

Oxford University Department of Materials
Academic Committee

DMAC 26 Unconfirmed Minutes of the Academic Committee held at 2.00 pm on Monday 22 November in the first floor Committee Room of 21 Banbury Road

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

In attendance: PMCG

1. **Apologies:** none

2. **Minutes of DMAC 25**

The Committee approved the Minutes of DMAC 25 with the following correction: Under ‘Matters Arising’, *Minute 11* SENDA. The end of sentence three should be altered from ‘and that such items were not a requirement of SENDA’ to read ‘and that such items might not be a requirement of SENDA’.

3. **Matters Arising**

From DMAC 25, 25th October

Minute 3 Access to teaching lab computer room. In progress.

Minute 3 MEM Exam Schedule. The matter was raised at the E(M)EM Standing Committee. The Engineering Science and Materials Sciences Examination Co-ordinators will liaise with the Examination Schools to try to ensure that the Economics paper E2 is rescheduled on a different day from any General Papers.

Minute 6 Matters Arising from DMAC 24, 7th June. Minute 11 SENDA. In progress (AOT) (see also GSAP report). **Action: AOT**

Minute 7 Report from the Chair of Prelims. The Chair reviewed the report. There are no major issues. Paper MS3 had a poor average of 47.2%, but no obvious reasons could be identified for this. Paper MS2 (Properties of Materials) had a good average of 64%, and this should be noted by RIT’s meeting on the poor performance in paper GP3. The average on the maths paper (55.2%) was regarded as acceptable. Other actions in progress:

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|-------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| (i) | Working group on Paper GP3 | Action: RIT |
| (ii) | Practical marks – records and use of 0-10 scale | Action: AOT |
| (iii) | Exam Regs amendment: declaration of Pt II thesis length | Action: AOT |
| (iv) | Guidance to supervisors & students on Pt II theses | Action: AOT |

Minute 8 Update Exam Conventions. In progress **Action: LJFJ**

Minute 12 Shortage of TDP Supervisors. The Committee agreed to adopt the recommendation by Subfaculty that in the event of there being insufficient volunteers to supervise TDP's that the Director of Studies should call on those staff who have not recently supervised a TDP, rather than those who had a lighter Part II supervision load for the year in question. Subfac had stated that supervision of Part II projects is a privilege, and having 2 or 3 Part IIs is not justification for being unwilling to supervise a TDP.

4. **Membership of DMAC**

PRW will serve until the end of TT05 (*vice* SGR). RIT and JMT will serve on DMAC in MT2004 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 and TT 2005 (cover for AC).

In practice, the method for selecting a new member of DMAC is that in consultation with DMAC the Chair asks suitable members of staff if they would be willing to serve. If they agree, these nominations are then put to Subfaculty, who have the opportunity to make further nominations, in which case a vote is held, or to approve the original nominations.

Possible names suggested by the Committee were KAQO'R, JTC, SGR, AKPL and AJW.

APS pointed out that his membership of DMAC was closely associated with other duties (Undergraduate Panel, JCCU, 1st year Leader, 1st year Monitor, Maths Class Organiser, Departmental representative on Earth Sciences SubFaculty). APS suggested either AKPL or AJW as possible replacements. It was agreed that AJW should be asked in the first instance.

Action: AOT

5. DMAC's Response to the Examiners' Reports

The report was sent out with the agenda, for information, but was not discussed at the meeting.

6. Chairman's Report

a) Comments from the Subfaculty on DMAC's Response to the Examiners' Reports

Subfaculty strongly endorsed DMAC's view that it was inappropriate to modify an existing Part I mark one year after it had been awarded. The Part I marks should remain as set after the Part I examination.

b) Other Matters

The Department of Economics wished to discontinue the National Economy course for MEM students in the academic year 2005-2006. The suggested alternative was for MEM students to take the course on Macroeconomics, however this course would be covered in 32 hours as opposed to 16 hours for the National Economy Course. Subfaculty felt it was inappropriate for changes to be made mid-course.

