

## Oxford University Department of Materials Academic Committee

**DMAC 27 Minutes of the Academic Committee** held at 2.00 pm on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2005 in the first floor Committee Room of 21 Banbury Road.

**Present:** GT, PRW, JMS, AJW, HEA, AOT (Chair).

**In attendance:** LJFJ.

**1. Welcome:** The Committee welcomed Dr Angus Wilkinson.

**2. Apologies:** none.

**3. Minutes of DMAC 26:** accepted.

**4. Report from the Chair of the JCCU**

- a) **The Freshers' Event** held in Michaelmas term was very successful and made a profit of £250. This profit is being credited to the Industrial tour 2005 to Beijing.
- b) **Lecture Questionnaires.** Two courses, the Elasticity first and second year courses, were highlighted for their poor feedback whilst the rest of the courses were generally good. In particular the students feel if the first year course was improved, the students would have greater understanding which would mean the second year course would not be such a challenge. The JCCU Chair asked that three points be considered:
- (i) the content of the course remains the same but the course is extended by two lectures.
  - (ii) a list of nomenclature is given at the start of the course, and efforts are made to reconcile lecture notes with course material.
  - (iii) the lectures are after the relevant Maths lectures and with the lectures spread out to enable students to grasp concepts as the course progresses.
- Dr Taylor (GT), the lecturer of the course, agreed the course was rushed and needed more lectures in order to cover more worked examples and all the course material fully. After much discussion, DMAC agreed to the following actions:

- The course will be extended from 6 lectures to 8 lectures in length.
  - GT/AJW will liaise with LJFJ over scheduling to ensure the lectures map onto the Maths course correctly.
- Action: LJFJ / GT /AJW**

The discussion continued onto the second year Elasticity course. The Committee predicted that the actions implemented for the first year course would have a knock-on effect on the 2<sup>nd</sup> year course but in addition, the following actions were agreed:

- The course should be scheduled after the Tensors course.
- Subject to the results of the GP3 Working Party (led by Dr Todd), the course would be extended by 2 hours with no increase in material.

- c) **Practical Classes** A request had been submitted by the JCCU to submit word-processed practical reports. This had been discussed at much length at the JCCU where the current Practical Class Organiser, Dr Peter Northover, had not been against the suggestion providing the results were clearly written in the lab book by hand. Many students currently word-process the first draft of their reports as they find this easier. They then have to copy their answers out longhand, and feel this represents wasted effort.

DMAC was concerned that word-processed reports would make plagiarism much easier to perform. The possibility of submission of both the hard and electronic copy was suggested

to enable electronic checks to be made for plagiarism using appropriate software. However, this would place a new administrative burden on whoever will be responsible for the collection and checking of the work. After further discussion, it was agreed that JMS would look into the possibility of software to help check against plagiarism. Additionally, AOT and AJW (as next academic year's Practical Class Organiser) would meet to discuss whether a simple system / solution could be found re the submission of word-processed reports in electronic and hard copy format. DMAC also reminded students that practical write-ups were not meant to be overly long and that they should always try to keep them within the word limit and as concise as possible. **Action: AOT / JMS / AJW**

- d) **The Industrial Tour** The tour is being organised by Katie Moore and To Chan and will be to Beijing in 9<sup>th</sup> week of term. Four industrial visits will take place on the tour. The overall cost per student is currently £475 but this should lower with more sponsorship to come. The Committee praised the two organisers for their hard work.

## 5. Report from the Chair of the JCCG

Miles Waring has come to the end of his term of Chairmanship of the JCCG, Kat Smart has been elected as the new Chair. The Committee thanked Miles for all his work during the past year.

## 6. Shortened Minutes

## 7. \*Matters Arising

From DMAC 26,

### Minute 4 Matters Arising from DMAC 25:

#### \*Minute 7

- (i) **Working group on Paper GP3 (RIT)** - in progress.
- (ii) **Practical marks** – records and use of 0-10 scale. The Practical Class Organiser has been asked to implement this from the beginning of Hilary term 2005.
- (iii) **Exam Regs amendment: declaration of Pt II thesis length** - in progress.
- (iv) **Guidance to supervisors & students on Pt II theses** - in progress.

