

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT FOR THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Committee of Management for the Natural Sciences Tripos held at 2:15 pm on Tuesday 30th January 2018 in the Todd–Hamied Room, Ground Floor, Chemistry Department, Lensfield Road.

Present: Dr James Keeler (in the Chair), Dr Nicholas Holmes, Dr David Summers, Dr Tim Weil, Dr Ed Tipper (standing in for Professor Harrison), Professor John Richer, Dr Sandra Fulton, Dr David Greaves, Dr Eric Rees, Dr Stewart Sage, Professor Harvey Reall, Professor James Elliott, Dr Dee Scadden, Dr Lisa Jardine-Wright, Ms Meg Tong, Mr Stanley Quek, Jane Clare (Secretary) and Miss Isabel Starkey.

Apologies were received from Dr Kate Plaisted-Grant, Professor Richard Harrison, Dr Daniel Margocsy and Gilbertas Umbrazunas

898) Minutes

After an amendment to minute 888(ii) was agreed, the minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2017 were approved.

899) Membership

i) The Committee welcomed Stanley Quek who had been appointed as a student member to the Committee by the Faculty Board of Biology, and Meg Tong and Gilbertas Umbrazunas who had been appointed as student members to the Committee by the Faculty Board of Physics and Chemistry.

ii) The Committee noted that Dr Noel Rutter had stepped down as Director of Education of the School of Physical Sciences. Dr Lisa Jardine-Wright who replaces him as the SPS representative on the Committee for an interim period was welcomed.

iii) The Committee welcomed Dr Eric Rees as the new representative of the Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology Syndicate.

900) Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

Minute 891, 21st November 2017

Master in Advanced Studies in Earth Sciences

The Committee noted that the proposal would be considered at the Council of the School of Physical Sciences meeting on 1st February, and once approved, would be considered at the General Board's Education Committee.

Minute 893, 21st November 2017

Report from Richard, UIS

The response to Richard Hey, UIS had been circulated. The Chair confirmed that a reply had not yet been received.

Action: The Secretary to contact UIS

Minute 894, 21st November 2017

Part II Allocation system

The Committee heard that the Secretary and her colleague had visited UIS to test out the Part II allocation system which had been undergoing reparation work. Although one of the main issues had been resolved, another had been discovered. CamSiS staff advised that a 'change request' would initiate an investigation into the new issue, although there is an embargo on any other work until the completion of the current CamSiS upgrade. The Secretary and her colleague believe they can cope

with this issue since they have been fore-warned, although were still concerned about other unforeseeable problems arising.

Minute 888(iii)

Use of the Cockcroft Lecture Theatre

The Committee heard that Physics have been re-housed in the Zoology lecture theatre and that the Physiology lecture theatre had been proposed for Maths. It was agreed that the Physiology LT was in need of some refurbishment to improve facilities, including the Audio/Visual system and the supply of more projectors and other basic equipment.

Action: The Secretary to arrange a meeting between members of the Committee representing the affected subjects and appropriate staff from Student Registry to discuss refurbishment.

901) Reported and straightforward business

- i. Minutes of the meeting of the Biological Sciences Committee held on 17th November 2017 had been circulated along with the rota for Departmental responsibilities for Course Organiser and Examiner roles on the IA Mathematical Biology course that was agreed at the meeting. Also circulated was the proposal for a new IB course in Statistical, Computational and Mathematical Modelling in Biology.
- ii. Documentation for the Part II subject allocation process was approved.

Dr Fulton reported on Biological Sciences Committee meeting, as follows.

Minute 707, Part II Allocation Process.

A paper by Dr Holmes had highlighted that students from the Medical and Veterinary Sciences Tripos were achieving higher median marks than NST students, partly due to the scaling of their 2nd MB marks. Consequently MVST students were more likely to be offered Part II project places in the biological subjects. The Biological Sciences Committee had agreed that ranking of candidates should be considered for Part II allocations, rather than relying on overall Tripos scores.

The Committee agreed that it was too late to implement any new processes in time for this year's allocation, especially in view of the fact that ranking does not currently appear on CamSiS so would have to be added manually. Further discussion would take place in time for changes to next year's process. Departments were reminded that the criteria used to allocate students must align with that published on the NST website.

Minute 698, Faculty Review of Mathematics and Computing teaching

The Biological Sciences Committee had discussed a paper written by Dr Nik Cunniffe. It had agreed that the Computer Science aspect of the Mathematical Biology course would be extended and discussed the possibility of a new IB course of the same name. The Biological Sciences Committee had also recommended the proposal for a new IB course, 'Statistical, Computational and Mathematical Modelling in Biology' to the NST Management Committee.

