



## Unconfirmed Minutes of the Directors of Studies in Computer Science Forum

held on Friday 16 October at 1400 via Teams

### Present:

Prof J Bacon (JE)	Prof C Mascolo (JE)
Prof A R Beresford (Q)	Prof S W Moore (TH)
Prof A F Blackwell (DAR)	Prof R M Mortimer (CH)
Dr L Bulat (ME)	Prof A Mycroft (R)
Ms M J Cobby (Undergraduate Administrator/Minutes)	Ms H Neal (Undergraduate Administrator)
Dr S Cummins (G)	Mrs D Pounds (Teaching Administration Manager)
Dr J K Fawcett (CHU,H,HH,LC,N,M)	Prof A Rice (Q)
Dr D J Greaves (CC)	Prof P Robinson (CAI)
Prof T G Griffin (K)	Prof F M Stajano (T)
Dr R K Harle (DOW, F) <i>Chair</i>	Mrs C Stewart (Departmental Secretary)
Dr S B Holden (T)	Dr S Taraskin (CTH)
Mr M Ireland (SID)	Dr G Titmus (CAI)
Dr T M Jones (CAI)	Dr R R Watts (SE)
Prof S Keshav (F)	Dr J Yallop (R)
Prof N Lawrence (Q)	

### 1 Apologies for absence

Prof L Paulson (CL)

### 2 Minutes of the meeting of 1 July 2020

With no corrections to be made, these were signed as a correct record of the meeting.

### 3 Actions pending

#### 3.1 Examinations publication date

3.1.1 It was confirmed that the examination publication date had been changed to Thursday in order to enable DoS to talk to their students on the Friday if needed.

3.1.2 It was confirmed that the next examinations would take place online at exactly the same dates as already published.

### 4 Matters arising from the minutes of 1 July 2020

None

### 5 Discussion on the start of term arrangements

5.1 It was reported that the project proposal form would now be on Google and that no hard copy would be necessary. Supervisors would be able to sign the forms off online.

5.2 The form was currently being finalised and would be available to students from Monday 19 October.

5.3 Students had not expressed much opinion about the start of the new year, but all appeared to be reasonably positive and making the best of the situation.

- 5.4 DoS had been advised by the university that a student would be permitted to self-isolate if they felt anxiety about the current situation, even if they had not tested positive for Corona virus.
- 5.5 Students had expressed gratitude for receiving printed lecture notes, and it was noted that not all other departments had provided this. The Administration office staff were formally thanked for enabling this to happen.

## **6 Examinations and Assessment**

- 6.1 All examinations this year would take place on Moodle. The final details were being agreed with the General Board and would be announced later in the term. The Department had requested they be run in 3 hours plus allowances - and upload time exactly as the Part II examinations ran in June 2020 rather than over 6 hours as suggested by the Registry. The arrangements which the Department put in place for 2020 worked very well.
- 6.2 Overseers would like to see students' previous results in order to measure their level of achievement and to oversee them accordingly. It was noted that in the past these results had been available but that DoS felt this was no longer the case.
- 6.3 It was agreed that this should be available on CamSIS with DoS privileges.
- 6.4 The same information would be helpful to potential project supervisors also, although there would be the added complication that a number of supervisors would not be departmental members, so care would need to be taken.
- 6.5 Dinah Pounds confirmed that she could distribute results for 1A and 1B to DoS.
- 6.6 It was noted that there could be an additional complication in that students had been told that there was an agreement not to use their Easter 2020 results in any way, due to the pandemic restrictions.

## **7 Practical work in 2020/21**

- 7.1 Practicals would take place online this year, broadly speaking, with the exception of 1A Hardware.
- 7.2 1A Hardware practicals had been re-scheduled into groups meeting every three weeks with only 2 ticks in each of Michaelmas and Lent terms.
- 7.3 Any isolating students would be able to catch up in Lent term.
- 7.4 ECAD would be virtual for compulsory assessment (Tick1) but students who wished to would also be able do the previous year's labs if they wanted to gain additional experience; however, these would not be assessed. Any students particularly interested in this can contact SWM for extra help.
- 7.5 It was agreed that the whole teaching experience for the students would be challenging this year so a reduction in their workload would not be a bad idea.
- 7.6 All other ticks would be virtual for IA and IB.
- 7.7 It was confirmed that all students would be able to have an FGPA of their own for the year and should request this from Student Admin.

