

## OXFORD UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MATERIALS

**DMAC 10 Minutes of Academic Committee held on 25 February 2002 at 2.15  
in Room 20.19, ETB Building**

**Present** GDWS (Chair), APS, SS, AKP-L, AC, RIT, PRW, JMS, CFH

1. **Apologies:** none received
2. The **minutes of DMAC 9** were agreed
4. **Matters arising not covered elsewhere in the agenda.**

### Minute 6.3. (DMAC 8): Supplementary subject legislation

APS has sent GDWS a draft, for onward submission to Jenny Nix.

The following points were raised in discussion:

Prelims legislation: Fraser scheme has been discontinued. We are setting up our own Preliminary scheme in Materials Science. Now there is the opportunity to include crystallography and practical work explicitly, as a 5<sup>th</sup> paper. It was agreed that there are distinct advantages in the proposal.

GDWS went over the timescale necessary to implement the changes. It was agreed they would apply for the next academic year. Thus notice of changes must reach the Gazette by June; and it is necessary for Subfaculty to pass them. The change to the Grey book could be achieved by correspondence and email, and all would need to be in place in time for the first Divisional Academic Meeting next term (TT).

**Action: GDWS**

### Minute 4. (DMAC 9): Running of DMAC

GDWS summarised the position by saying that because of sabbatical and maternity leave, etc. it would be preferable to address the issues fully by the start of next academic year (MT 2002). In the meantime, as well as ensuring the proper running of courses, there were two things to be addressed.

1. The lecture list for next year must be produced in Trinity term.
2. Update of Handbook - with production in time for new intake in Michaelmas term.

Lecture list: APS said he was willing to produce a General Scheme for next year. This should be a valuable guide to producing the Michaelmas term lecture list.

**Action: APS**

Course Handbook: JMS said this needs marking through by the academic administrator. He suggested a file of changes be kept as they arose. APS mentioned the need to update lecture synopses, and the Postgraduate booklet (produced for the first time last year).

**Action: MM upon return**

### Minute 9 (DMAC 9): New Advanced Options

There was considerable discussion on this subject. Concern was expressed at the very large amount of effort involved in putting on Option courses, a number of which were very poorly attended.

It was noted that the overall strategy of the Mathematics and Physical Sciences Division was to move towards a position in which final year Option courses would be made available on a cross-disciplinary basis. The following strategy was agreed:

1. The total number of options to be reduced from 20 to 16.
2. Options to be grouped in complimentary pairs wherever possible to enable more systematic coverage of major topics.
3. Broader groupings of 4 Options each to be brought together, as potential offerings for interdepartmental courses.
4. Staff to be invited to propose new Option courses, e.g. Nanomaterials, as previously suggested by GADB.

It was agreed between GDWS and APS that they would meet and discuss groupings etc. A document would be circulated to DMAC for comment.

**Action: GDWS & APS**

## **5. JCCU Minutes.**

### Minute 3: Examination requirements – Industrial Project (MEM)

GDWS reported that there were minor mistakes on this year's examination entry forms. Syllabus changes which had been approved last year had not been communicated to the Examination Schools. These errors were now being corrected. The information in the Course Handbook and on the web site remains correct and in force.

### Minute 4 (iii): Library office hours

The feedback from students was positive about the changed times of library opening.

### Minute 4 (viii): Second year examinations

GDWS said Physics and Chemistry had presented robust cases for these. Engineering were not in favour. E(MEM) standing committee had concern about the difficulties associated with Joint Honour schools.

For Materials, it was agreed the matter was on hold. It would be appropriate to consider this again when the next major review of the undergraduate teaching course was carried out.

### Minute 9: Entrepreneurship Course

GDWS said that the Engineers A7 Panel (Engineering in Society) had stated that they would be prepared to offer this course as an alternative to Introduction to Management. It was now urgent to establish whether or not the Science Enterprise Centre at the Said Business School would be able to run the course in the next academic year. APS pointed out that if the Entrepreneurship course could not be run next year an urgent change would be needed to the Grey book regulations.

The structure of the course was discussed. It was felt that the number of lectures should be reduced to 8, with an additional 4 hours of direct teaching on how to produce the business plan.

**Action: GDWS to  
contact Liz Miller.**

## **6. JCCG minutes.**

### Minute 3: Claims for payment

It was stated that the new system, now having been explained, was beginning to take effect satisfactorily. SS felt that although payments were just beginning to come through, it seemed likely that it was progressing. This item must be kept under review.

**Action GDWS/RMP**

### Minute 6: Lecture questionnaires

It was reported that lecture questionnaires for graduate courses would be issued next year, in a slightly different form from the existing undergraduate questionnaires.

