



# UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Department of Computer  
Science and Technology

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

Friday 30 April 2021 at 1400 by Zoom

### Members

Prof J Bacon (J)	Prof S. W. Moore (TH)
Prof A R Beresford (Q)	Dr R. D. Mullins (JN, PET)
Prof A. F. Blackwell (DAR)	Prof S. Murdoch (CHR)
Dr L. Bulat (ME, ED)	Prof A. Mycroft (ROB)
Prof P. Buttery (CAI)	Ms H. Neal (Teaching Admin)
Ms M. J. Cobby (Teaching Admin/Minutes)	Prof L. C. Paulson (CL)
Dr S. Cummins (GIR)	Ms D. Pounds (Teaching Admin Manager)
Dr J. K. Fawcett (CHU,H,HH,LC,N,M)	Dr A.S. Prorok (PEM)
Dr D. J. Greaves (CC)	Prof A. Rice (Q)
Prof T. G. Griffin (K)	Prof P. Robinson (CAI)
Dr Hatice Gunes (TH)	Dr T. M. Sauerwald (EMM)
Dr R. K. Harle (DOW, F)	Dr R. Sharp (ROB)
Dr S. B. Holden (T)	Prof F. M. Stajano (T)
Dr A. Hutchings (K)	Mrs C. Stewart (Department Secretary)
Mr M. Ireland (SID)	Dr S. Taraskin (CTH)
Dr T. M. Jones (CAI)	Dr G. Titmus (CAI)
Prof S. Keshav (FITZ)	Dr C. P. Town (W, JE)
Dr N. Krishnaswami (T)	Dr J. Vicary (K)
Prof N. Lawrence (Q)	Dr R. R. Watts (SE)
Dr M. Mahmoud (K)	Dr J. Yallop (ROB)
Prof C. Mascolo (JE)	

It was noted that the meeting was being recorded, for those who were absent.

### 1 Apologies for absence

Prof J Bacon  
Prof A R Beresford  
Ms H Neal  
Prof A Rice  
Prof P Robinson  
Prof F Stajano  
Dr G Titmus

### 2 Minutes of the meeting of 15 January 2021

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

### **3 Actions from the meeting of 15 January 2021**

- 3.1 Formal expression of concern re workload for Part II students to TMC 25.01.21:
  - 3.1.1 This had been discussed at the TMC and although it was acknowledged that real-life situations would inevitably present an unbalanced workload this was not ideal.
  - 3.1.2 It was agreed that all units of assessment should be scrutinised to ensure that expectations of the students were not too high.
- 3.2 No discussion had taken place about the ten remaining places for Autumn 2021 admission as the department felt they should be left for the adjustment pool.

### **4 Matters arising from the meeting of 15 January 2021**

There were no matters arising.

### **5 Tripos matters**

- 5.1 Part II project timetable:
  - 5.1.1 It was suggested that project details could perhaps be finalised before the end of Easter term so that students would be able to work on them over the summer and start Michaelmas term with a clearer idea of what they were going to be doing.
  - 5.1.2 It was agreed that this may seem unfair to those who were in internships over the summer holiday and therefore unable to begin work on their projects.
  - 5.1.3 It was suggested that there should be scope to change the project upon return in Michaelmas term should students' ideas have developed over the summer.
  - 5.1.4 It was suggested that so long as the starting point was made very clear, it would then be acceptable for some students to begin their work over the summer but that it would not be approved before the start of Michaelmas term.
  - 5.1.5 It was agreed that the official starting-point should be emphasised in the Part II Project briefing to make it clear.
  - 5.1.6 It was agreed to take a discussion document to TMC with the aim of setting something up by the end of the 1B Easter term but to note that potential supervisors would not be permitted to engage with students about their projects until the end of examinations (*action RKH*).