## **8 Admissions and numbers management**

- 8.1 It was noted that there are still a large number of questions to be resolved.
- 8.2 It was reported that December interviews would start on 30 November and continue until 17 December.
- 8.3 There would be a period in early January 2021 to interview any candidates who were unwell in the December period or who had technical problems.
- 8.4 Colleges were planning to carry out as many interviews in the December period as possible, in order to keep the January period free, given the unknown number of cases that would arise.
- 8.5 It was confirmed that the winter pool in January would be one week later than usual, starting 13 January 2021, and would be entirely online.
- 8.6 Access to all candidate files would be via the subject-moderation face, as had happened in the summer, but with some improvements introduced by UIS.
- 8.7 All Admissions Tutors had agreed collectively to make a reduced number of offers in the December period due to the risk of grade inflations, as there was uncertainty as to how A level grading/potential cancellation of examinations would happen.

- 8.8 It was noted that there could well be a higher number of disadvantaged and special-case applicants this year, so the plan would be for more offers being made in the summer pool after scrutinization of the applications.
- 8.9 However, they did not wish to reduce the number admitted in total so to maintain the total numbers being admitted, despite fewer offers being made in December, the adjustment pool in the summer would be boosted.
- 8.10 Examination boards would be expecting results to come out 2-3 weeks later than normal which would pose problems for the Cambridge schedule but college Admissions Officers were working on this at the moment.
- 8.11 There was a general expectation that examination boards would not wish to reduce the proportion of A and A\* at A level, to prevent candidates complaining that it would be unfair in the current circumstances. However, this was still being discussed by examination boards and government agencies – there was also a suggestion of the introduction of an A\*\* but this was still under debate.
- 8.12 A level examinations would possibly take place a few weeks later, but this was also still to be confirmed.
- 8.13 Brexit was also raising more questions than answers at the moment! There was an ongoing issue regarding whether or not EU students would be identified as international students after Brexit, which was still to be confirmed. This would affect Computer Science significantly due to the high numbers of EU and international students in the department.
- 8.14 It was noted that even when the University would have some level of control the final country-wide outcome would need a Government statute.
- 8.15 It would, therefore, be impossible to confirm to potential EU students, at this stage, whether they would be charged home fees or international fees.
- 8.16 There would be a risk of losing some offer-holders from the EU should they be charged the full international fee, so there could be a lower proportion of offers converting to admissions in October 2021.
- 8.17 It was confirmed that 1638 applications had already been received and that Admissions Tutors could provide further details to DoS.
- 8.18 It was noted that one positive of the current situation was the demonstration that the department was able to deliver on-line learning successfully so the constraint in numbers could perhaps no longer be a problem as more students could, potentially, be recruited.
- 8.19 At this stage a final number had not yet been specified and DoS were advised to provide an absolute maximum number to their colleges rather than a target as in previous years.
- 8.20 Rob Harle confirmed that he would circulate a form to DoS to populate with the numbers they were seeking, in discussion with college Admissions Tutors and Senior Tutors. DoS were advised to suggest realistic numbers and not to over-inflate or undershoot. **Action RKH**
- 8.21 These numbers would then be supplied to the central Admissions Office to identify the departmental cap.
- 8.22 It was noted that there would need to be discussions concerning the management of increased numbers which would translate into many areas of the learning, eg supervisions, practical lab space, part 2 units and project supervisions.
- 8.23 There could potentially be a need to evaluate whether or not to add more units if the student numbers increased, rather than adding more numbers to existing classes.
- 8.24 There was concern about the long-term provision of on-line learning as it seemed that remote teaching was harder in terms of engagement. However, some supervisors had found it beneficial to watch the lecturers' videos to hear exactly what the students had been taught, before their input.

## 9 Any Other Business

- 9.1 Rob Harle presented slides of the profile of the new intake and would undertake more analysis of the data in due course, in terms of previous programming languages experience and countries of origin.
- 9.2 The increase of female students to 28% was welcomed.
- 9.3 Supervision hours – an agreement to reduce them had been made but it was uncertain whether the Nat Sci maths could also fit into this reduction, but perhaps it would be up to the maths tutors to resolve this?

**Action: ARB to bring to TMC.**

**Date of next meeting: 15 January 2021**