

Oxford University Department of Materials Academic Committee

DMAC 30 Minutes of the Academic Committee held at 2.00 pm on Monday 6th June 2005 in the first floor Committee Room of 21 Banbury Road.

Present: KAQO'R, AJW, GT, HEA, JMS, AOT (Chair).

In attendance: LJFJ (Secretary), Prof. Patrick Grant (for item 6) & Dr Peter Northover for Item 8.

- 1. Welcome:** The Committee welcomed Dr Keyna O'Reilly as a new member of DMAC.
- 2. Apologies:** PRW.
- 3. Minutes of DMAC 29.** The minutes were approved.
- 4. Shortened Minutes of DMAC 29**

5. 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. **This item is now closed** (the sections on plagiarism in the course handbooks will remain as originally drafted)

From DMAC 28

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

From DMAC 29

Minute 4 JCCU

Matters: Questionnaires. AOT will remind lecturers of this requirement at the beginning of MT.

Part II Project management forms LJFJ has discussed this with the present Part II Organiser.

Minute 9 Tutors' Committee:

Collections LJFJ has discussed this with the IT Manager.

Practicals. AOT will reinforce during the handover from the current PCO to the new PCO in the long Vacation.

Minute 12 General Scheme: LJFJ is liaising with Jane Frew from Eng. Sci over the Thermodynamics course. The outcome will be decided once it is known whether there are to be any 2nd year EMS students next year. The possible delivery of the Option courses is being investigated. [Secretary's note: Jane Frew (Academic Administrator, Engineering Science) agreed to the scheduling change (12 lectures in MT and 4 in HT). AIK requested that the first 12 lectures of the Thermodynamics course are taught in weeks 1-6 of MT. This has been timetabled. The Options courses have been partially split to be taught in different terms. In

Michaelmas term, 6 × Paper 2 course and 2 × Option Paper 1 courses are taught, with the opposite in Hilary term.]

6. Teaching of Steel-making (JMS / AIK / PSG DMAC 30/2)

Prof. Angus Kirkland sent his apologies at being unable to discuss this matter at DMAC. His full lecture notes have been assessed by the Chair of DMAC prior to the meeting. During the course revisions that took place in HT 04, the Extraction Metallurgy course was deleted from the core course, with part of the information being embedded (steel making) in the Thermodynamics first year course, and the Engineering Alloys (Paper 4) second year course. However this academic year, due to a number of reasons, this handover did not occur fully and some of the material had to be covered by Dr Sykes in two extra second year lectures. (In the last academic year (03/04) Dr Sykes had embedded these lectures in the Engineering Alloy course.

The Committee agreed that the thermodynamics of steel and iron-making, the blast furnace and applied steel-making should be covered in the MEng course. Profs. Grant and Kirkland agreed to meet and discuss how best to cover the materials between the two courses and DMAC asked that AIK consider the possibility of basing more of the thermodynamics examples on the blast furnace and that PSG consider the inclusion of compositional control in steelmaking. If possible, the inclusion of some discussion of slags & impurities was also thought to be worthwhile. JMS agreed to provide his two additional lectures to Prof. Grant to review, in order for part of this information to be assimilated into the Engineering Alloys course. Detailed course synopses would be sent to the Committee for re-approval (via email before the next Committee meeting).

Action: JMS / PSG / AIK / Committee

7. Review of Industrial Visits (ICS DMAC 30/3)

Dr Ian Stone (the Industrial Visits Organiser) presented a review paper on the implementation of the new, assessed industrial visits programme. The Committee thanked Dr Stone for his work and acknowledged that the job of Industrial Visits Organiser had developed into one that required a significant amount of work for the person in question.

During the discussion several matters arose that required action.

- i. **Day of visits.** As the majority of students on the visits will be 2nd or 3rd year Part I students, it was agreed that where possible visits should take place on Thursdays or Fridays in term-time to avoid clashing with the Part I practical classes.
- ii. **EMS student attendance.** LJFJ agreed to check whether the current Part I and Part II EMS students had chosen the IV option over an industrial placement. **Action: LJFJ** *[Secretary's Note: Jane Frew (Academic Administrator, Engineering Science) informed the Secretary that the EMS students do not need to choose their option until Michaelmas term of 4th year.]*
- iii. **In order to address the problem of limited visits and high student numbers,** students will be advised that as of the academic year 2005/06, if they attend a visit, they **must** submit a report on it. A non-submittal, without extenuating circumstances, will result in a **non-satisfactory** grade. Dr Stone agreed to examine the possibility of a rota for the students to participate on visits, and the possible introduction of deadline by which students should have submitted 3 visit reports.
- iv. **Report Length.** A word limit of 400 words, plus a maximum of 2 diagrams (if appropriate) will be set as of next academic year. The word count must be included on the report.

- v. **Company type.** Dr Stone was advised to look at as many different materials / engineering companies as possible.
- vi. **Submission of reports.** It was agreed that the IVO should continue to log attendance on visits and subsequent report submission, and assess the reports. After assessment, the reports will be stored with the PCT. The PCO is responsible for ensuring that the information on report submissions is passed on tutors (at the same time as information on other aspects of practical class attendance).
- vii. **A maximum of 2 assessed visit reports from any combination of self-organised visits, industrial tour or summer placement** was agreed.
- viii. **The new second year in Michaelmas term 2005** will be warned of the importance of attending visits regularly.