7. Report from the E(M)EM Standing Committee

It was noted that a new Introduction to Economics course was being introduced and that MEM students embarking on Part I of the Final Honours School in or after October 2005 would be examined on the course at the end of their second year. The course consists of 16 hrs of lectures on Microeconomics and 16 hours on Macroeconomics. APS felt that the amount of associated maths and statistics within the new course should be monitored.

8. Report from the EMS Standing Committee

The EMS Standing Committee agreed that as there was only one student in the second year on the EMS course, consideration should be given to allowing the student to undertake materials practicals alongside materials students. This has been organised.

9. Amendment to General Scheme for 2004/05

The Committee was satisfied with the amendment to the General Scheme as outlined in the tabled paper.

10. Reports from Divisional Committee

a) Academic Committee

b) UG Studies Advisory Panel

SENDA The Division will take forward compliance issues with the University. The Engineering Department is being proactive and introducing their own measures – they have not yet received any guidance from the University.

c) Graduate Studies Advisory Panel

In 2005 there will be QA checks (external to the University) to ensure that the new Code of Practice for graduate students is being adhered to.

11. Third Year Options Restructuring

SGR outlined the proposed scheme to group third year MS and MEM options courses into blocks. MS students would take two out of three block options (A - Metals and Alloys, B - Functional and Nanocomposite Materials, C - Non metallic Materials). There would be a fourth non-optional block D, to include the Team Design Project and Characterisation of Materials Course.

As a result of the unexpected controversy expressed on this topic at DMAC 25, AOT also tabled a paper with an alternative model for option blocks scheduling, including the removal of the requirement for MEM to take the Characterisation course and limiting its content to 30 contact hours, and giving a summary of the student load for MS and MEM under the various schemes. However, this model was not favoured by the Committee who felt students were likely to choose automatically block A (given in MT) and then select one of blocks B & C (given in HT) rather than making a free choice. In addition, the subject matter of block A would not be available as a choice for MEM students. It was agreed not to pursue this alternative model further.

The Committee returned to discuss the SGR proposal. The following points were raised:

GT felt MEM students would be at a disadvantage as they would only attend the lectures in HT, therefore missing the first half of any block that had been taught in MT. RIT was of the opinion that the courses could be taught in such a way that they could 'stand alone' so MEM students would not be at a disadvantage. The lectures would need to be taught so that HT lectures were not dependent on MT lectures.

There was extensive discussion on whether or not to adopt the characterisation block. It was agreed early on in the discussion that MEM students would not take this block, so the discussion centred on MS students. Strong views on the extra load were expressed by GT, PRW and RIT. SGR felt students would not be overburdened as the course would fit into a defined two-week slot. It would also mean students doing some experimental work in their 3rd year, which is not currently the case.

The availability of choice of exam questions was discussed. Under the present system students take at best five out of the eight options and occasionally only three. Based on the assumption that students take five options under the current system, the real choice of exam questions at present is three from five (60%). It was agreed that under the new system MS students would choose four from six questions (67%) having attended all six courses. It was agreed that MEM students would choose two from three questions. There was concern expressed about the limitations of two from three for MEM students.

There was then a vote on whether the new SGR options blocking proposal should be taken forward, including the Characterisation option. Votes cast were as follows: PRW – no, GT – no, JMS – yes, APS – yes, JMT – yes, AOT – yes, RIT – abstain (concerned over increased workload). It was therefore agreed to take the proposal forward.

At this point, AOT noted that, as suggested by DMAC during the earlier discussions, the views of JCCU would be sought and that it would be necessary for the content of the characterisation course to be fleshed out. The issue would then be put to the Subfaculty and this would provide a further opportunity to withdraw the characterisation course if objections over the increased load dominated the desire to include the Characterisation topics in the course.

12. Any Other Business

No items were raised

13. Date of the next Meeting – 2pm, Monday 2 February, 21 BR CR