

**UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD DEPARTMENT OF MATERIALS
ACADEMIC COMMITTEE (DMAC)**

DMAC 49

There will be a meeting of the Department of Materials Academic Committee at **2.00 pm** on Monday 27th October 2008 in the **Wolfson Meeting Room**.

* Starred items will not be discussed unless requested in writing (email) to the Chair by 10.00 am Monday 27th October 2008.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
2. **Membership and Terms of Reference** **DMAC 49/1**
3. **Report from the Chair of JCCG (KD)**
4. **Report from the Chair of JCCU (HB)**
5. **Minutes of DMAC 48** **DMAC 49/2**
6. **Shortened Minutes**
7. **Matters Arising – that are not specific Agenda Items**

***From DMAC 27**

Minute 4 Report from JCCU Chair:

Practical Classes Possibility of submitting reports in word-processed format. JMS has provided a lead on information on software for the detection of plagiarism. AOT is investigating its use and attended a half-day workshop on plagiarism in June 2006. AOT noted that EPSC has now produced some guidance on plagiarism.

AOT reported that the University is now trialling plagiarism detection software called "Turnitin" in two departments (Law and Computing).

DMAC 45: AOT reported that MPLS had agreed to take forward his request that they ask for a progress report on this trial.

DMAC 48: AOT reported that the students had conducted their own survey to investigate whether or not the students would like to submit practical reports electronically. The results showed an equal split between those who would prefer to submit reports in a word-processed format and those who would prefer to continue with hand-written reports. DMAC was concerned that an electronic format could increase the risk of "cut and paste" plagiarism. DMAC also considered that there was benefit to be gained in completing hand-written exercises prior to examinations.

Whilst it was agreed that Turnitin would prove invaluable for large pieces of work, DMAC held the view that the markers could detect any similarity in reports within the year group, although admittedly not against previous years. It was agreed that any decision regarding electronic submission of reports should only be considered once further detail is known about "Turnitin". AOT advised that no update had been received from Division. CRMG will follow-

up with the Proctors for details of progress with “Turnitin”.

Action: CRMG

***From DMAC 32**

***Minute 11iv Report from the Faculty: Guidance to Supervisors** AOT and CRMG will adapt the guidance from the EPSC. Andrew Watt, as part of his CDF duties, will assist in taking this forward, has been briefed by AOT and will produce a final version for DMAC in wk7 TT08.

In progress: AARW

[Secretary’s Note following DMAC 47: Update from AARW – he would still like to do this but workloads have prevented him from meeting the above deadline.]

***From DMAC 37**

***Minute 4ii 2nd Year Polymers**

DMAC 48: AOT confirmed that BJJ had been approached with this request and had agreed to undertake this review. However, HEA had submitted an interim report following DMAC 47 in which she advised that she considered the 2nd Year Polymers material to be accurate in content and that no changes were required. Revisions have been made to the 1st and 3rd Year material which HEA would like to review once examination results are known. It was queried whether HEA’s remit should cover tutorial teaching and DMAC concluded that, as HEA was conducting a large scale review of the Polymers material, tutorial teaching would be a part of this, together with the practical element. AOT advised that AJW had reported that the Polymer practicals were on a suitable pro-rata scale to fit with the lectures.

It was noted that the Polymers material was being taught by a team of 3: HEA, BJJ and AARW. DMAC heard that students were now keener to take Polymers.

Action: BJJ/HEA

***From DMAC 41**

***Minute 10i Report from the Tutors’ Committee (LJFJ): Writing Skills (DMAC 41/5)** AOT reported that the Language Centre has neither provision nor funding for native English speakers. The Language Centre had informed him that colleges have funding for support of native English speakers.

AOT has suggested to Tutors that they might use the new Divisional lecture series on Energy & Climate Change as a vehicle for an essay writing exercise. In light of the Language Centre’s response DMAC supported a proposal for AOT to ask Tutors via the Tutors’ Committee to report on how students with weak English are supported (particularly with a view to the Department’s QAA justification).

In progress: AOT

[Secretary’s Note following DMAC 46: Tutors have agreed to provide this information and in due course AOT will report to DMAC a summary of the provision.]

***From DMAC 43**

***Minute 4i Report from the Chair of JCCU (AZ): Industrial Visits (DMAC 43/2)** CRMG agreed to explore with PJD whether an annual 'Begbroke' visit could be put in place that included spin-out companies and BegbrokeNano as a commercial enterprise.

Action: CRMG

***From DMAC 46**

***Minute 8 Employment Statistics (DMAC 46/5)** A survey of graduates taken 6-months after graduation was considered. It was noted that the report did not include any statistics for MEM students. There was concern that the statistics showed a rate of 29% unemployment; in previous years 0% has been recorded in this category. The issue was raised as to whether or not the questionnaire had been revised leading to different types of responses being elicited from the leavers.

