The Directors of Studies in Computer Science Forum held on Friday 19 October 2018 at 14:00 in FW11 in the William Gates Building

Agenda and Notes

Members

Prof J. Bacon (JE)  Dr A. R. Beresford (Q)  Prof A. F. Blackwell (DAR)  Dr P. J. Buttery (CAI)  Dr D. Chisnall (MUR)  Prof A. Dawar (ROB)  Dr J. K. Fawcett (CHU,H, HH, LC, M, N)  Dr D. J. Greaves (Sabbatical)  Dr T. G. Griffin (K)  Mr C. K. Hadley (G)  Dr R. K. Harle Sabbatical)  Dr S. B. Holden (Sabbatical)  Mr C. Ireland (SID)  Dr G. C. Jenkinson (DOW,ED,F)  Dr T. M. Jones (CAI)  Mr M. Kleppmann (CC)  Dr A. V. S. Madhavapeddy (PEM)  Prof C. Mascolo (JE)  Prof S. W. Moore (TH)  Dr R. M. Mortier (CHR)  Dr R. D. Mullins (JN, PET)  Prof A. Mycroft (ROB)  Dr A. C. Norman (T)  Prof L. Paulson (CL)  Ms D. Pounds (Manager Teaching Admin)  Prof P. Robinson (CAI)  Dr A. B. Roman (CSAT coordinator)  Mrs M. Sammons (Teaching Admin Asst)  Dr T. M. Sauerwald (EMM)  Dr R. Sharp (ROB)  Mrs C. Stewart (Dept Sec)  Dr S. Taraskin (CTH)  Dr G. Titmus (CAI)  Dr C. P. Town (W)  Dr R. R. Watts (SE)

1. Apologies for absence

2. Minutes from previous meeting

3. Matters arising

The Part II dissertation submission date will remain unchanged at the third Friday before the start of exams for 2019. Students are however, strongly urged to submit earlier if they can. Faculty Board have approved a change to the fourth Friday before the start of exams from 2020.
4. Tripos Matters
   I. Examiner for NST IA maths
   II. Duration of CSAT (RMM)
   III. Overseas test (CSAT-like) (ABR)
   IV. CSAT Practice[+] platform ABR)
   V. CSAT sittings in December (central and in-college) (ABR)
   VI. Numbers management
   VII. CamSIS exam entries
   VIII. Part II units of assessment.

5. Admissions figures

6. Notification of any other business

7. Any other business

8. Date of next meeting – Friday 11 January 2pm in FW11
Minutes of the meeting of the Directors of Studies Forum held on Wednesday 4 July 2018 at 10:00 in FW11

Chairman Dr R. M. Mortier

Members

Prof J. Bacon (JE)  Dr A. R. Beresford (Q)  Prof A. F. Blackwell (DAR)  Dr P. J. Buttery (CAI)  Dr D. Chisnall (ME)  Prof A. Dawar (ROB)  Dr J. K. Fawcett (CHU, N, M, HO, HH, LC)  Dr D. J. Greaves (CC)  Dr T. G. Griffin (K)  Mr C. K. Hadley (G)  Dr R. K. Harle (Sabbatical leave)  Dr S. B. Holden (T)  Mr M. Ireland (SID)  Dr G. C. Jenkinson (DOW, ED, F)  Dr T. M. Jones (CAI)  Mr M. Kleppmann (CC)  Dr A. V. S. Madhavapeddy (PEM)  Dr K. Moody  Prof S. W. Moore (TH)

Secretary Mrs M. Sammons

Prof C. Mascolo (JE)  Dr R. M. Mortier (CHR)  Dr R. D. Mullins (JN, PET)  Prof A. Mycroft (ROB)  Dr A. C. Norman (T)  Ms D. Pounds (Manager Teaching Admin)  Dr A. C. Rice  Prof P. Robinson (CAI)  Dr Bogdan Roman (CSAT representative)  Mrs M. Sammons (Teaching Admin Asst)  Dr T. M. Sauerwald (EMM)  Dr R. Sharp (ROB)  Mrs C. Stewart (Dept Sec)  Dr S. Taraskin (CTH)  Dr G. Titmus (CAI)  Dr C. P. Town (W)  Dr R. R. Watts (SE, CL)

1. Apologies for absence.
   Apologies were received from Dr P. J. Buttery, Dr T. G. Griffin, Dr A. V. S. Madhavapeddy, Prof. C. Mascolo, Dr K. Moody, Dr A. B. Roman, Dr C. P. Town. Dr M. A. Mahmoud was standing in for Dr T. G. Griffin.

