

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

DMAC 50

There will be a meeting of the Department of Materials Academic Committee at **2.00 pm** on Monday 2nd February 2009 in the **Wolfson Meeting Room**.

* Starred items will not be discussed unless requested in writing (email) to the Chair by 10.00 am Monday 2nd February 2009.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies & Welcome**
2. **Report from the Chair of JCCG (KD/GO)**
3. **Report from the Chair of JCCU (DL)**
4. **Minutes of DMAC 49** – confirmed out of committee, attached for information **DMAC 50/1**
5. **Shortened Minutes**
6. **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 BJG 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, BJG and AARW. DMAC heard that students were now keener to take Polymers.

Action: BJG/HEA

***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.

In progress: AOT

[Secretary's Note following DMAC49 – Action completed. AOT has requested that the Tutors follow up with their students to assess movements after graduation. Further details will be advised once available.]

***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 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

[Secretary's Note following DMAC 49: Faculty were informed at the meeting in MT08. A proforma is to be drafted.]

***From DMAC 48**

***Minute 11 iii) Undergraduate Studies Advisory Panel** Teaching for the new Engineering Diploma starts in September which will be equivalent to 3.5 A Levels (Oxbridge included in Steering Group for this). Engineering reported a number of concerns, specifically, that the Maths and Physics content was considered to be sub-AS level. Given the competence required in these areas in the Engineering Science courses, it was felt that the Diploma could not be viewed as the principal route of study. It was requested that Division take this up so that Oxford's view is known before students commit to these courses. The University's stance is being awaited. CRMG is to follow-up with the Pro VC Education to establish the current position, depending on Division's actions to date, which AOT will explore.

Action: CRMG

[Secretary's Note following DMAC 49: Due to the PVC's illness this action lapsed, but AOT has followed up with Prof. Softley who has promised to raise it again at EdC.]

[Further Secretary's Note following DMAC 49: The following release was issued by Undergraduate Admissions in November 2008:

Approval of Engineering Diploma for entry qualification to Engineering Science

The Engineering Department has confirmed that it will accept the new Engineering Diploma for admissions purposes. This is the information which has been sent out in a press release, and which will also appear in the new prospectus:

"The department will accept the Advanced Diploma in Engineering (Level 3) for entry, provided candidates also obtain both an A-level in Physics and the new Level 3 Certificate in Mathematics for Engineering. These qualifications can be presented as the additional specialist learning component of the diploma. Offers will be formulated itemising performance in A-level Physics, the Level 3 certificate in Mathematics for Engineering, the Extended Project and the Principal Learning of the diploma on an equivalent basis with existing level 3 qualifications."

Access to HE Diploma for mature applications

Guidelines on the new Diploma for Access to Higher Education are being developed by the QAA. Details on the changes for the 2009 entry admissions round are available at <http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk>.]

***From DMAC 49**

*** Minute 4 Report from the Chair of JCCU (HB) –**

i) Team Design Project Scheduling JCCU was concerned that, due to concurrent commitments in Economics and Management, MEM students were disadvantaged by the timing of the Team Design Projects, even with the expected input of 75 hours reduced from 100 hours for the MS students. JCCU enquired whether the TDPs could be swapped with the Option Modules in HT. DMAC considered that the training load on the SEMs was too high at the beginning of MT to allow for these modules to be done then.

DMAC agreed to investigate further with the Economics and Management faculties to determine amount of work being set so the total workload could be considered. It was discussed that it may be possible to reduce the contribution of MEM students to 50% and reduce marks proportionately but there were concerns about further reducing the Materials content in the programme.

Action: AOT

ii) Foreign Language Provision The Department currently funds a language option for MS students; a foundation course is studied in the first year with an assessed course continuing in the second year in place of the Business Plan. A further voluntary course is offered in the fourth year. JCCU reported that all 1st years would like the option to take a language course. DMAC considered that all 1st years should be allowed to take the language option, for which the Department would pay. However, DMAC felt it would not be sensible for 2nd year MEM students to take an additional language course, given the already heavy workload. The entry in the handbook will be revised to reflect this.

Action: PJM

[Secretary's Note following DMAC 49: DC has approved this suggestion, including the evening classes for those students whose timetable commitments prevent attendance during the day and subject to a firm commitment from the student to put in the required amount of study and attendance on the language course. However, at present registration on the evening (OPAL) courses is required in MT week 0, which is impractical for freshers. This problem will be explored with OU Language Centre.]

***Minute 8 Examiners' Reports – Prelims** It was noted that on MS2 there were very few attempts to the questions on Electronic Properties, and that those were poor. It was believed that, historically, this has not been a popular area for students in examinations. As an important role of the Prelims examination is to provide evidence of understanding of the subject matter, there was some concern that preparedness for the electronic properties elements of Year 2 core papers was not being demonstrated. DMAC considered that it was not necessarily that students did not understand the subject matter, as mechanisms such as tutorials were in place throughout the course to enable tutors to monitor basic understanding, rather that this area was less inter-related to other subject areas so, given the format of the papers, the students chose to avoid answering those questions. Having discussed a couple of possible solutions, such as splitting the papers into sections, or alternating a question on Kinetic Theory with a Physics-based question each year. DMAC concluded that further data should be established to determine the exact trend in uptake of questions before proposing any further action. Statistics from the previous four years are to be collated for this, and to identify whether or not there are similar trends in other areas.

Action: PJM

[Secretary's Note following DMAC49: JCCU have also expressed concern about the content and speed of 1st and 2nd year Electrical Properties courses. A working group will be set up to examine Prelims and core FHS provision in this area.]

* Minute 15 Chairman's Report

- i) Following discussion over the summer, a better system has been devised for recording practical marks and attendance. This will assist in providing accurate information to Tutors. This will also address the comment made by the Chair of Moderators for Prelims that he was not happy with the lack of transparency in the mechanism for applying penalties. This will be rolled out in MT.

Action: AOT

7. Student Surveys

- (i) National Student Survey **DMAC 50/2**
- (ii) Oxford Student Course Experience Questionnaire

8. Examination Conventions

- (i) Prelims **DMAC 50/3**
- (ii) *Final Honours School (for information only) **DMAC 50/4**

9. Undergraduate Joint Degree Consultation **DMAC 50/5**

10. Proposed Revision to 3rd Year Option Scheme **DMAC 50/6**

11. Scheduling of Lectures

12. Word limit on Part II Theses **DMAC 50/7**

13. *Revised Lecture Synopses – 3rd year Option courses: **DMAC 50/8** Advanced Engineering Alloys & Composites; Manufacture with Metals & Alloys

14. *English Language Provision – report attached for information **DMAC 50/9**

15. Report from the Tutors' Committee (AOT)

16. Reports from Divisional Committees

(i) Academic Committee (AOT)

- Grad School
- Cont Ed Vision
- Other Items

(ii) Graduate Studies Advisory Panel (AOT)

(iii) Undergraduate Studies Access Advisory Panel (AOT)

- August re-sits

17. Chairman's Report

- The delivery of tutorials by Grads and Postdocs.
- Other Items

18. Any Other Business

19. Date of the next meeting – 2.00 pm Monday 23rd February 200, Wolfson Meeting Room

The meeting is scheduled to end at 5.00 pm.