### **6 Examinations**

- 6.1 Update on examination timetable and plans:
  - 6.1.1 It was confirmed that guidance on uploading scripts would be finalised by the Exams office and circulated the following week.
  - 6.1.2 It was confirmed that the Exam board would be undertaking the monitoring this year but that flexibility would be needed, especially in the case of internet problems.
  - 6.1.3 A practice examination session had been planned for 28 May and tutors would be asked to assist their students with this.
  - 6.1.4 It was confirmed that the Student Administration already had details of students with disabilities and that colleges were informed of those who required extra time, but colleges were asked to confirm to Dinah Pounds that this information had been noted.
  - 6.1.5 The publication dates of exams would remain the same even though the paper order had been moved, in order for students to receive their results in time for general admission.
  - 6.1.6 It was noted that some exams had been moved to the following week but that this may be welcomed as it allowed a few more days between exams.
  - 6.1.7 The publication of results and the appeals period would remain as usual.
  - 6.1.8 Part II extensions: it was confirmed that tutors would need to send requests to Dinah Pounds for onward transmission to the Chair of Examiners for approval or otherwise.
  - 6.1.9 It was noted that there would be no flexibility in timing of examinations, to make allowances for different time zones, but that there would automatic succession to the next year.

6.2 Open-book examinations and the information to be given to students – discussion at TMC on 25.01.21:

6.2.1 The Chief of Examiners had agreed to circulate information to all students and, as no comments had been received since then, it was assumed that everything was clear.

## **7 Admissions 21/22**

The following update was presented by Dr John Fawcett:

7.1 Computer Science had seen a further double-digit percentage increase year-on-year (YoY) in applications and was a numbers-managed subject again in this admissions round. Unfortunately, the gender balance regressed some of recent years' gains:

2021 round: 1656 (+14.4% YoY) (285 female, 17.2%)

2020 round: 1447 (+10.7% YoY) (275 female, 19.0%)

2019 round: 1307 (+14.7% YoY)

2018 round: 1139 (+33.8% YoY)

2017 round: 851 (+21.4% YoY)

2016 round: 701

7.2 Interviews, including overseas interviews, were conducted online with the majority of colleagues welcoming some benefits of an "online" operation as well as noting the challenges familiar to all subjects.

7.3 Online and out-of-hours access to applicants' paperwork was welcome and, one would hope, a feature that would persist after the necessities of operating around Covid-19.

7.4 The Winter Pool, also online, was very active despite the pressure on numbers and was well (admirably) used by colleagues and colleges for both moderation and trading: 28 colleges (out of 29 receiving direct applications) pooled at least one candidate and 15.5% of applications (257) were placed in the pool. 8 tags were retrieved and 26 further offers were made to candidates in the pool, meaning 24.2% of candidates receiving an offer were involved in the pool (10% of those pooled) -- which represented:

- 7.4.1 1. a healthy proportion of the field to have been pooled;
2. a healthy proportion of moderation by the colleges of their lowest-ranking applicants;
3. a healthy level of engagement with the pool to ensure the best candidates secure a place regardless of their preference college.

7.5 Once again, the Computer Science DoSs, college fellows and Admissions Tutors were applauded for their time and dedication to making the winter pool work. Many productive discussions, cross-checks and second opinions had been sought, and it would appear that applicants' interests had been well served. The online, as opposed to face-to-face, nature of proceedings did not seem to suppress communication.

7.6 The March round saw a couple of further offers made by the mature colleges.

7.7 It was generally expected that most offers would be met due to the way the A levels were being assessed this year.

7.8 It was confirmed that EU candidates, excluding Irish, were now counting as overseas students, but this had not been reflected in application numbers from the EU.

7.9 However, it was yet to be seen whether or not these places would actually be taken up, or whether students would feel they could not afford the international fess – it was therefore too early to decide whether or not we had been adversely affected by Brexit.

## **8 TMUA update and discussion**

8.1 The DoS again discussed the proposed change for students to pay their own fee for CTMUA and for a fee-waiver to be available for those in need and reported that they were not happy with the proposal, as there was no clarity as to how the fee-waiver procedure would actually be managed.[Post-meeting update: The Admissions forum decided to implement the change from CTMUA to TMUA for 2021 despite the objections raised in the DoS forum.]

- 8.2 The UK Department of Education was proposing to change the UCAS procedures and for places to be offered based on real grades rather than predictions. No decisions had yet been made but universities and colleges across the UK had been surveyed and a draft response from the University of Cambridge would be circulated to this meeting in due course.
- 8.3 As the interviewing procedures for next year were now being planned, it was suggested that it would be good to have subject-based coherence across the colleges and that this could be a proposal from the DoS Forum for the Department to endorse (*action: DoS to HoD*)

**9 Any Other Business**  
None

**10 Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 7 July 2021, 14.15, via Zoom