

Annual Report of the Teaching Committee

May, 2012

1. The Teaching Committee is required by its terms of reference to provide an annual report to the Faculty Board in the Easter Term.
2. The members of the Teaching Committee are currently

Prof Thanasis Fokas

Prof Imre Leader (ex officio, Chair of Curriculum Committee)

Dr Tom Fisher

Dr R Samworth

Mr David Mestel (Junior Member, Trinity, Part IB)

Mr Clive Newstead (Junior Member, Robinson Part II)

Prof David Tong

Prof John Lister

Dr Stephen Siklos (Chair)

Dr Keith Carne

Junior members are nominated by the Chair of the Committee and appointed by the Faculty Board. Recent practice has been to seek expressions of interest by means of an e-mail to all Part IB students before the beginning of the academical year, and to invite the Junior Member at the end of his or her first year of service to serve for an additional year, so that there is a Part IB representative and a Part II representative (or possibly a Part III representative and a Part IB or II representative).

3. We met a total of 4 times in the Michaelmas term and a further 5 times in the Lent term, each meeting lasting for about two hours. As usual, the major item on the agenda for the Michaelmas term was a review of the undergraduate Tripos examinations. The Lent term meetings were taken up with discussion on the Teaching and Learning Review report, a paper from Dr Sean Lip, and a matter relating to border lines in the Tripos.
4. We provided a detailed report on the undergraduate examinations to the Faculty Board based on reports of the Examiners and the External Examiners, on examination data such as statistics and the actual questions, and on the information from the e-mail questionnaires. Our report was used as the basis of the Faculty Board's response to the Education Committee of the General Board. This report was considered by the Board at its November meeting, having previously been received by the meeting of Directors of Studies.
5. We provided a detailed report on the TLR and Dr Lip's paper, which was considered by the Faculty Board at its February (23rd) meeting.
6. We recommended a temporary 'fix' to the way in which lists of candidates are ordered both for the examiners and for circulation to colleges. We also discussed a change to the classification criteria which would, we believe, be easier to apply at each of the borderlines and would iron out the difficulties mentioned above. However, we decided not to propose this change to the Faculty Board to take effect next year, because it is possible that the committees set up to consider the findings of the TLR might have recommendations that would affect the classification criteria and we thought it better not to make several incremental changes.
7. We provided a report to Heads of Department on the teaching of their departments, based on the paper and on-line questionnaires. A small number of courses/lecturers are referred to the Heads of Department for possible action.

In general, the feedback from students was very positive. In this year's report:

- (a) we noted that 3 lecturers had not handed out any paper questionnaires, though the returns from a number of Part II courses are very small;
- (b) we drew the attention of the Heads of Department to a six courses (out of 61) for which we recommended some action be taken (by HoDs or others);
- (c) we drew attention to two courses that were poorly received but in each case the lecture had now retired;
- (d) we drew attention to two courses for which a revised schedule might be appropriate (in one case, Partial Differential Equations, the problem was that the take-up was small);

- (e) we drew attention to six lecturers (in addition to the usual suspects) whose courses had been particularly well received
8. In addition, members of the Teaching Committee were involved in various miscellaneous activities (for some of which the Board has received an independent report), including:
- the induction session for first year students;
 - the examination briefing session for Part IA students;
 - the e-mail to Part IA students explaining the rubric for the examination;
 - advising on the choice of lecturers;
 - advising on the timetable for lectures;
 - supervisor training sessions (though this has now been largely taken over by the Staff Development Office);
 - providing informal advice to new lecturers.

Stephen Siklos, May 29, 2012