AOT will contact tutors to see how accurate these statistics may be, particularly regarding unemployment, as tutors are generally aware where their students end up.

Action: AOT

***From DMAC 47**

***Minute 2 Report from the Chair of JCCG – Access to the Department Workshop** Following an action raised at a previous meeting, JCCG had drafted a proforma for applying for extended access giving details of the student, the supervisor, the project and an outline of planned workshop activities. JCCG will submit an electronic version of this. DMAC enquired as to the level of graduate students requiring extended access and whilst it was reported that this year the level had dropped due to the nature of projects undertaken, it was agreed that the procedure should be put in place to allow for an increase in the level of requests.

Action: DA

***Minute 3 Report from the Chair of JCCU – Disparity between tutorial support and lecture courses** JCCU reported that feedback on the Macroplasticity lecture course had highlighted that students felt that some tutors may not have been aware of the changes made to the lecture course in 2006/07. This was also felt to have occurred following changes to the 3rd year option courses, despite changes being discussed and approved by Faculty and reflected in the course synopses which are updated on an annual basis. DMAC considered that there was a need for a formal mechanism by which tutors were alerted to changes in lecture courses and tutorial sheets. DMAC concluded that once synopses have been updated, the course information, including tutorial sheets, should be communicated by PJM to the tutorial fellows. DMAC will report this to Faculty to ensure this process is fully communicated.

Action: AOT/JMS

[Secretary's Note following DMAC 47: Following investigation into the resources available through WebLearn, it is proposed that this could be used as a central repository for, initially, tutorial sheets. Further details and guidance will be circulated in due course.]

[Secretary's Note following DMAC 48: Work continues to obtain the raw information to enable this. Updated synopses have been sent out to all tutors.]

***Minute 8 Regulation Change: Penalties for late submission of coursework and new deadline for submission of Part II theses**

This prompted a question about the Business Plans, as some students had been penalised by Proctors for missing the deadline: these students had sent work via the internal post before they left to go on the Industrial Tour. It was agreed that an explicit statement would be added to the handbook confirming that it was the student's own responsibility to meet deadlines and when submitting work to Examination Schools this should be done in person so the work can be date-stamped. DMAC asked if the submission deadline for the Business Plans could be moved to de-conflict from the Industrial Tour. PJM is to investigate dependent timeframes with the course lecturer. AOT reminded DMAC that a change in deadline would require a regulation change through Faculty.

Action: PJM

***Minute 9 Teaching Lab Access for Research Workers** DMAC considered the level of control that should be implemented to assist the Practical Class Technician and others in managing requests from researchers for access to the Teaching Lab. DMAC agreed that access should always be arranged in advance, that users must provide their own consumables, and that supervisors should endorse such requests, having judged whether or not the researcher is competent in using the necessary equipment. Pre-arranged and planned access should negate the need for out-of-hours access, and access during afternoon undergraduate practicals should be actively discouraged. All usage must be subject to having satisfied the PCT that adequate training has been received. A well-equipped metallographic outfit, including resources, is available at Begbroke and when access to the teaching lab is not possible / convenient suitably trained researchers should be referred there in the first instance. A proforma is to be drafted explicitly stating these rules. Any exceptional requests and/or difficulties are to be referred to CRMG.

Action: AOT

***From DMAC 48**

***Minute 11 iii) Undergraduate Studies Advisory Panel** Teaching for the new Engineering Diploma starts in schools in September. [Material removed from the minutes to be published on the Department of Materials website.]

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| 8. Examiners' Reports (sent hard-copy only) | DMAC 49/3 |
| (i) Prelims | |
| (ii) Part I and Part II MS | |
| (iii) Part I and Part II MEM | |
| (iv) External Examiners' Reports (not received) | |
| (v) Draft Response to Examiners' Reports | DMAC 49/4 |

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| 9. Exam Conventions (to be tabled) | DMAC 49/5 |
| 10. * Lecture Synopses - significant changes, approved by Chair's action during Long Vac | DMAC 49/6 |
| 11. Student Representation – OUSU paper (to be summarised verbally at meeting by AOT) | |
| 12. Report from the Tutors' Committee (AOT) | |
| 13. Report from EMS Standing Committee (PJM) | |
| 14. Reports from Divisional Committees (i) Academic Committee (AOT) | |
| 15. Chairman's Report | |
| 16. Any Other Business | |
| 17. Date of the next meeting – 2.00 pm Monday 24th November 2008, Wolfson Meeting Room | |

The meeting is scheduled to end at 5.00 pm.