**\*Minute 5 DMAC Membership.** Dr Angus Wilkinson and Dr Keyna O'Reilly have been asked to join DMAC with effect from HT and TT '05, respectively. Dr O'Reilly is currently on maternity leave.

**\*Minute 11(a) Academic Committee Programme Specifications** – in progress.

**8. \*Plagiarism**

The Committee were asked to read the current advice to students and send in comments on the appropriate style for the formatting of references to the Chair.

**9. Divisional Academic Committee (GT)**

- **Review of Mathematics Faculty.** The practice in the Mathematics Faculty of classifying both the 3-year and 4-year degree is still raising concerns in the wider University.
- **Computing Science** has requested the initiation of a four year course. Permission will be granted on the provision that no more staff need be employed and that student numbers do not increase.
- **Programme Specifications** It has been suggested that Divisional Academic Committee no longer reviews programme specifications, this becoming an administrative task between Departments and the appropriate Divisional Officer (Jenny Nix).
- **Marking Graduate Course** Social Sciences has suggested that graduate courses throughout the University are marked /85, with a distinction given at 70. The MPS Division has rejected this proposal. They wish to see a standard with courses being marked /100, pass mark 50, and distinction given at 70.
- **Working Party on Academic Career Management** The Division has recognised the need for a professional Director of Studies, and has even mooted the idea that such a person be Chair of examiners. Other areas that could be improved were: improved use of teaching time by revision of load, appraisal every year, performance reviews, merit awards for outstanding lecturers, review of the College appointment system.

**10. \*Third Year Option Reform**

The Chair informed the Committee that the paper represented the final agreed reform of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year option course. JCCUs representatives would be asked to comment on the suggested changes. HEA wished the Committee to note that the Polymer section had been expanded in the new system compared to the current lecture course choices. The Chair also clarified that the Characterisation block would be examined by coursework.

**11. Examination Conventions - MS and MEM.**

The MEM Conventions were submitted to the Committee for information only (the EMEM SC has official responsibility for these). The Committee made a minor amendment to the MS Conventions. Section (3) Marking of Papers, final paragraph, end sentence at "...for these papers".

(HEA left the meeting).

**12. Advice on Part I vivas and Class Boundaries – via the EPSC and Richard Hughes)**

- a) The Committee discussed the paper presented on this matter. The advice given agreed that as the ability to set vivas was within the Examination Regulations then it was appropriate to consider the option, despite the general advice from the EPSC to move away from vivas. It was reported that the current Part I external examiner did not require them.
- b) There was much discussion over the guidance concerning class boundaries.

**13. Election of new Undergraduate Panel**

PRW was elected to the Undergraduate Panel.

#### 14. Submission of Examination Questions

The Committee agreed that the delivery of questions from lecturers on sabbatical needed to be clarified. It was agreed that the Head of Department should ensure that the lecturer applying for had made appropriate arrangements for the setting of exam questions for the period for which they request leave. If this task is taken on by the stand-in lecturer, then the sabbatical lecturer must be prepared to make him/herself available to the replacement question setter to ensure that the questions are set appropriately. AOT agreed to check with the Head of Department to ensure this request was reasonable and that such arrangements could be made. **Action: AOT**

#### 15. AOB

- a) **Consultation on Library (CONFIDENTIAL).**
  
- b) **CETL in 'Preparation for Academic Practice'** The Chairman informed the Committee that the University had received a HEFCE grant of £3.3M over 5 years to support a Centre of Excellence in Teaching & Learning. This will assist in the training of Post-docs and Grad students to become the next generation of Academics and covers funds for hardware, including it is hoped a web-cast video link between Begbroke and Parks Road, and for buy-out of staff time.

The meeting closed at 5.30 pm.

**The date of the next meeting is Monday 28<sup>th</sup> February at 2 pm in 21 Banbury Road Conference Room.**