2. Minutes from the previous meeting
   There was nothing to report

3. Matters arising
   There were no matters arising

4. Tripos matters.
   i. It was considered reasonable to conduct basic knowledge supervisions in larger scale groups. Where the work required more intense explanation, smaller groups were deemed to be favourable.
ii. It was agreed that course exercises need to be improved and should be provided at the same time as lecture notes. The Department will encourage everyone to address the issue as a matter of urgency. Action Student Admin/AAC.

iii. The Moodle wiki was considered immensely useful and new supervisors should be encouraged to sign up to it.

iv. Disparity arose between supervisors, as it was reported that some subjects were well supervised and went further than the syllabus conversely, some not so deep. It was suggested this may vary because of the quality of the teaching. Directors of Studies requested better feedback channels from supervisors to lecturers. This will be set up online.

v. It is recommended that DoS make a supervision schedule for supervisors to ensure students get regular supervisions and to ensure continuity of supervisors, it was suggested to allocate 2 supervisors per student for the academic year.

vi. It was also suggested that adding supervising as a requirement to the Research Skills tasks may reach a higher volume of supervisors. The Wiseman award continues to act a positive incentive to encourage and attract supervisors.

vii. It was recommended that the current ratio of supervising 1:3-4 supervisions per lecture in IA should be changed to 1:4. Action DP

viii. Listing the exam paper, teaching room and lecture time on the course pages was requested. Action DP

ix. There was support for moving towards a style of online lecturing mirroring IB Prolog. It was agreed it required more work in the initial stages, but the long term rewards were maximized. DoS requested a 1.5 lecturer playback and transcripts. Action DP

x. Once again the emphasis of attending the supervisor’s workshop is mandatory along with the inclusion of the topic of unconscious bias. DoS would like to be informed if supervisors do not attend training. Potential supervisors should take the University’s online unconscious bias training. To achieve this, better channels of communication between the Graduate and Undergraduate offices will be sought.

Action DP, LMG and MGK

5. Accreditation
After seeking support from students, employers and several acclaimed institutions, a feeling of mutual agreement held that there is no point in carrying on with the present accreditors of the IET and BCS. The criterion of both these bodies is no longer fit for purpose for the Department. Following recent consultation with ARM, (Softbank) it was deemed that international recognition is more relevant.
It was advised to use ACM as a more realistic guide.

6. OCAML
The move to Ocaml has been deferred for a year, a senior academic will concentrate on getting this up and running for the next academic year, 2019.

7. Part II Module selections
As the existing Paper 7 disappears to be replaced by the Part II modules, the students have made their selections comfortably with no apparent over committing of any particular
module. The structure of Papers 8 and 9 will change considerably and will be published on
the website very soon.
Links on Moodle course selections will be sent out to Directors of Studies shortly.

8. **Chairman of Examiner’s Report**
Dr Mullins reported that the examination period had transited smoothly and Dinah along with
her team were thanked for this. The External Examiner was very happy with the drafts and
there were few errors in the exam scripts. Two of the prizes awarded went to the same
student and we will investigate spreading prizes more widely in future.
The Part II dissertations proved interesting to read and the quality was good. Next year a
move will be made to apply anonymous submissions to dissertations. Other points to
address for next year were;

i. To consider whether to have a page count instead of a word count, as this is a
constant form of worry for students.

ii. With large amounts of AI information, it was hard to determine how much work had
actually been done. To this end, it was suggested that a description of the source
code be added to requirements.

iii. Feedback is requested from Directors of Studies about moving the dissertation
deadline to one week earlier than at present, to accommodate a longer period of
revision without the distraction of dissertation submission. This proposal was agreed
and DoS felt strongly that this would reduce pressure on students.

