

Oxford University Department of Materials Academic Committee

DMAC 20 Minutes of the Academic Committee held at 2.00 pm on Monday 24th November in the first floor Committee Room of 21 Banbury Road.

Present: GT (Chair), AC, SGR, JMS,

In attendance: LJFJ, JPN.

1. **Apologies:** HEA, APS.

2. **Minutes of DMAC 19**

The minutes were accepted.

3. **Matters Arising**

a) **From DMAC 19, 24th October 2003**

Library Matters – LJFJ is attempting to improve access to the reserve book collection and will inform the students of any fixed hours if and when they become available.

Undergraduate Panel Membership – GT, JMS and APS were nominated as members of the Undergraduate Panel (JCCU).

IT Learning and Teaching Strategy – LJFJ has forwarded the divisional document to PJW (IT committee).

Divisional Learning and Teaching Strategy – LJFJ is preparing the information for Jenny Nix.

Withdrawal from School of Natural Sciences – the Subfaculty has approved the decision to withdraw from the Honour School of Natural Sciences.

b) **From Subfaculty, 10th November 2003**

The Proctors responded to the Chair's query re. the distribution of examination marks. Marks may only be disclosed to the Senior Tutor of a candidate's college, not to tutors or other members of the Subfaculty. This information has been passed on to the Subfaculty.

4. **Membership of DMAC**

SGR has resigned from the Committee with effect from HT 04; he will, however, still produce a review on 3rd year options. The Committee thanked SGR for his work on DMAC. The Chair agreed to ask for nominations from the Subfaculty for a replacement

Action: GT / SGR

5. **Practical Classes**

a) **Attendance Monitoring**

JPN reported that improved monitoring of undergraduate attendance at practicals was in place and that one tutor had already been alerted to a specific problem. The first years were slightly confused re. the marking of practicals, and JPN planned to improve this by ensuring details on how practicals are marked are more widely advertised next year.

b) **Revision of the Practical Schedule for the Refurbished Teaching Lab (outlined in associated paper).**

From MT 04, undergraduates will undertake practicals in a batch system, with half of the class each completing one set of practicals at the same time so that a new practical is started every fortnight. Under the new system, TAs would perform their demonstrating duties for

the term in this fortnight. It was suggested that, as an alternative, TAs should demonstrate for only one of the practicals in the fortnight. TAs will be able to make up any hours this summer testing practicals.

Under this scheme the role of SDs in MT and HT will change considerably becoming much more didactic. It was pointed out that some SDs would find it extremely difficult to spend three afternoons in the Teaching Lab (second-year experiments) in any one week. This problem was left unresolved and will require further discussion.

JMS volunteered the use of transfer function analysers in the undergraduate practicals. The SEM/TEM practicals will be scheduled to run in the original non-batch style during TT. As an alternative to these practicals, it was suggested that the students prepare a metallography folder over the course of the academic year. After some debate, the Committee decided against this proposal. To ensure the new scheduling of practicals is a good fit with the lecture timetable, JPN and GT agreed to liaise over the fine details of the suggestion.

Action: GT/JPN

JPN thanked SGR, PRW and PSG for revising practical handouts.

6. Graduate Admissions Procedures MT 04 (AC)

AC briefed the Committee on upcoming changes to graduate admissions. Departmental, University and College offers will be linked. Divisions bid to Colleges for places, and University Admitting Bodies (UABs) bid to Divisions for a proportion of the places available. There will be four gathered field exercises per year (likely to be around:

31st January – overseas and home students;

April – quota students;

July – fill quota places;

Sept/Oct – project students).

UABs can fill a specified number of places per gathered field, or clearly advertise a disclaimer stating that places may fill up earlier than the final gathered field and that students are encouraged to apply early. AC highlighted two main problems: bidding for places, and judging of self-funded students. UABs have been instructed to judge for places on the basis of academic merit alone. AC recommended that all overseas applicants, over the threshold minimum criteria, be ranked together on this basis, and places awarded accordingly. This would mean the loss of some self-funded students. After much discussion, AC agreed to present the matter to the Subfaculty.

