

## Oxford University Department of Materials Academic Committee

**DMAC 25 Minutes of the Academic Committee** held at 2.00 pm on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2004 in the first floor Committee Room of 21 Banbury Road.

**Present:** GT, PRW, JMS, JMT, RIT, APS, AOT (Chair).

**In attendance:** LJFJ.

**1. Apologies:** none.

### **2. Report from the Chair of the JCCG (MW)**

Shafiq Ahmed (the JCCG Secretary) attended in place of the current Chair. There were no items to report from the JCCG.

### **3. Report from the Chair of the JCCU (MM)**

The outgoing JCCU Chair, Markus Mittermaier, introduced the incoming Chair, To Chan. The following issues were raised from the MT JCCU meeting.

- ***Access to the Teaching Lab Computer Room.*** Part II students have requested increased access to the Teaching Lab Computer Room. As this room has a unique key it is likely that copies will be given to Part II students on receipt of a suitable deposit. LJFJ agreed to take this action further. **Action: LJFJ**
- ***Examination Timetables.*** The Part I MEM examination timetable in 2004 was organised so that students sat GP2 on Tuesday am, E2 on Tuesday pm, and GP3 on Wednesday am. As well as sitting 3 examinations in 27 hours, the examination subjects varied between Materials and Economics, creating further difficulties as the mental approach to these two different subjects varies enormously. The JCCU Chair requested that this timetable be changed for the examinations in 2005, ideally having fewer examinations in such a short space of time, and ensuring the Economics examination is not sandwiched so tightly between two Materials exams. DMAC agreed that the matter would be brought to the 2004/05 Examiners' attention, but reminded the students that E2 is taken by MEM and EEM students, and the General papers must overlap with ME papers, so there is no guarantee of a successful outcome. **Action: LJFJ**
- ***Freshers' Event.*** A JCCU second year representative is taking the lead in organising the Freshers' event. DMAC reminded the JCCU Chair that early and full liaison with the Department's Administrator and Deputy Administrator (Finance) was very important. No senior representative had yet been identified.
- ***Industrial Tour 2005.*** The tour this year is to Beijing, PR China. A full itinerary has been planned, and sponsorship is currently being sought.
- ***Best Lecturer 2003/04.*** The majority of Department's lecturers received at least one vote. The joint winners were Prof. Grovenor and Dr Wilshaw; the joint runners-up were Prof. Sutton and Dr Sykes. The JCCU would like to present the trophy at the Freshers' Event.

### **4. Minutes of DMAC 24**

The minutes were accepted with minor typographical changes.

## 5. Matters Arising

### From DMAC 22, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2004

*Minute 10* Policy on Lecturing Arrangements. GDWS has been asked to circulate a letter to Subfaculty.

### From DMAC 23, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2004

*Minute 12* Membership of DMAC. PRW will serve one further year on DMAC (vice SGR). RIT & JMT will serve on DMAC in MT 2004 to provide cover for members on leave (HEA, AC). One new member is required from HT 2005 (*vice* APS) and one temporary member for HT & TT 2005 (cover for AC). Membership will be reviewed in DMAC 26.

### From DMAC 24, 7<sup>th</sup> June

*Minute 4* Certificate of Competence in Electron Microscopy (MLJ) A handbook has been prepared, and the paperwork will be forwarded to Division this term.

*Minute 9* Laboratory Class Procedures (AOT). These are under review. The revised system for recording marks and reporting back to tutors that was adopted in HT '04 will be monitored.

## 6. Examination Reports 2004

### *Report from the Chair of Part I MS & MEM 2004, including letter from Chair to HoD*

The Committee noted that General Paper 3 remained a difficult paper for students. A number of possible contributory factors were identified:

- The first year foundation course in Elasticity may not be preparing the students thoroughly for the core course. There is a need to introduce basic information slowly and thoroughly, with key mathematical concepts covered only after the generic material has been taught in the maths lecture course (e.g. matrices). However it was also noted that the Prelims exam performance on material covering mechanical properties was fine.
- GP3 is not wholly reinforced in the Options courses taken in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year. The Options courses are currently under review.
- There is a need to ensure that all students are suitably tutored in this paper. The Committee felt that this is happening but referred the matter to the Tutors' Committee.

As a response to the issues raised the Committee noted that the first cohort of students that would fully benefit from the changes already made to the course in the academic year 2003/04 in order to address similar issues, is the current 3<sup>rd</sup> year which will sit Part I in 2005. However, given the serious concern over paper 3, RIT agreed to lead an informal meeting of the lecturers involved in GP3 to discuss the GP3-specific points further.

**Action: RIT**

The Committee noted that the Chair of Part I highlighted ongoing issues with the Practical Laboratory marks reporting system, and urged the Chair to ensure that the Practical Lab Organiser is maintaining the practical lab marks properly.

**Action: AOT**

After some discussion, the Committee agreed that senior demonstrators should mark practicals on a scale of 0 - 10 rather than alpha, beta, gamma. The Chair agreed to draft written guidelines on this matter and to send them to all Senior Demonstrators.

