**Transfers in Year 4 Between MInf and BSc/BEng Degrees**

**Motivation**

Over the last few years the School has transformed the project component of its MInf programme to better align with the four-year BSc/BEng degrees. This provides an exit route for MInf students wishing to leave at the end of Year 4, and also makes it simpler for students on the four-year degrees to transfer into MInf.

Students have expressed approval of this new flexibility. Both kinds of transfer are now beginning to occur, and we need a clear policy statement for both staff and students indicating how and when transfers are possible.

I'm writing at the request of Alex Simpson (as SCAO) and as Convener of the Year 4 and Year 5 Boards of Examiners. I have spoken to relevant staff at other schools in Science and Engineering which have had five-year undergraduate Masters programmes for some time now. Physics in particular permit fourth-year exit and have a clear policy statement on transfers. I've attached the relevant text, and have based this proposal on their existing practice.

**Authority**

College policy delegates to Schools any changes of degree programme within the same School and between related subject areas. Within Informatics, authority to approve changes is held by the School Curriculum Approval Officer (SCAO), currently ex-officio the Deputy Director of Teaching.

The necessary changes to the programmes themselves have already been made by the Board of Studies: this proposal is to provide operational guidelines, and I think therefore appropriate for Teaching Committee.

**Notes on transfers from BSc/BEng to MInf**

*Progression Hurdle:* We currently have an elevated hurdle for progression from third-year to fourth-year MInf; students failing to clear the hurdle are usually transferred onto a suitable BSc/BEng programme. I think it natural to insist that students wishing to transfer into MInf at fourth-year should have a third-year performance that meets the hurdle.

*Projects:* Not all BSc/BEng project topics will be suitable for extension to two-year MInf projects. I think the individual project supervisor should be the person to judge this, through the project coordinator who might, if done sufficiently early, be able to arrange a transfer to a more suitable project.

*Funding:* Students will need funding for an additional year fees and maintenance. It is the student's responsibility to arrange this, although the School's approval of a transfer may be important for some funding agencies. For Scottish students SAAS will normally allow one extra year's funding for approved changes of programme.

**Notes on transfers from MInf to BSc/BEng**

For students who simply wish to leave their degree at the end of fourth year, and can confirm this in advance, things should be straightforward.
Things become trickier if a student's reason for leaving depends on getting entry to do something else. Offers may not be confirmed in time for the Board of Examiners; and certainly won't be if that place is grade-dependent. This is a real concern, and we had requests this year of exactly this kind. One particular cause is the 1+3-year programmes of Doctoral Training Centres, including our own.

For example, we had requests of the form “I wish to leave with a BSc if I get a 2.1 or higher; otherwise I want to stay on the MInf”. I propose that we do not accept these requests, but instead require students to fix in advance which degree they wish to be considered for.

Physics refuse such requests. Chemistry report that they will support students switching immediately after the Board of Examiners meeting and before reporting results to Student Administration. It's rare, but has happened. I suggest that we do not attempt that.

If a student does leave after progression to MInf Year 5 — either immediately, or at any time during the year — then the Board of Examiners in the following summer can award an appropriate Bachelor's degree based on performance up to Year 4. However, that's quite a long time to wait.

At this year's Board meeting I suggested identifying provisional exit grades for MInf Year 4 students. The Board emphatically rejected this, but did propose reconvening electronically if any student came back and asked to leave with a BSc/BEng. In the end no such case arose.

**Proposal**

Adopt the policy on the next page, effective immediately, and include in Year 4 Handbook. There's one question about a particular line restricting the timing of transfers.

**Finally**

With a reliable fourth-year exit route, it becomes possible to introduce a performance hurdle for progression to MInf Year 5, similar to that for progression to MInf Year 4. I think this would be in keeping with the principle of the MInf programme and a good thing to do. I recommend that Teaching Committee consider this, and if thought appropriate note that in a request to the Board of Studies.
Policy on Transfers Between Degree Programmes in Year 4

The following text to be included in Year 4 Handbook.

Transfers Between Degree Programmes

All transfers between degree programmes within the School of Informatics require permission of the School Curriculum Approval Officer (SCAO), whose decision is final. Students considering changing degree programme should start by consulting with their Personal Tutor.

Transferring from 4-Year BSc/BEng to 5-Year MInf

Applications to transfer from a four-year degree to the five-year MInf programme should be made as early as possible in the academic year, and certainly during Semester 1. Transfers are at the discretion of the SCAO, guided by the following requirements.

- Students must have passed Year 3 with marks at the level required for progression in MInf. This is higher than a basic pass, and currently requires an average of 55% at the first attempt across all courses taken in third year.

- The undergraduate final-year project must be suitable for extension to a two-year MInf project. This requires the agreement of the project supervisor and confirmation from the Undergraduate Project Coordinator.

Students will also need to ensure they have appropriate funding for the additional year.

Question — do we add this: No transfer into MInf is permitted after the end of Semester 1

Transferring from a 5-Year MInf to a 4-Year BSc/BEng

Applications to transfer from the five-year MInf programme to a four-year Bachelors should be made as early as possible in the academic year, and always at least one week before the Board of Examiners meeting in the summer.

Most course combinations in MInf will be suitable for exit at the end of Year 4 with an appropriate Bachelors degree, but transfer is not automatic and still requires explicit permission from the SCAO.

Students who apply any later, or who leave during Year 5, may still be eligible to leave with a Bachelor's degree but must wait until the next Board of Examiners meeting for this to be awarded. This may not be until the following summer.
Changing between the BSc and MPhys Programmes

For Degree Programmes that offer an MPhys option, you will normally make the choice between the MPhys and BSc Degree Programmes at the start of the Senior Honours year. After this time you may change between the programmes as follows:

From BSc to MPhys

With the guidance of your Personal Tutor, you may transfer into the MPhys Programme from the BSc Programme only during Semester 1 of the Senior Honours year, provided:

- Your results at Junior Honours meet the criteria for entry to the MPhys Programme.
- The Courses being taken in Semester 1 are compatible with the DPT for the corresponding MPhys Programme. Note: the Group Project is a compulsory Senior Honours year course for all MPhys Programmes.

Transfer after the end of Semester 1 is not permitted.

From MPhys to BSc

With the guidance of your Personal Tutor, you may transfer into the BSc Programme from the MPhys Programme during Semester 1 of the Senior Honours year, provided:

- The Courses being taken in Semester 1 are compatible with the DPT for the corresponding BSc Programme.

Transfers after the end of Semester 1 are subject to approval of the Head of School. Such approval will normally be given provided:

1. The intention to switch must be notified to the Head of School, in writing, at least 7 days before the meeting of the Board of Examiners of the BSc Programme currently scheduled for early June 2015 (date to be confirmed.)

2. The Courses taken in the Senior Honours year are compatible with the DPT for the BSc Degree programmes. (Group Project and Physics Skills (MPhys), will be treated as equivalent to Team Review Project and Physics Skills (BSc)).

If these criteria are satisfied, the Board of Examiners will consider the award of a classified BSc Honours degree.

A student enrolled on a MPhys Programme who decides not to complete the programme after the date stipulated in 1. above must notify the Head of School in writing of the intention to withdraw. Provided that condition 2. is satisfied, the Board of Examiners in the subsequent year will consider the award of a classified BSc Honours degree on the basis of performance in the Junior Honours and Senior Honours years.