

## Oxford University Department of Materials Academic Committee

**DMAC 36 Minutes of the Academic Committee** held at 2.00 pm on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2006 in the Wolfson Meeting Room.

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

**In attendance:** ICS (Secretary), Kirsten Dickers (KJD).

### 1. Apologies & Welcome

There were no apologies. AOT welcomed Kirsten Dickers (maternity cover for LJFJ) to the meeting.

### 2. Minutes of DMAC 35

The minutes of DMAC 35 were accepted.

### 3. Shortened Minutes

Consideration of confidential items to be removed from the minutes to be published on the Department of Materials website.

### 4. 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 and will attend a half-day workshop on plagiarism in June 2006.

**Action: AOT**

#### *\*From DMAC 30*

*Minute 8i - Practical Review* – AJW stated that he was not aware that construction of the end of term practical questionnaire had progressed, but confirmed that it was still desirable. AOT requested AJW to jot down some ideas from which ICS and AOT would draft a questionnaire.

**Action: AJW/ICS/AOT**

[Following discussion at DMAC 35 the questionnaire will also include a poll for a new prize to be awarded to the best Teaching Assistant]

#### *\*From DMAC 32*

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

**Action: AOT/CRMG**

#### *\* From DMAC 33*

*Minute 3i Maths Review* A working group comprising CMB (Chair), AJW, JMS, SCB, and JaMS will report to DMAC by MT06. If at their initial meeting major changes are thought to be urgent they will report to DMAC in week 7 TT. Prof J Woodhouse (Earth Sci) will be invited to contribute to the group.

The working group has held two meetings. No urgent changes have been identified. The report is expected in MT06.

**In progress: CMB**

**Minute 3ii Quantum & Statistical Mechanics (DMAC34/2)** An informal working group has been set up comprising PRW, SH, MRC and JaMS (Chair). The working group has met, report will be made to DMAC 36, JaMS will inform Year 2 UGs of which parts of the course delivered in 2005/06 are not for examination purposes in TT 2007. JaMS has drafted a list of non-examinable materials and is awaiting approval of the working party prior to informing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Year UGs. The report from the working party has been delayed and will carry over to DMAC 37 in MT06.

**Action: JaMS**

ICS reported that JaMS has circulated the list of non-examinable material to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Year UGs.

**\*From DMAC 34**

**Minute 5 Election of New Member(s) of the Nominating Committee (for the Appointment of Examiners)** The current members of the Nominating Committee are GT (Chair), GDWS and SGR. GT proposed that the committee should comprise the Head of Department, the Chair of Faculty and the Director of Studies (all *ex officio*). The proposal was carried and will be put forward to Faculty in TT06.

Faculty has agreed to this proposal.

**\*From DMAC 35**

**Minute 2 Report from the Chair of JCCG (SH)** SH reported that JCCG thought that it would be helpful to have access to electronic versions of Part II and DPhil theses. AOT further reported that the 2004/05 Part II external examiner had suggested in his report that it would be useful for external examiners to have access to previous theses, and suggested that an electronic format would facilitate this. It was agreed that in future years the Part II students should be required to hand in a pdf file of their thesis on CD-ROM as part of the sign-off procedure, and that the Part II Organiser should include an instruction to this effect in the Part II handbook and at the induction course.

**Action: ICS**

**Minute 3ii Report from the Chair of JCCU (ST) - Industrial Visits** JCCU have requested that a record of satisfactory Industrial Visit reports for both 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Year students is published. ICS reported that a record had been placed on the Teaching Laboratory noticeboard on one occasion only in the interests of the cohort sitting Part I in 2004/05. ICS, as Industrial Visits Organiser, agreed to post an up to date Industrial Visit report record on the noticeboard at the beginning of each term. Action completed (ICS TT06).

**Minute 3iii Report from the Chair of JCCU (ST) - Electrochemistry** JCCU request that AIK's lecture notes are made available on the Web. AOT reminded the JCCU that publication of lecture notes is a matter for individual lecturers. ICS has passed on the request to AIK. AIK expressed surprise given that the handouts were identical to those of last year when there were no complaints and given that all of the slides come straight from the lecture notes. He wondered if this complaint is a consequence of splitting the course across two terms. He noted that he had also offered to provide copies of the slides to anyone who emailed him. He is not prepared to post these on the Web.

**Minute 7ii Characterisation of Materials Module** CRMG and MRC will explore including a broader range of more advanced techniques. MRC will rework the module based on the extension of the number of techniques and will seek SGR's comments on these changes.

**Action: CRMG/MRC**

**Minute 8 Examiners' Reports: Availability in the Library** There are now bound copies of the 2003/04 and 2004/05 Examiners' Reports in the library which can be accessed by staff and students via the librarian.

**Minute 9 New DMAC Members** DJHC has offered to stand. One further candidate is being sought.

**In progress: AOT**

**Minute 11 Report from the EMS Standing Committee** AOT reported that, as a general timetabling issue, there is now restlessness among students concerning ad hoc timetable changes after publication of the Lecture List. CRMG agreed and stated that such timetable changes indicate a lack of commitment to the core function of teaching. AOT and CRMG will consider the issue further.

**Action: AOT/CRMG**

## **5. Renaming Functional & Structural Nanomaterials I & II (DMAC 36/1)**

AOT introduced the proposed name changes. It was agreed that Functional & Structural Nanomaterials I should be renamed Fabrication & Applications of Nanomaterials as proposed, and that Functional & Structural Nanomaterials II should be renamed Physics of Nanomaterials in preference to the proposed Physics & Applications of Nanomaterials. AJW questioned whether it was appropriate that there should continue to be a combined reading list for the two courses. The lecturers concerned (PJD, VMB, CN) will be asked to update the reading lists.