iv. It was agreed to add a more detailed description to the dissertation marking scheme.

v. The supervisor report form will be revised to allow supervisors to write a confidential
report on Moodle.

vi. **Comments from IA Examinations Chairman.**
Dr Mortier reported there was an error on a paper where the diagram labelling had
failed to print on the sheet. The matter was dealt with quickly. There were
insufficient papers produced for Paper 3, this was also dealt with before the students
had entered the exam room. The Exam Board have been informed. Because of this,
it was considered prudent to ask examiners to arrive 15 minutes early in order to
check that the scripts are fit and in place.

vii. There was a matter of negative marking which Chris Hadley was able to sort out.

viii. The question of Ticks arose, are we over examining in obtaining so many ticks with
varied deadlines? Comments welcomed from Directors of Studies.

9. **Any other business**
The CSAT test will be conducted at the same time as the interview, during
December, as was conducted last year.

10. **Date of next meeting**
The meeting will be set for October, a date to be advised.
After considerable thought, and following some discussion with John (as subject convenor) and Sam Lucy (as Director of Admissions), we (the Department) feel that we will have to apply to enter numbers management for this admissions round. In practical terms that means we provide a target number of admissions and a cover ratio, and Admissions Tutors are requested to limit the total number of offers made to that target. The timeline is that we put a case to the UAC Numbers Sub-committee (papers circulated by Oct23 for meeting on Oct30), who will take it forward to the Admissions Forum (Nov16), and finally the Senior Tutors’ Committee (Nov23).

There are several motivations for this but in short: we don’t feel we will be able to continue to provide our students with an excellent learning environment if admissions continue to increase. We are at a record 133 in CST this year — of whom 24% are women, another record -- from ~165 offers made. Given the continuing upward pressure from increasing applications, we need some way to ensure admissions don’t continue to go up without being able to ensure appropriate resources are available to support those increased numbers. Our target would simply be to restrict admissions to roughly what we were at for the last couple of years (about 120).

The pressures involved are:

* Space constraints. The Intel Lab and LT2 both have limited seating, and we’re very close to hitting those limits already. We have limited scope for reconfiguration of those rooms — arguably the Intel Lab is already too full (demonstrators have nowhere to sit, and anecdotally we understand some students may be avoiding it as too busy already) — and at current rate of increase, reconfiguration might buy us a year or two breathing space, but at the cost of considerable disruption and with no guarantee we won’t soon be back in the same situation anyway.

* Supervision capacity. As some of you have noted (and perhaps are still noting!), it’s already difficult to find supervisors for some courses. Continually increasing numbers exacerbates this. Project supervision (IB, II, III/MPhil) is a particular problem, especially in popular areas.

* Course limits. With the introduction of Paper 10 and the sharing of courses with the MPhil/Part III, we have more courses that have to limit the number of participants. A significant, and increasing, majority of undergraduates are taking the 75% option. If total numbers in the year continue to increase, it’s going to get much harder to satisfy students in their Paper 10 course selections.

* Demonstrator capacity. We attempt to maintain a ratio of 1 demonstrator for 10 students during practicals, but this has already become impossible for some courses (e.g., IA MLRD last year).

John (as subject convenor) would officially run the process, but we have some flexibility as to what the process should actually be. We would like to avoid strict per-College quotas so that there is some flexibility as admission numbers and quality varies between Colleges in different years. For example, based on data from recent years the cover ratio currently in use is around 1.2 offers per place. So we might say that 75% of offers (if the admissions target is 120 at a cover ratio of 1.2, that works out at 108 offers) should be made by Colleges in proportion to what they have done in recent years, and then the remaining 25% of offers (with the same numbers, that would be 36 offers) are allocated via a process akin to the Winter Pool.

We hope this won’t need to be permanent, and that we will be able to find ways to alleviate these constraints in the future. But, for now, this is unfortunately the only way forward we can find.
Happy to receive constructive comments, either to me directly (email or in person) or via the list. And, of course, this will be on the agenda for next Friday.

Thanks!

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