

Oxford University Department of Materials

Academic Committee

DMAC 13 Minutes of Academic Committee held at 2.30pm on Monday 28th October 2002
in the first floor conference room at 21 Banbury Road.

Present: GT (Chair), AC, SGR, APS, JMS, RIT, PRW, Laura Jones (LJFJ) (Temp. Deputy Administrator (Academic)).

1. **Apologies:** were received from JTC, JPN.

2. **Terms of reference and membership of the Committee**

The membership of the Committee for 2002/03 was noted and it was agreed that under the terms of reference of the Committee, GT would be nominated formally as Chair of the Committee and put to election by the subfaculty at the next subfaculty meeting.

3. **The minutes of meeting DMAC 12** were approved subject to the following amendments:

- a) *Minute 9.* Remove the Departmental Administrator from the people required to attend the Fresher's Induction Course and replace "the Integral Class Organiser" with "the Practical Class Organiser".
- b) *Minute 12c.* Replace "Design for Manufacture" with "Design and Manufacture".

4. **JCCU Matters**

The outgoing Chair of the JCCU, Georgia Hodge, presented the minutes of the meeting held on October 22 2002 and highlighted the following points.

- a) *The proposed start date for Part I examinations* is in 8th week of Trinity term, which the students feel is too late. The previous start date has been Thursday of wk 7. It appears the examinations may have been matched with the wrong Engineering papers, GT and LJFJ are addressing the matter. **Action: GT/LJFJ**
- b) *The library opening hours.* There had been some feedback from students that the library office was not open after 11am. GT agreed to monitor the situation. **Action: GT**
- c) *The new Functional & Structural Nanomaterials course.* The student body felt the new course is a good development. However, in light of the course representing two options that must be taken together, DMAC was asked to inform all students in writing of the changes to the proposed options by the end of week 4. APS informed the Committee that he was drafting the letter and that the Chairman of DMAC (GT) would send it out to meet the students' deadline. **Action: APS/GT**
- d) *The Industrial Trip.* This year's Easter trip is to Hong Kong and has been arranged by Arvi Luoma (also the incoming JCCU Chair). Currently, there is no visit to a steel company but Arvi Luoma has now contacted the Corus office in Hong Kong with a view to organising a visit to a Hong Kong-based steel works during the Easter tour. If this proves to be impossible Georgia Hodge and Markus Mittermaier (1st year JCCU rep.) will organise a trip to a UK-based steel plant. SGR has passed on the Corus contact details. The UK trip would ideally be at the end of the Michaelmas term.

6. **JCCG Matters**

Susannah Speller, Chair of the JCCG, presented the minutes of the meeting held on October 15 2002 and highlighted the following points.

- a) *Postgraduate questionnaires*. Last year's questionnaires' had highlighted a request from the graduates for an "Introduction to Materials" course for non-materials graduates. The committee discussed the possibility of introducing this for the new students of October '03. The committee felt that the intake of the academic year 01/02 had contained an unusually high number of physics graduates, which had perhaps resulted in this request. Also, it was felt that the Department was already overstretched in its teaching load and that a condensed course would not solve the common problem, which is often a lack of background knowledge. It was pointed out that the graduates could attend undergraduate lectures as one of their assessed courses if they so desired and that supervisors should direct them as to which core courses were best suited to their needs. The conclusion of the discussion was that no special course be arranged.
- b) *Graduate Induction Day*. The Committee were informed that the new two-day induction course ran well on the whole but that certain supervisors were not there to meet their new graduate students. In certain cases, the supervisors had also failed to nominate a member of their research group to take their place. AC informed the Committee that the 2003 Induction Course would include a "Meet your Supervisor and Group" afternoon timetabled into the course. The DC would be informed in advance and all supervisors would be specifically asked to nominate a replacement if they were unable to attend. **Action: AC**

7a. Matters arising from DMAC 12, June 3rd 2002

- a) *Minute 6*. The Entrepreneurship course lectures and tutorials have now been arranged (see DMAC 13, Minute 15).
- b) *Minutes 7 & 8*. It was not known if the revised regulations concerning the third year options courses had yet been published in the Gazette. LJFJ agreed to contact Jenny Nix re. this matter. [Note subsequent to the meeting, it was discovered that the change in regulations is on the agenda of the E(M)EM Standing Committee meeting (31st October).

