

## Oxford University Department of Materials Academic Committee

**DMAC 33 Minutes of the Academic Committee** held at 2.00 pm on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2006 in the Wolfson Meeting Room.

**Present:** KAQO'R, GT, JMS, CRMG, AOT (Chair).

**In attendance:** LJFJ (Outgoing Secretary), ICS (Secretary), Sarah Haigh (JCCG Chair), Semjon Terehov (JCCU Chair).

### 1. Apologies

AJW, HEA. ICS was welcomed to the committee as the incoming Secretary.

### 2. Report from the Chair of the JCCG (SH)

The 1<sup>st</sup> year graduate students wished it to be noted that they were upset that the date of the 1<sup>st</sup> year vivas had been brought forward at relatively short notice, particularly given that they had been given strict instructions at the beginning of the academic year to keep the original dates clear in their diaries. The committee noted this, but pointed out that week 5 was common to the new and old arrangements – thus students for whom weeks 3 & 4 were inconvenient could be accommodated in week 5.

### 3. Report from the Chair of the JCCU (ST)

#### i. Maths

ST reported that 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year maths tends to be hard. AOT reminded the meeting that DMAC had already resolved that its UG panel would be asked to review the course. It was noted that course feedback questionnaires were in contrast to JCCU's earlier complaints. Discussion at JCCU confirmed that the 1<sup>st</sup> years were now happy with the maths teaching and had no complaints. It was agreed that a broad review of the maths provision should go ahead nonetheless. Catherine Bishop is now the Maths classes organiser, and will lead the panel reviewing the course. Prof Woodhouse (Earth Sci) will be invited to contribute to the review.

JCCU requested that maths tutorials have more questions that do not need calculators, as practice for the exam, in which calculators are not allowed. This will be considered by the review panel.

#### ii. Quantum Statistical Mechanics

The course now given by Dr Jason Smith (JaMS) has changed compared with that given previously by Prof Adrian Sutton. AOT stated that reports at JCCU indicated that the course seems to have been stepped up to too high a level (quantity & depth of coverage). One tutor also commented that there were a number of mistakes in the question sheets and worked examples. AOT will discuss the course with JaMS, and a small group of tutors will be gathered to review the course content in order to determine if there is a problem. The working group will be asked to report in time for the current 2<sup>nd</sup> year to be informed by week 8 TT06 of which aspects of the course and course notes will be examinable for Part I.

**Action: AOT**

#### iii. Elasticity

Two extra lectures had been added to the 1<sup>st</sup> year course and DMAC recommended that this arrangement be retained in subsequent years.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> year course is considered to be difficult and many students do not attend it. GT is giving the course this year for the final time, and DMAC were of the view that the course is likely to be reviewed given this natural break. KAQOR reported that AJW had expressed an interest in teaching a course which combined the current Tensors and Elasticity courses given their natural relationship.

DMAC considered that the non-attendance at difficult lecture courses had an impact on the students' understanding of related courses, and that students were often unaware of the interrelationship between courses. JMS suggested that the construction of a flow sheet showing the feeding of each lecture course into other lecture courses might be an effective method of aiding students to realise the interrelationships between courses. AOT recommended if such a flow chart was constructed then it should come with a "health warning" because it would not be possible to reflect all of the detailed links between courses. AOT and LJFJ both indicated that a flow chart of this nature could be useful as an aid to timetabling. The maths review panel will be producing a guidance note to indicate some of the key materials topics which the various maths topics underpin.

#### iv. Nanomaterials Option

JCCU consider the part of the course delivered by VMB to be too difficult. This will be kept under review.

#### v. Industrial Tour - Toulouse

Dr Peter Wilshaw will be accompanying 12 students including ST. The estimated total, pre-sponsorship, cost is approximately £400 per student. The department will be sponsoring the tour to the level of £50 per student. The Worshipful Company of Armourers and Brasiers will be sponsoring the tour to the level of approximately £100 per student (approximately double the sponsorship of any previous European tour). A decision by the IoM<sup>3</sup> concerning sponsorship is still awaited.

