Flexibility, involvement and depth

For all its far reaching recommendations, the most significant feature of the Zacharias report on the curriculum is its philosophy of molding curriculum to the individual student.

Besides giving students more freedom to express themselves and choose their paths, the report expresses a heartening faith in students. Moreover, it represents another break from the "old mold" which is so often damned university faculties and administrations.

The cornerstone of the curriculum structure committee's recommendations, and freshman seminar makes a combination satisfying the three main aims of flexibility, depth and involvement.

These alternatives would recognize wide variations in the training of the entering freshmen. For although most American schools, college and seminars make a combination satisfying the three main aims of flexibility, depth and involvement.

The problem lies in preparation. Forcing each subject into a rigid size and pattern would weaken the very flexibility that the Zacharias Committee has been trying to build into the curriculum. It is hard to see how stretching and squeezing our subjects, which now vary from 3 to 30 hours per week, into a standard 10 credit-hour pattern would offer any benefit.

Moreover, the enormous amount of faculty time that would have to be involved in making the changes could be better spent in many ways.

If the committee wishes to set an upper and lower limit on the number of credit hours that students have each quarter, they may set their limits — 60 and 45 hours — as recommended in the report completely independently of the size of any individual subject. The limits would serve merely as a guide to students selecting subjects for their forthcoming quarter.

The Zacharias Report is an interim progress report, and those programs which will ultimately be adopted are now on the horizon of necessity. Its philosophy has not yet hardened, and its suggestions are areas for discussion.

While the faculty has already given this report thousands of hours of intense discussion, student committees have been bare a murmur. Since the proposed plan in the report stand to affect academic life at MIT more than any others in several years, we are sure that so few students have shown any interest in the report.