SS reminded the committee that in addition it had been agreed to issue a general questionnaire, covering the course as a whole, during next term (TT). A draft was needed as soon as possible

**Action Robin Taylor+ AC**

There then followed an extensive discussion on Teaching Assistant Bursaries

AKP-L said she had grave reservations about TABs being issued, and maintained for 3 years. In the past TABs had been introduced to increase the uptake of graduates. Now we should emphasize that prospective graduates would be lucky to obtain a TAB. She showed concern about the incompetence of some of the junior demonstrators.

AKP-L stated, and others agreed, that the teaching of undergraduates by some junior demonstrators was just not good enough. They were paid for this work, and they were not producing good results. There should be a mechanism to withdraw the TAB after 1 year, for unsatisfactory performance. RMP was quoted as stating that TABS are not a bursary but a payment for work. The term bursary should be decoupled from the payment. The sound teaching of our undergraduates must be our prime concern, whilst TABs would be awarded for good performance in as many cases as the Department considers affordable.

It was agreed:

1. TABS should be conditional for 1 year at a time, based on satisfactory performance of duties.
2. GT should address the problem that exists with junior demonstrators. He should make it clear to them that if performance is below par, TAB will be withdrawn.
3. RMP + GT should draw up a job description for TABs, to include selection criteria.

**Action GT/RMP**

**7. E(MEM) minutes**

Minute 6: Information Management Option

The Information Management Option is likely to cease. The lecturer has left, and is not likely to be replaced.

Minute 8: Management tutorials

The Said Business School had offered assistance in arranging Management tutorials for students at colleges where there was no Management tutor. Dr. Keith Blois and Dr. Steve New would provide advice and contact information, but requested notification in good time before the start of the academic year.

Minute 9: Tutorial Guidelines

Stephen New and GDWS would work on an advisory template for the whole course.

**8. EMS Standing Committee – (Minutes to follow shortly)**

Weighting of practicals and project work

It has been agreed that the final year project carried out by EMS students should have the weighting of 3 examination papers.

Provision of tutorials for ME papers

The Chairman of the EMS Standing Committee, Dr. Sheard, has agreed to provide assistance with final tutorials for the ME1, ME2 and ME3 papers in case of difficulty.

Rationalisation of lecture schedules:

APS reported that he had been able almost to completely eliminate the need for lecture courses to be repeated, especially for EMS students. This resulted in a saving of 37 hours in lecturing time per annum.

APS was thanked for his efforts.

### **9. Divisional Academic Committee Report**

Soft skills for graduate students had been discussed. Our graduate teaching was a role model throughout the Division.

### **10. Lecture List for Trinity Term**

This had now been agreed. Thanks were due to APS.

### **11. Princeton link Update**

GDWS reported that Part II projects can be set up, without fees from Princeton. One project is already being set up for next year. This would comprise 2 terms as a guest researcher.

### **Any other Business**

#### Sixth Form Courses

RIT said he was expecting a further report on these courses shortly. Bookings are coming in at a satisfactory rate.

#### Summer School for Chemistry Teachers 7-10 July 2002

GDWS reported that this is being organised through the Royal Society of Chemistry, and we would have 30-40 chemistry teachers here. We must provide some talks. On one day there would be a visit by the party to Culham and Rutherford.

**Action MJC/RIT**

#### Headstart (residential course for sixth formers interested in engineering/materials)

We will take part on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day. It is in the same week as the Summer School above, but fortunately the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of Headstart coincides with the Culham/Rutherford visit of the Summer School. Headstart is organised by the Royal Academy of Engineering. They pick the students and make all the necessary connections/arrangements.

**Action MJC**

#### New Government initiative SEAS (Science and Engineering Ambassadors Scheme)

GDWS passed round details of this scheme, the aim of which is to get practising scientists and engineers into schools for talks and to give help to students and teachers; thus promoting interest in these areas. When it is set up it will be run through the Oxford Trust, so we would be in a good position in this respect. It is important that significant numbers of staff, research fellows and graduate students in the Department should become involved in this scheme.

**Action: GDWS**

Another Government initiative is the Specialist Status school scheme. It is for state schools only. All disciplines can be involved, sport, etc., and materials. Initially schools must raise £50,000. Some surprise was expressed at this, but GDWS explained that afterwards there would be great returns to schools in the form of increased funding per head for students and other payments worth more than the original amount invested. SEAS could usefully be focussed on Specialist Status schools.

**Action: MJC**

#### JMS Sabbatical leave. Teaching arrangements for Thermodynamics.

JMS to pursue this in consultation with GDWS. Some possible names were suggested.

**Action: JMS**

### **Date of the next meeting:**

TT 2<sup>nd</sup> week (Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April) at 2.15 in ETB Committee room 20.19.

CFH 3/5/02