

# Oxford University Department of Materials

## Academic Committee

**DMAC 14 Minutes of Academic Committee held at 2.30pm on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2002** in the first floor conference room at 21 Banbury Road.

**Present:** GT (Chair), AC, SGR, APS, JMS, RIT, PRW, JTC, JPN, LJFJ.

1. **Apologies:** none was received.

### 2. Minutes of DMAC 13

The Committee approved the minutes of DMAC 13.

### 3. Matters Arising

*From DMAC 13, 28<sup>th</sup> October 2002.*

- a) *Minute 5a.* The start date for the Part I examination will be the same as last year, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> week and not as shown in the blue booklet issued to students.
- b) *Minute 5b.* The librarian's hours are 9-1, Monday - Friday.
- c) *Minute 5c.* GT has sent the letter detailing the changes to the Options courses to all candidates. APS alerted the Committee to current and possible problems with the new Options course, Functional and Structural Nanomaterials. Due to the broad scope of the course and the fact that the post-doctoral researchers, who are providing it, are relatively inexperienced in lecturing, he had agreed to give 4 of the lectures. This highlights a future issue; if one or more of the post-docs teaching the course leaves the Department it will be difficult to continue with the course in its present form. The Committee noted this problem and agreed to review the course in July 2003.
- d) *Minute 7b.* The revised regulations concerning third year Options have not been published yet. They are being considered by the E(M)EM Standing Committee.
- e) *Minute 7d.* GT agreed to present details of the Brownie Point scheme at the next meeting. PRW informed the Committee that this topic had also been raised in the Research Policy Committee meeting and that the scheme was in-hand. **Action: GT**
- f) *Minute 8f.* GT informed the Committee that the HoD had been alerted to the fact that there is no academic contact for the EPSC in preparation for the 2004 Institutional Audit.
- g) *Minute 17.* GT informed the Committee that the date for the Corus prize had not been set but that it would be arranged for a day early in Hilary term. **Action: GT**

*The minutes were not available from DC 388, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2002.*

### 4. Divisional AC

- a) *Finals Examination 2002.* On the issue of communication with external examiners in joint schools, the Divisional AC recommended that the Board of Examiners for each joint school should meet annually to decide the arrangements for contacting the external examiners. **Action: GT**
- b) *Payment for examining and camera-ready copy of papers.* All examiners should get paid for examining and for the preparation of camera-ready copy for examination papers. Last year's Chairman of Examiners, JTC agreed to investigate this matter further. **Action: JTC**

- c) *Handing in of coursework and projects.* The EPSC has ruled that all assessed work should be handed in at the Examination schools rather than at Departments. The Committee supported this ruling and the Chair agreed to re-write the Regulations for October 2003.

**Action: GT**

- d) *The Grey Book.* There are proposals to put the Grey Book online.

- e) *School Liaison Officer.* The Division is applying to HEFCE (aspiration) for £70k to provide half the funding for 3 SLO posts (and support posts) within the Division. These posts will be for the Department of Materials (possibly joint with Earth Sciences), Mathematical Sciences, and a Divisional post that will support other subjects and develop a Divisional website. In the discussion that followed, the Committee agreed that the Department's own website, particularly in the Admissions area, should be improved. The Chair agreed to speak to Dr. Paul Warren on this matter. Additionally, AC informed the Committee that the Admissions Prospectus "Studying Materials Science at Oxford University" may also need to be redesigned. The Committee agreed to discuss this matter further in DMAC 16.

**Action: GT**

- f) *Programme Specifications.* The Chair informed the Committee that the EPSC would be examining the Programme Specifications for each course and suggesting uniform format changes to the document in the future.

- g) *Intercollegiate Classes.* The Chair asked the Committee for feedback on such classes as certain Departments at the Divisional AC had stated there were problems meeting the costs of marking for large classes under the current payment scales. In the discussion that followed the Committee agreed that the classes were useful, and indeed were already used for certain elements of the course, ie Options. The Committee also agreed that the higher rate should be paid for such classes but that this was not possible currently unless the Senior Tutors' Committee has ratified the class. The Chair agreed to write to the Senior Tutors' Committee asking for all Options Classes to be ratified so that tutors may claim the higher payment scale.

**Action: GT**

## 5. Second Choice Subject for Applicants

The Chair informed the Committee that Materials Science was now down as a possible second choice option for applicants to Physics and Engineering Science only. The Divisional AC asks for the relevant Committees within Departments to discuss the mechanisms of the process and to report back in HT on possible procedures. It was agreed to ask the Tutors' Committee to discuss this matter further.