#### vi. Materials drinks

Contributions from the department and from students were £200 and £157 respectively. The profit of £137 will be used to subsidise the Industrial Tour.

### 4. Minutes of DMAC 32

The minutes of DMAC 32 were accepted.

### 5. Shortened Minutes

There were no confidential items to be removed from the minutes to be published on the Department of Materials website.

### 6. Matters Arising

*\*From DMAC 24:*

*Minute 11 SENDA – in progress.*

*\*From DMAC 27*

*Minute 4 Report from JCCU Chair:*

Practical Classes: Possibility of submitting reports in word-processed format. JMS has provided a lead on information on software for the detection of plagiarism. AOT is investigating its use.

**Action: AOT**

*\*From DMAC 27*

*Minute 7 Matters Arising:*

7(c) Programme Specifications on the Web – PS have been updated and are being reviewed before publication online.

*\*From DMAC 30*

*Minute 8i - Practical Review* – The end of term questionnaire is currently under construction.

**Action: LJFJ**

*From DMAC 31*

*Minute 2 JCCG Chair's Report Feedback on assessed courses.* The Faculty has confirmed that feedback to graduate students on taking their graduate courses was required from all course lecturers. The Chair has informed all staff and students.

*Minute 8c Prelims Examination Reports-Maths Lectures* The students had reported previously that the Maths lectures were progressing at too fast a pace. This has been backed up by the lecture questionnaires. Historically the Maths course is fast-paced with a high number of topics covered relatively quickly. The Committee agreed that a Working Party should look at this issue. It was proposed that the Academic Committee's Undergraduate Panel (GT, JMS and Dr Wilshaw) should be asked to review the course in the Hilary term. The Chair also proposed to meet with the maths Convenor in The Department of Earth Sciences (Prof. Woodhouse).

**Action: AOT**

*\*From DMAC 32*

*Minute 5c MEM Conventions* LJFJ will ensure the relevant marks are passed onto tutors in July when the results are known.

*Minute 6 Change of 1<sup>st</sup> Year viva dates* The 1<sup>st</sup> year PGR students and Senior Staff have been informed of the change in dates. Vivas will now be held on Friday afternoons of weeks 3,4 & 5 TT.

*Minute 11iv Report from the Faculty: Guidance to Supervisors* AOT and CRMG will adapt the guidance from EPSC.

**Action: AOT/CRMG**

*Minute 12 Graduate Studies Advisory Panel* EPSRC paper on research student training strategy. This response is now being handled by the HoD's office and will include feedback on the proposals from our IAP

**7. Prelims Regulation Amendments (DMAC 33/2)**

AOT reported that he had spoken with Richard Hughes who indicated that there was no precedent that would prevent the proposed amended regulations passing through EPSC, although he was uneasy about the severity of the pre-requisite. Hence an alternative was considered. The aim of the amendments was to make it clear to students that they must take practicals seriously. JMS was of the view that colleges would be uneasy about allowing a student to come back just to pass the practicals. The committee agreed that that the first option 2(c) in DMC 33/2 was clearer and that it was the preferred option.

It was agreed that "completed" should be replaced with "submitted" in the definition of satisfactory crystallography classwork, the final phrase to read: ...and have submitted the crystallography classwork for each class. The amendments will be put forward to Division.

**Action: LJFJ**

A similar set of regulations will be drawn up for Part I and put forward to Faculty.

**Action: AOT**

**8. Recognising and Rewarding Excellent Teaching: communication from the Educational Policy and Standards Committee and the Personnel Committee (DMAC 33/3)**

AOT introduced the paper. JMS reported that the Divisional Academic Committee were keen to devolve organisation of the scheme to departments. AOT circulated comments from HEA

who on balance would prefer a scheme based on personal award, but with a broad remit, e.g. to include new initiatives, schools liaison etc. CRMG's view was that to make the process simple a number of MPS departments are likely to give the HoD the responsibility of making the awards. One proposal was to ring fence the funding as part of the annual merit review, but CRMG would prefer not to have it as part of the merit review if the decision making process was with the HoD. KAQOR and CRMG were of the view that awards of this nature would be best made at the postdoc/postgrad/technician levels. The consensus was that the scheme in Materials should apply to non-tenured teaching staff (Royal Society/EPSRC advanced/RAEng etc Fellows, Lecturers still within their 5-year probationary periods, Career Development Fellows, Postdocs, and graduate students) and exceptionally to permanent lecturers beyond their probationary periods. AOT was requested to clarify if "learning support staff" can only apply to the central panel (Note: this has been confirmed).