Dr Stone, LJFJ and AOT agreed to re-write the course handbooks rules on Industrial Visits and submit it to the Committee for approval (via email). **Action AOT / LJFJ / ICS**

8. Practical Review – Chairman’s Report from Subfac & PCO & Student Feedback

The Chair reported that the Subfaculty had reviewed the new Practical system and agreed that it was working well and should be retained. There were a few issues regarding the timing of practicals with respect to lecture courses, but overall the system was well-liked by both staff and students, and the enhanced familiarity of the TAs with each practical was highlighted as a specific plus point. A number of further issues regarding the Practical were then discussed by the Committee as follows.

- i. **Practical Questionnaires.** It was suggested that rather than assess practicals on an individual basis, a termly questionnaire could be used. It was agreed that the JCCU would be canvassed on this proposal. Concern over the timing of 1P4, as expressed in the questionnaire returns, was noted but the committee recognised that in this case it was not possible to timetable the lectures in advance of the practical. In order to manage the students’ expectations, the PCO and/or SD should ensure that the rationale behind timetabling this practical in advance of the lectures and of limiting the amount of ‘spoon-feeding’ available from the SD is outlined during the briefing.

Action: LJFJ/AJW/PRW

- ii. **Marking and Attendance at Practical.**
- iii. **Mitigating Circumstances.** The Committee agreed that in the batch system of practicals, the students need to be responsible for providing evidence of illness, or other mitigating circumstances, to the Practical Lab if they miss a session. Their attendance at practicals will be logged by the PCT. Any absence due to a mitigating circumstance must be logged with the PCT via a self-certificate (initialled by the College tutor) or a medical note. The PCO will then pass these on to the Examiners and advise them of the action taken. The PCO is responsible for taking action on those students that provide no evidence of mitigating circumstances. This includes informing Colleges and tutors in good time.
- iv. **Examination Regulations Amendment.**

9. Chairman’s Report

- a) **Subfaculty**
Keyna O’Reilly was elected *nem con* to DMAC.
Review of new practical course reported as separate agenda item.
- b) **Other Matters**

The Committee was asked to confirm that it was happy for the Chairmen of DMAC & Subfac to complete the annual EPSC QAA template on its behalf each year. This was confirmed.

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

- a) **Statistical Methods in Economics.** The lecturer is retiring and the last cohort able to sit the examination will be 2006 Part II students. The Faculty have yet to decide on a replacement course.
- b) **Introduction to Management Examination.** There was some confusion by 3rd year students as to how the questions will be set now that E&M and E(M)EM students take the same examination. Dr Kate Blackmon feels there are no differences between the questions and has released a set to pass onto tutors and students alike. *[Secretary's Note: the students were informed of this before the MI Examination.]*
- c) **Examination Timetable 2006.** The Introductory Economics paper is usually sat on Monday pm of week 9. The Committee considered relief to 2nd year MEM students to ensure they have time to revise. The PCO, AJW agreed to look at the possibility of scheduling MEM practicals in weeks 1-6 during trinity term. TAOT agreed to remind tutors that 2nd year MEM students would sit a Part I examination in week 9 of Trinity term.

Action: AOT / AJW

11. *Report from EMS Standing Committee

There are no items to report.

12. Divisional Academic Committee

The Chairman of the Subfaculty (GT) reported on the following issues from the Div Ac Meeting.

- i. **Skills Training.** Funds remain for post-graduate skills training (see 15(a) for more detail).
- ii. **The CETL** is ongoing.
- iii. **SENDA.** The University is in discussions re. the implementation of SENDA, and in particular the lack of onus on a student to declare their disability immediately.

13. Review of Undergraduate Statistics

The statistics were received by the Committee. There were no points of discussion.

14. *Report from Divisional Undergraduate Studies Advisory Panel

The Proctors & EPSC are encouraging all Departments to adopt qualitative descriptors of classifications¹ and to include these in Exam Conventions. MPS has suggested that they are also included in course handbooks. DMAC will consider these descriptors in MT 05 when reviewing the Exam Conventions.

¹ For example: 1st – The candidate shows excellent problem solving skills and excellent knowledge of the material over a wide range of topics, and is able to use that knowledge innovatively and/or in unfamiliar contexts.

Pass – The candidate shows some limited grasp of basic material over a restricted range of topics, but with large gaps in understanding. There need not be any good quality answers, but there will be indications of some competence.

[Chair's note: The application of such descriptors is not necessarily compatible with the instruction that we have to adhere to rigid mark boundaries between classes. One way to reconcile the two is to use the descriptors to aid the decision of the Examiners on scaling of

marks, thus giving the appropriate mark for the descriptor. Obviously the descriptors could also be used as an aid to constructing and apportioning marks to individual graded questions.]

15. *Report from Divisional Graduate Studies Advisory Panel

- a) 'Roberts' skills training money is now being received and after top-slicing for University-wide and MPS-wide provision is being distributed to Departments. The scheme is phasing-in, but when at steady state (from 2005/06 onwards) the University will receive funding for each RC or Welcome sponsored researcher (PGR students in years 1-3, CRS while on contract). The audited deliverable for this will be 2 weeks pa attendance at skills training courses – which include events such as our Project Mgt workshop for new PGR, the UK Grad School Residential Course for 2nd or 3rd year PGR, Insight into Management Course.
- b) Regulations now stipulate that PGR students are entitled to a 2nd attempt at Transfer of Status and at Confirmation of Status should their first attempt(s) be unsuccessful.
- c) Regulations on appointment of Examiners for research degrees have been modified to include explicit guidance on suitability in terms of the extent to which the person has links with the candidate, his work or the Department.

An interim review of the new Grad Admissions process has been held – The Division made a fairly damning submission, we now await the report (apparently this has been considered at Council and no doubt will filter down to DGS's in due course).

16. AOB

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 5.20 pm.

The date of the next meeting is Monday 24th October at 2 pm in the Wolfson Meeting Room.