**Action: JTC**

## 6. Princeton-Oxford Exchanges (PRW/GT)

PRW informed the Committee that Princeton were strongly in favour of more contacts between the two Departments but felt there should not be straight exchanges of students but that it should be organised on a project/timing basis. Also, PRW presented information on the extra costs to a student at Princeton (DMAC 14/02a), which is currently approx. \$2600. In addition, the student must demonstrate that he/she has a bank balance in excess \$9500. Overall, PRW's paper on this issue emphasised the need for the scheme to have flexibility rather than a predefined straight swap. In the discussion that followed, it appeared this would be difficult to achieve, as the Rhodes fund is available only if an exchange of undergraduates has occurred. However, the Committee was alerted to the presence of a Princeton fund. It was also pointed out that the scheme must run as cost neutral with both Institutions waiving the fees for the incoming visitor. Two options for the scheme were defined:

- An Oxford graduate would exchange with a Princeton graduate student

- A visiting scholar scheme could be investigated with the Princeton student being affiliated to Wolfson.

The Chair agreed to put these proposals to Jenny Nix (Divisional AC Secretary) and to enquire about the Princeton fund. **Action: GT**

## 7. Response to External Examiners

DMAC 14/02 has been tabled for information only.

## 8. Exam Conventions

The Committee agreed to accept the revised Examination Conventions. The main change, in summary, states that the Final Examination consists of two parts and that failure to obtain honours in Part II will result in the awarding of an unclassified BA. The Committee proposed that the incoming Chairmen of Examiners (for Prelims, Part I and Part II) should inform the students of the changes to the Conventions. In future the course handbook will include the conventions for the previous year's examinations. GT agreed to write to the Chairmen. It was also agreed that the Examination Conventions should be placed on the web and the students informed of their location by GT. **Action: GT**

## 9. Teaching

- a) *Paul Butler*. The Chair informed the Committee that Dr. Paul Butler (a visiting scientist) will be in the Department for 2 days a week, over the next two years and was keen to help with teaching; he is already collaborating with Dr. Ian Stone on the Design and Manufacture course. The Committee made the following suggestions for further areas where Dr. Butler's experience could be of substantial benefit.
- Senior Demonstrating in the Practical Classes
  - Team Design Project
  - Engineering Alloys course

In addition College tutors may wish to consider offering Dr. Butler tutorial teaching. GT agreed to put these suggestions to the HoD. **Action: GT**

## 10. Graduate Student Matters (AC)

- a) AC was concerned that graduate students appeared to be given second-class status for the new Options course on Functional and Structural Materials. After some discussion, the Committee agreed, that providing there was enough space, graduate students were entitled to attend any course.
- b) In order to formalise graduate students' requirements re. assessed courses, the Committee agreed the following standard.
- One 'course' for a graduate should consist of 8 lectures, and 2 tutorials worth of work. For those specific post-graduate courses that contained fewer lectures, the lecturers would be asked to adjust the question sheet and/or lecture content (at present this ruling applies to courses given by Dr. Wilkinson and the question sheet on the course given by Dr Northover).
  - The Functional and Structural Nanomaterials course is equivalent to 2 'courses' for a graduate student. Alternatively a student taking any 2 of the 4 question sheets offered could gain a one-course credit.

AC agreed to inform the lecturers in question.

**Action: AC**

**11. Course Content Questionnaire**

This matter was not discussed and will be raised at the next meeting.

**12. Practical Classes (JPN)**

This matter was not discussed and will be raised at the next meeting. JPN asked for any feedback to be emailed to him for discussion at DMAC 15.

**Action: All members**

**13. Any Other Business**

The request from the JCCU for the Industrial Visit to Corus (Sheffield) to take place during term time was discussed. The Committee considered the difficulties this year of arranging a 1-day visit at the usual time, ie either side of full term. It was agreed that the Corus trip could substitute for the termly half-day industrial visit subject to agreement of the Industrial Visits Organiser, Dr. Stone. SGR agreed to liaise with Dr Stone and accompany the students. The lecture list secretary will re-arrange the lectures scheduled for the morning of Weds, in 8<sup>th</sup> week of Hilary term.

**Action: SGR/GT.**

The meeting closed at 6pm.

**The next meeting of the Academic Committee is at 2.00pm, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2003 in the first floor Committee Room of 21 Banbury Road.**