**Action: ICS/KJD**

## **6. Report from E(M)EM Standing Committee (KAQOR)**

KAQOR reminded DMAC that she had reported to Faculty in TT06 that there were difficulties associated with placing students to external Part II management projects. She reported that the current position was that there were still two MEM students without placements. Both students have been put in contact with ten companies, and both had refused to travel to an interview at which only those two were being interviewed. One of the two students is awaiting a telephone interview, and the other has nothing left in the pipe-line. Steve New has three internal management projects available at the Said Business School, so it is hopeful that all MEM students will get management projects. KAQOR will inform the tutors of the two students.

**Action: KAQOR**

The Standing Committee felt that student expectations were too high, and as a result it is putting mechanisms into place to inform students of what is expected of a placement and their role in being placed successfully including advice on preparation of CVs, and to involve students if things go wrong.

AOT reminded DMAC that the accreditation panel had stated a preference for MEM students to be allocated materials related management projects. AOT suggested that Dee Broquard (management project coordinator) sends a list of companies to the Department for DMAC to inform her of which might be materials related, although KAQOR and ICS noted that most of the companies were unlikely to fall into that category. AOT also proposed that the Department suggests materials related companies that might be able to offer management projects.

## **7. Chairman's Report**

### **i. Prelims Regulation Changes**

AOT reported that the Prelims regulation changes had passed through the Division, but were held up at EPSC. EPSC thought that requiring the students to resit Prelims if they failed coursework was disproportionate. AOT has discussed the matter with Richard Hughes and

believes that EPSC could be convinced that it is not disproportionate. AOT will write a justification for the new regulation for EPSC's consideration.

**Action: AOT**

In any event the deadline for including the amended regulations in the Grey Book had passed, but if passed by EPSC will they appear in the Gazette.

**ii. Vacancy on Divisional Board**

AOT reported that there was a vacancy on the Divisional Board due to the retirement of DJHC. The Department is still able to nominate a member of the Board. CRMG reported that PSG had agreed to stand and so will be nominated.

**Action: CRMG**

**iii. Voluntary French Language Course**

AOT reported that the Mathematical Institute have a voluntary French course in year 3 for which they have spare capacity that they are offering to Materials. The course is non-credit bearing and costs £200 per student. HEA and GT reminded DMAC that the language centre offers free language courses, but CRMG noted that such courses took the form of self-help teaching rather than a structured course. AOT suggested that the 2<sup>nd</sup> year or Part II year might be appropriate for Materials students. CRMG considered the 2<sup>nd</sup> year to be already heavily loaded, but that Part II would be reasonable. He suggested that DMAC looks into it further, e.g. with respect to loading, and felt that encouraging students to learn something of a new language was not a bad thing. As head of Department, he would be willing to find the funds to pay for interested students. KJD informed DMAC that she had attended a course in French whilst she had been an undergraduate and that it had been not very helpful but found that some knowledge of technical translation had been useful. CRMG suggested that we ask for a technical slant to be put on the course.

**Action: AOT**

**iv. JCC for Postdocs**

AOT reminded DMAC that he sits on the Earth Sciences Faculty. Earth Sciences have a Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) for postdocs. AOT sought DMAC's view on the potential for a JCC for postdocs in the Materials, and if such a JCC were to be established if it should report to DMAC. KAQOR was of the view that postdocs are the least well catered for group in the University. AOT reminded DMAC that Roberts Skills funding is available for postdocs and that there was thus a link with DMAC. HEA stated that if the remit of a JCC for postdocs was based on skills training and teaching opportunities then she would be in favour of it reporting to DMAC.

**v. Teaching Excellence Awards**

The deadline for bids had closed and two bids had been received. CRMG and AOT, as members of the judging panel, had considered that the available funds would be split between three of four awards. DMAC made further suggestions for nomination.

[Modified to remove confidential material from the minutes to be published on the Department of Materials website.]

**Action: CRMG**

## 8. Reports from Divisional Committees

### i. Academic Committee (JMS)

- There is an ongoing review of Chemistry which will remove the boundaries between the Physical, Organic and Inorganic Chemistry sub-departments.
- EPSRC UG Summer Vacation Bursaries. JMS reported that DivAC is to devolve this scheme to departments. AOT noted that the scheme would not be entirely devolved to departments as Division will decide how many bursaries will be allocated to each department. HEA and GADB have submitted projects, and AOT has prioritised HEA's project. AOT noted his disappointment that the funding cannot be spent on external students given that JaMS had a student from Cambridge that wants to come to work with him over the summer vacation.
- HEFCE Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund. The Division wants to use this money to support CETL.
- Embedding Graduate Studies. AOT reminded DMAC that a key aspect of this EPSC initiative was for colleges and departments to provide a minimum provision for graduate students. A template has been produced.
- The Divisional Graduate Studies Advisory Panel has recommended, as a result of some supervisors dragging their heels, tightening up the procedure for transfer of status in Physics. Physics grad students will now *normally* transfer at three or four terms after admission. AOT noted that this does not have an impact on Materials, because this department's procedure is already within this framework.

## 9. Any Other Business

There was no further business. The committee thanked GT for his long standing service to DMAC and the UG Panel.

**Date of the next meeting – 2 pm Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2006, Wolfson Meeting Room.** The meeting closed at 3.11 pm.