It was agreed that awards should be made at the level of approximately £1,000 per award, and decisions to be made by the HoD following consultation.

#### **9. External Examiner's Report – Prof Windle (2005 Part II) (DMAC 33/4)**

There were no additional comments or discussion on the examiner's report.

#### **10. \*Response to the Examiners' Reports (DMAC 33/5)**

AOT clarified that he reported in the response to the examiners' reports that scaling using an annual average is not appropriate for small cohorts such as those in Materials.

#### **11. Report from Tutors' Committee (JTC)**

The Tutors' Committee had not met.

#### **12. Report from EMS Standing Committee (SGR)**

LJFJ reported that the meeting had been very short, and that the EMS course was proceeding well. LJFJ agreed to warn the standing committee that CRMG will not give his 4<sup>th</sup> Year course.

**Action: LJFJ**

#### **13. Chairman's Report**

- i. Postgraduate Poster Session** The poster session for 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Year postgraduate students will take place at 4.00 pm on Wednesday 15 February (Wk 5) in the Holder Building common room. The session is voluntary this year, but will be compulsory in future years. There will be a prize of £200 sponsored by Rolls-Royce for the best poster in the standard conference style category and a prize of £200 sponsored by the Worshipful Company of Ironmongers for the best poster in the public understanding of science category.
- ii. Graduate Admissions** This year's Gathered Field 2 gave a very strong field of 26 applicants, mainly from overseas (as expected in GF2). Gathered Field 3 had closed and the dossiers were expected to arrive in Wk 4.
- iii. Tsinghua Summer Placements** Summer placement opportunities for 3 undergraduates have been arranged with Tsinghua. Full funding by Tsinghua and the Armourers & Braziers is now in place. Tsinghua have shown a preference for 3<sup>rd</sup> years, although a number of 2<sup>nd</sup> years have shown interest.
- iv. Summer Internship Exchange with University of California Santa Barbara** A pilot exchange with UCSB is being negotiated. This will be for two students and is at the Department's cost for the first year.
- v. Industrial Advisory Panel** The IAP will sit on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2006.
- vi. Educational Policy and Standards Committee Review** The EPSC Review is timetabled for Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> and Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2006. It is likely to involve the whole of DMAC.

The Department hopes that the timetable for the review can be compressed into Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April only, although members of DMAC were requested to keep both dates free in their diaries.

**vii. Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning** Materials, Maths and Physics are the lead Departments in the MPS division. A group bid to the University e-Science fund has seen some success. It is hoped that this will lead to a webcast capability between the Keble Road triangle and Begbroke, and it is hoped that orders can be placed for one or two smart boards and visualizers.

**viii. 21 Banbury Road Lecture Theatre Refurbishment** is on course for the summer of 2006.

**ix. Lankester Report** The Department's response drafted by the Tutorial Fellows and AOT will be presented to Faculty in Week 5 of Hilary Term 2006.

#### **14. Reports from Divisional Committees**

**i. Academic Committee (JMS)**

Week 1 (JMS) The major items for discussion were (i) sections in the divisional 5-year plan concerning teaching and learning, (ii) student number planning, (iii) Report of the Working Party on Selection and Admissions - Undergraduate Admissions: Policy and Procedures, (iv) Reports of examiners on the 2005 examinations, (v) Report of the EPSC Working Party on Taught Graduate Courses, and (vi) awards for recognising and rewarding excellent teaching.

#### **15. Any Other Business**

There was no further business.

**Date of the next meeting – 2 pm Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2006, Wolfson Meeting Room.** The meeting closed at 4.08 pm.