Some members of the Committee flagged that particular subjects were more likely to lose students to the new course. Although practicalities were still to be ironed out, including the insertion of another course into the IB timetable, the Committee approved it in principle.

Action: Secretary to feed back to the Secretary of the Biological Sciences Committee

Minute 708.3, The Biocentrum

A Biocentrum Teaching Forum had been established to discuss implications for teaching. It is planned that all NST biological subjects will be taught there.

902) Restriction to student numbers borrowing CST Paper 1

Dr Greaves reported that the Computer Laboratory had taken account of the feedback from the Management Committee and the Senior Tutors' Committee. The Faculty Board had decided that the Computer Science Tripos would be substantially amended (in time for the 2020 intake) and CST Paper 1 will be redesigned in such a way that it would no longer be relevant to non-computer scientists and therefore should no longer be lent to other triposes. Dr Greaves said that he and his colleagues would be very willing to assist in the design of a Computer Science course aimed at NST students if the Management Committee planned to create such a course.

903) Corrections to Examination Papers, 2017

The Committee noted that at its meeting on 6th December 2017, the General Board's Education Committee had received a table showing numbers of corrections for examination papers in 2017 compared with the previous two examination seasons. The Education Committee expressed its concern at the increased incidence of corrections in the Natural Sciences Tripos and had asked the Management Committee to reflect on how the number of corrections might be limited in future years.

The Committee agreed that two issues needed to be taken into consideration. Firstly, there are a very large number of papers across the breadth of the Natural Sciences Tripos and the number of corrections should be looked at in context. Secondly, a typographical error in a mathematical or technical paper has a very different effect to an error on a non-technical paper which could be ignored or fairly easily overlooked.

However, the Committee agreed that a reminder to Senior Examiners about the importance of proofreading and final checking of papers would be circulated via an email from the Chairs of Examiners.

Action: The Secretary to feed back to the General Board's Education Committee

904) NST Examinations

i. Part IA Chair of Examiners Report

The Committee approved an updated report by Dr Finian Leeper on the IA examinations 2017 featuring an analysis of the effect of the new classing system.

ii. Examiners Guidance

The Committee approved for publication, the guides and appendices for Senior Examiners for Part IA, Part IB, Parts II and III and the Administration Timetable.

iii. Examination arrangements

The Committee approved the updated process for students requiring special arrangements for exams.

There was some discussion around the perennial problem of scripts from candidates that had taken examinations in college, arriving late or at the wrong Department. The Board of Examinations had been made aware of the issues.

905) Consultation on changing the start time of University examinations

The Committee noted that the Board of Examinations is to review the start time of afternoon examinations. A consultation paper had been circulated, the responses from which would be considered by the Board of Examinations with a view to implementing any changes in the academic year 2018-19.

The Committee agreed that it could support the proposals as long as (a) Reprographics would remain open beyond normal hours to receive the scripts of candidates taking the exam in college and (b) that extra support is put in place to ensure there are no further delays in Examiners receiving scripts.

Action: The Secretary to feedback to the Board of Examinations

906) Working Group on Degree Classification

The Committee noted that following the Consultation on Degree Classification and Examinations Ranking launched last February, the General Board's Education Committee had agreed to set up a working group to review the responses to the consultation and develop detailed proposals for the introduction of an overall degree classification for all Triposes.

The Working Group was expected to meet in early March. Faculty Boards had been encouraged to express comments and concerns through their School representative. The Committee noted that the representative for the Schools of Biological Science and Clinical Medicine is Sandra Fulton (amf26@cam.ac.uk) and for the Schools of Physical Sciences and Technology, Jonathan Evans (DAMTP, jme23@cam.ac.uk).

907) IB Subjects Fair

The Committee heard that Tamara Hug, the Departmental Administrator at the Department of History and Philosophy of Science would be organising a IB subjects fair on Thursday 15th March 2018 in the Cormack Rooms at the University Centre. The NST/MVST Part II subjects fair would be held the following day in the same venue. HPS had agreed to fund the IB subjects fair this year (at a cost of around £500) but hoped that funding may be found going forward if the fair is deemed to be successful.

Mrs Hug would be contacting course organisers inviting them to sign up to the event and to contribute a few words about their courses for a booklet that is in production.

The Committee agreed that it was important to support this effort and that all departments should be represented, at least for this first year.

908) Any other business

There was none.

909) Date of next meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting would take place at 2:15 pm on Tuesday, 27th February 2018, Todd Hamied Room, Ground Floor, Department of Chemistry.