**Action: AOT**

The Committee noted that the Department of Economics had failed to produce examination reports on time (for either Part I or Part II examinations).

### *Report from the Chair of Part II MS & MEM 2004*

The Committee wholly supported the recommendation by the outgoing Chair of Part II Examinations that Part II students need to strictly adhere to the 15,000 word limit for theses. The Examination Regulations need to be amended to require that students hand-in a signed declaration stating the length of their thesis.

**Action: AOT**

The Committee agreed to recommend to the incoming set of Examiners that a reminder on this Regulation is sent to all Part II students and supervisors (as happened last academic year). It was agreed that any penalties could only be enforced at the Examiners' discretion. It had also been recommended that supervisors be given guidance on what makes a good Part II thesis. The Committee asked the Chair to refer supervisors to the online list of prize winners' theses that are held in the library.

**Action: AOT**

### ***Report from the Chair of Prelims Moderators 2004(Tabled at the meeting)***

The Committee did not review this report. The Chair agreed to review it out of committee.

**Action: AOT**

## **7. Examination Conventions**

The Conventions for 2004/05 need to be updated to reflect the changes made to the course. The Committee recommended the possibility of students being called for Part I vivas also be stated in the Conventions. The Secretary agreed to update the Conventions for approval by the examiners.

**Action: LJFJ**

## **8. Third Year Options: Restructuring Proposal**

The Committee reviewed again the proposed new Options scheme as drafted by Dr Roberts. The Committee did not agree to the suggested route for MEM students and felt that the compulsory items overly increased the students' workload. However, the Committee agreed to refer the matter to the next meeting when it was hoped there would be more time to discuss the matter with Dr Roberts present.

**Action: AOT**

## **9. Chairman's Report**

The Committee noted this paper which highlighted the following issues:

- ***Grad Studies Panel*** JMT (MT only), GDWS, CRMG, & HEA (HT onwards) are the members for 2004/05.
- ***EPSRC DTA-funding*** From 2004/05 the Department receives an increased grant, awarded to allow more than three years funding per student. SMT has decided that this will be distributed evenly amongst the new DTA cohort, giving each of these students 3.5y funding. Only in exceptional circumstances will such students be eligible for a Departmental Continuation Bursary.
- ***BA (Hons) 3 year exit for 4 year degree*** In response to EPSC, a meeting between Materials, Eng Sci & MPS was held during the long vac to discuss this matter. The Department of Materials explanation of why this was not appropriate for a Department which offered only 4y integrated MEng programmes was accepted. Note however that the outcome of continuing national discussions over the Bologna agreement may require the whole question of MSci/MEng type degrees to be revisited.

## 10. Reports from Divisional Committees:

The Divisional Academic Committee, UG Advisory Panel & Graduate Advisory Panel have not met since DMAC 24.

## 11. Team Design Projects – Submission of Topics and guidance on length

DMAC agreed that the guidance on the length of team design project reports should be clarified to read between ‘1000 – 3000 words per team member’, with the upper limit being a strict maximum.

After some discussion, the Committee agreed to the Chair’s suggestion that titles for TDP be sought in HT, and if insufficient titles are supplied, academic members of staff with the least number of Part II students (for the forthcoming academic year) will be asked to act as TDP supervisors.

## 12. Industrial Visits – Self Certification

The Committee agreed that students should be allowed a maximum of one self-certified industrial visit as part of their 4 assessed visits. Self-certification requires a formal letter from the company confirming the date, nature and duration of a visit. At least 2 out of 4 visits must be from the Departmentally-organised visits.

## 13. Any Other Business

- a) ***Amendment to General Scheme 2004/05*** GT requested 16 h of HT lectures be moved into TT to give a more balanced student load. The Committee agreed the Chair should examine the possibility. The Chair reminded the Committee that the General Scheme for the year had been fixed in TT when this issue could and should have been discussed, and that the HT was near completion, but if possible the amendment would be made following liaison with GT and LJFJ. **Action: LJFJ/GT/AOT**
- b) ***General Scheme 2005/06*** GT flagged-up the need to modify the General Scheme for 2005/06 such that all Option Paper 1 courses are taught in HT, as required for MEM students on the new course (current 2<sup>nd</sup> year). These lectures should match the Option Paper 1 list that was published at the end of TT 2004 in order to define those Option Courses currently being given. This latter requirement will enable the current year 2 MS students and the MEM students on the old course (the current third year, who are examined on Option Paper 1 in their 4<sup>th</sup> year, but take some of the lectures in year 3 and some in year 4) to sit a common Option Paper 1 exam in 2006.

The meeting closed at 5.35 pm. The Committee endorsed the Chair’s decision to allow fuller discussion of the items and not to guillotine extended debates during the meeting.

**The date of the next meeting is Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2004 at 2 pm in 21 Banbury Road Conference Room.**