Action: LJFJ

- c) *Minute 10*. AC noted that shifting the lectures on 'Partial differential equations and Fourier series' from Trinity term in the 1st year to Michaelmas term in the 2nd year would mean that the students would not have covered this material in time for the course on Diffusion, given in the Michaelmas term. It was noted that there was in fact a great deal of overlap between the courses, and after some discussion, it was agreed that AC and APS should discuss further the possibility of shared classes to teach the mathematical elements of diffusion.

Action: APS/AC

- d) *Minute 11*. The Committee were keen to view the Departmental points scheme. GT agreed to contact GDWS about this.

Action: GT

7b. Matters arising from DC 12, October 7th 2002

No matters arising, no minutes available.

8. Divisional Academic Committee (DMAC 13/05)

GT had attended the Divisional Academic Committee and highlighted the following points for DMAC.

- a) *Princeton-Oxford undergraduate exchanges*. The University is keen to encourage student exchanges and The Rhodes Trust is funding 6 undergraduate exchanges at £3k each to meet the extra costs of studying at Princeton.
- b) *Issues concerning the award of a Masters qualification to four-year undergraduate degrees*. The Divisional AC wishes to establish a consistent system re. the award given to a student who leaves a four-year Masters course after only three years. The Divisional AC felt

that four-year Masters courses should adopt the following convention “candidates may be awarded a classified BA in exceptional circumstances only (normally medical or other extreme personal circumstances), to be determined by the examiners in consultation with the Proctors.” The Committee agreed in principle with this statement.

- c) *Quality assurance procedures and preparation for academic audit.* The audit due in Hilary term 2004 is to have a dual focus with scrutiny of systems at a mainly institutional level and only 4-6 Departments will be more closely examined. A timetable for the preparation and run-up to the assessment is tabled in document DMAC 13/05. In preparation for this the EPSC wishes to have a Departmental Academic contact and an administrative contact from each Department.

9. **Examiners’ Reports** (DMAC 13/06)

- a & b) The Preliminary examination was considered to have gone well by the Committee.
- c) *Response to External Examiners’ main points for Divisional Board.* DMAC recommended that the Chairman of Examiners and GT include in their response the issues concerning the overloading of the course and of DMAC with tasks handed down from the division and EPSC. This is primarily that the Academic Committee needs time to consider the construction of the course and the level of teaching so they can address the issues with the core courses as highlighted in the Part I examination marks.

11. **Programme Specifications**

The Committee accepted the Programme Specifications (DMAC 13/08) as composed by GT/LJFJ with some alterations. An amended version will be circulated to the Committee before forwarding to the division.

12. **Future of E(M)EM**

DMAC feel that the MEM course is a valuable asset to the Department and that it attracts students to Oxford University. There is no wish to lose the Economics component but if this is inevitable the option described in DMAC 13/09 is a viable alternative.

13. **Training for new lecturers and teachers (incl. postdocs and graduate students)**

GT informed DMAC that the EPSC guidelines require Departments to verify and monitor the quality of teaching and teacher training for new lecturers and teachers (incl. postdocs and graduate students). This includes graduate demonstrators. It was felt that the Department’s procedures cover this and that no further action was required.

14. **New Courses**

GT presented the two new courses to DMAC: the new options course, Functional and Structural Nanomaterials (16 lectures), which counts for two courses, and the EBSD electron microscopy training course for post-graduates. DMAC approved both courses.

15. **Entrepreneurship**

The Proctor’s letter (DMAC 13/10a) giving permission for the marks to be released as soon as available was welcomed. The course of lectures and associated tutorials (by Dr. Treve Willis) was approved.

16. **Foreign Language Option**

This was not discussed, but it was noted that the language department would prefer students to start in the Michaelmas term of the first year.

17. **Date for Corus Prize**

It was thought that Harriet Fishman has organised this (GT to check). It was mentioned that perhaps GT should inform Corus of the amount awarded for other prizes. **Action: GT**

18. Tutors Committee Reports

The report was received.

19. Any other Business

- a) The Committee was informed that the Dept now required a lecturer for the Engineering Drawing Classes. There were no suggestions. It was agreed that GT & LJFJ should again ask Engineering. **Action: GT/LJFJ**

- b) GT asked if more DMAC meetings were required. The consensus was no.

The meeting closed at 5.55pm.

The next meeting is at 2.15pm, Monday 25th November 2002 in the first floor Conference Room at 21 Banbury Road.