

## Oxford University Department of Materials Academic Committee

**DMAC 29 Minutes of the Academic Committee** held at 2.00 pm on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2005 in the first floor Committee Room of 21 Banbury Road.

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

**In attendance:** LJFJ, To Chan (Chair of the JCCU), Kat Smart (Chair of the JCCG).

1. **Welcome:** The Committee welcomed Kat Smart, the new Chair of the JCCG Committee.
2. **Apologies:** JMS.
3. **Minutes of DMAC 27 & DMAC 28.** The minutes were approved.
4. **JCCU Matters**

The JCCU Chair reported on the following matters:

- a) **Questionnaires** The results of the lecture questionnaires were mostly of a high standard. However, there were a low number of returns for a number of lecture courses, in particular those taught by Dr Wilshaw. The Committee asked Dr Wilshaw to ensure that students were given time to complete the questionnaires during the first five minutes of the last lecture of the course, and were alerted to its presence within the lecture handouts. AOT also agreed to remind other lecturers of this commitment. **Action : AOT**
- b) **Practicals** There were no current issues with the practicals. JCCU representatives are currently collating feedback on the first year of operation of the new batch practicals system.
- c) **Part II Project Management Forms** It was requested that the final two project management forms are reviewed. The final form is too descriptive, and acts solely as an executive summary. It needs to be better designed to act as a checklist on aims highlighted on previous project management forms. The Committee agreed that the Part II Organiser should review the forms. LJFJ agreed to liaise with the current Part II Organiser. **Action: LJFJ**
- d) **Best Lecturer Competition** This competition will be run as in previous years, with first years having one vote; second years, two; and third years, three. The prize will be awarded at the MT Freshers' Event.
- e) **Easter Vacation Industrial Tour** The final tour cost to participants is approximately £320 per head. All participants greatly enjoyed the experience. Further information, and a full report, can be found on the following website:  
<http://www.materials.ox.ac.uk/teaching/tour.html>. One of the first year representatives has volunteered to organise the next tour to Moscow. A preliminary proposal is being drawn up to examine the feasibility such a trip. The Chair of DMAC expressed concern over the feasibility of taking a tour to Russia with only one native speaker and no local contact. The Committee thanked both To Chan and Katie Moore for their organisation of the Beijing Trip.
- f) **IAP and the Oxford Materials Dinner** Recruits to attend the IAP lunch were being sought. Dates had been suggested for the dinner.

## 5. JCCG Matters

The JCCG Chair reported to the Committee on the following matters:

- a) **The Annual Graduate Student Questionnaire** The questionnaire has been slightly revised this year. It will be sent out during the Trinity term and the returns reviewed over the Long Vacation.
- b) **IAP** Recruits to attend the IAP lunch were being sought.
- c) **Graduate Summer BBQ** This event will be held on the 5<sup>th</sup> July.
- d) **Oxford Materials Society** Sarah Haigh has volunteered to be the link between the graduate students and the Oxford Materials Society.

## 6. Shortened Minutes

### 7. Matters Arising

**From DMAC 24:**

*Minute 11 SENDA.* In progress

**From DMAC 27**

*Minute 7 Matters Arising:*

*7(a)(i) Working group on paper GP3 (RIT)* – In progress

*7(c) Programme Specifications on the Web* – In progress.

**Action: LJFJ**

*Minute 8 Plagiarism* No comments have yet been received by AOT. **Action: DMAC members**

**From DMAC 28**

*Minute 8 Chairman's Report Submission of Exam Questions.* The HoD has agreed to Subfac's suggestions.

## 8. Review of Programme Specifications

An annual review of the programme specifications is required by the EPSC and Division. The Chair asked the Committee for their view on how the review should be organised. After some discussion it was agreed that the programme specifications should be reviewed and updated by the Director of Studies, with input from the Undergraduate Panel. It is anticipated that the undergraduate panel's input can be provided via email. The Committee decided against using the programme specifications as a basis for annual course review.

## 9. Tutors' Committee

The Secretary reported on the Tutors' Committee on the behalf of the Chair of the Tutors' Committee (currently Dr Czernuszka):

- a) **Collections** The Committee were informed that the tutors were continuing with the semi—centralised organisation of the College collections. It had been agreed that a new rota of setters would be drawn up from the tutors, one for each term and cohort. New papers will not be set each term, rather a central stock of papers will be modified on a termly basis. The Chair of the Tutors' Committee requested that tutors' returned marks promptly to the Deputy Administrator (Academic). After some discussion over keeping track of tutors' responsibilities, it was suggested that a new Tutors' page be constructed on the Department website to keep tutors' up to date with teaching commitments and deadlines. The Secretary agreed to liaise with Dr Paul Warren, IT Manager, over this. **Action: LJFJ**
- b) **Practicals**

- c) **Electronic Marks feedback system** The Secretary informed the Committee that on the tutors' behest she would be consulting with Dr Warren over the possible development of an electronic marks reporting system. It was noted that Maths already use a web-based system for reporting to colleges. AOT asked whether DMAC wished to continue the current system of marking the work for Option classes, or do as the Engineering Science Department has and stop marking option class work, simply reporting absences from classes to colleges and providing model solutions on their website to enable the students to self-assess. The Committee wished to retain the "tutorial feel" of Option classes and ensure that students' work is marked and reported back to colleges.