Action: AC

7. Undergraduate Admissions Brochure/SENDA

LJFJ reminded the Committee that they must consider the essential aspects of the course with respect to any SENDA applicants. The Committee agreed that all areas of the course were essential, and, depending on their particular needs, candidates, covered by SENDA, may have a limited number of Part II Projects and industrial visits available to them, but that lectures were accessible, in principle. JPN agreed to examine the accessibility of the practical class, and the number of essential practicals.

Action: JPN

8. Team Design Project

Eleven (out of 23) students completed the survey on the TDP project. Overall students were positive about the project but felt there was too much to do in the time available. HEA, as TDP coordinator, suggested moving the presentation to 4th week. After discussion, the Committee decided to keep the hand-in date for the reports to Tuesday, week 3 with the

presentation on Friday, week 3. The start of the project will be 9am Monday, week 1, although students will have been given a list of projects with descriptions in week 0. Feedback from project supervisors has also been positive, although supervisors were keen to ensure that this teaching job was equally shared around the Subfaculty.

9. Sabbatical Leave 2004-05

Professor Amanda Petford-Long has requested sabbatical leave in MT 04. The courses affected are:

- (i) Introduction to Structure of Materials (1st year);
- (ii) Magnetic Materials, option course (3rd year);
- (iii) TEM Image Interpretation (postgraduate).

The request for sabbatical leave was supported providing the following conditions are met:

- (i) A suitable lecturer is nominated for the first-year course in MT 04;
- (ii) AKP-L teaches the Options Course in HT 05.

AKP-L has already found a replacement lecturer for the postgraduate lecture course (Dr Crispin Hetherington).

Professor Alfred Cerezo has requested sabbatical leave for all of academic year 04/05. The courses affected are:

- (i) Kinetic Theory of Gases (1st year);
- (ii) Phase Transformations & Diffusion (2nd year);
- (iii) half of 3rd year option course, taught with Dr O'Reilly.

The Committee supported the request providing suitable cover can be found:

- for (i) it was agreed the course should be offered to the new QIP-IRC lecturer (to be appointed); **Action: GT**
- for (ii) JMS volunteered to take the course; **Action: JMS**
- for (iii), AC will negotiate with his co-lecturer, Dr O'Reilly, over teaching the whole course that year. **Action: AC**

The remaining teaching responsibilities are concerned with the transferable skills for graduates, which will be covered by the new Director of Studies. **Action: AOT**

10. QAA

The Committee received the divisional paper on the forthcoming audit. JMS requested that the information on student induction is presented to the Tutors' Committee at their next meeting.

Action: LJFJ.

LJFJ reminded the Committee that the Department currently had neither official means of recording undergraduate student complaints and appeals, nor any instructions to undergraduate or postgraduate students on how to complain. The Committee agreed that the procedure for all complaints should be as follows. The first port of call within the Department should be tutors or the new Director of Studies, tutors should refer all complaints directly to the Director of Studies, who will then take appropriate action, consulting with the supervisor, class organiser, and tutor as necessary and referring upwards to the Head of Department and/or Proctors as required. GT/LJFJ agreed to liaise over drafting such guidelines.

Action: LJFJ/GT

[Secretary's note – the EPSC will be producing guidelines on this matter shortly.]

11. EPSC Guidance Notes

The Committee noted the contents of the paper.

12. *Said Business School Conference on Entrepreneurship in Higher Education in the South East

The Committee was alerted to this Conference.

13. *Application for HEFCE Aspiration Funding to Support Widening Access

The Committee received the paper. The SLO had been alerted of its contents.

14. Any Other Business

The Committee considered APS's offer to teach an Advanced Mathematics Options course. However, it was felt that all Option courses should have a large Materials content so a mathematics course was not appropriate.

The meeting closed at 4.35 pm. The next meeting is on Monday February 2nd at 2 pm in 21 BR Committee Room.