## 10. Review of 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Options Marking Scheme

The Committee agreed that the Characterisation element of the new 3<sup>rd</sup> year option course scheme should be allocated 50 marks (the same amount that is allocated to the team design project). This would mean the total Part I mark for Materials Science would be 800 marks. After some consideration, the Committee allocated a further 50 marks to the MS Part II mark to raise it to 400 marks and thus retain a similar balance to that at present between Part I & II contributions to the final degree mark, making a total of 1200 marks for the complete degree, with the split between Part I: Part II being 800:400.

## 11. Preliminary Examination Conventions

The Conventions were accepted.

## 12. General Scheme 2005/06

AOT advised the Committee that a similar level of teaching would continue to be bought in by the Department, through the use of post-doctoral researchers and visitors. This aims to maintain as much relief as possible for the Department's academic staff, whilst maintaining standards. The Committee welcomed the decision.

The Chair informed the Committee that Dr Kirkland had requested that the first year Thermodynamics course be taught over Michaelmas and Hilary term, rather than wholly in Michaelmas term. Dr Kirkland feels that the students need more time to absorb the 16 lecture course. Twelve lectures will be taught in Michaelmas term, and the four on electrochemistry in Hilary. The Secretary reminded the Committee that the course is also taken by 2<sup>nd</sup> year EMS students. She agreed to check with the Department of Engineering Science that the EMS timetable could accommodate the change. The Committee agreed the change subject to confirmation that this was acceptable to Engineering Science. **Action: LJFJ**

There was some discussion over the scheduling of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year Options courses. Under the new MEM regulations, it is necessary to change the scheduling of Option course lectures before 2006/07. Paper 2 should be taught wholly within Michaelmas term and Paper 1 within Hilary term. The Committee remained undecided as to how the scheduling of the courses should be changed for 2005/06. It was suggested that instead of implementing the change fully straight away, it could be phased in with those courses that are amenable to change being rescheduled for 2005/06. The Chair agreed to further investigate the issue. **Action: AOT**

The draft general scheme for 2005/06 was presented, noting that lecturers were still required for two courses:

- 1<sup>st</sup> year Polymer synthesis – suggestions were requested for the 1<sup>st</sup> year polymer synthesis course. DMAC was unable to suggest a suitable person, at which point HEA offered to swap one of her 2nd year courses for this course if after best efforts we were still unable to find a suitable lecturer.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> year Magnetic Properties – A response from Dr Laura Lauro-Taroni was awaited. [*Dr. Amit Kohn has now agreed to teach this course.*]

### 13. Divisional Academic Committee

There was no meeting.

### 14. Chairman's Report

- Team Design Project 2005** Three academic staff have volunteered projects so far. The Committee noted that the current second year is relatively small in student numbers, meaning that four projects is likely to be sufficient to provide suitable sized teams. As had been decided by the Subfaculty, those members of academic staff who had not recently supervised a team design project will be asked to provide one by AOT if no further volunteers are found.
- DMAC Membership** Dr Keyna O'Reilly has agreed to stand for election to DMAC at the next Subfaculty Meeting (week 5, Trinity term).
- Centre of Excellence in Teaching & Learning** The Departments of Materials, Physics, and Mathematics are the lead MPS participants in the CETL. The Centre aims to provide training to graduate students and post-doctoral researchers in teaching methods and practice. It is hoped that the trainees can be used to reduce load on academic staff, for example perhaps taking tutorials for those tutorial fellows over stint, taking lecture courses for some of those with above average departmental teaching loads and acting as SD's for certain practical classes. The intention in our Department is that academics offered such assistance will be asked to provide a few hours training and mentoring to the scheme in return for relief from considerably more hours of teaching, thus giving a significant net release of time.
- IOM<sup>3</sup> Accreditation Visit** The date has been set for 9<sup>th</sup> November 2005. The accreditation party will arrive on the evening of 8<sup>th</sup> November and will be hosted at a meal.
- Writing Skills of Undergraduate Students** Professor Cockayne has commented that the writing skills of the current undergraduates are not at a high enough standard. The Committee requested more information re. the comment, and felt that the Part II is designed to enhance the writing skills of students. It was stated that if the balance of students from different backgrounds changes this problem may increase.

The Committee noted that PRW had now finished his 'temporary' stint as a member of DMAC and thanked him for standing-in for the last two years.

The meeting closed at 4.20 pm.

**The date of the next meeting is Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June at 2 pm in 21 Banbury Road Conference Room.**