UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Department of Computer Science and Technology

Minutes of the meeting of the

Directors of Studies in Computer Science Forum

Wednesday 6 July 2022 at 14:15 by Zoom

Members

Mrs Helen Averill (Teaching Admin Manager)
Prof Jean Bacon (JE)
Prof Alastair Beresford (Q)
Prof Alan Blackwell (DAR)
Dr Luana Bulat (ME, ST EDS)
Ms Marion Cobby (Admin/Minutes)
Dr Stephen Cummins (GIRTON)
Dr John Fawcett (CH, HOM, HH, LC, M, NEWN)
Dr David Greaves (CC)
Prof Timothy Griffin (K)
Dr Hatice Gunes (TH)
Prof Robert Harle (DOW, FITZ) *(Chair)*
Dr Sean Holden (T)
Dr Alice Hutchings (K)
Dr Matthew Ireland (SID)
Prof Timothy Jones (CAIUS)
Prof Srinivasan Keshav (FITZ)
Dr Neel Krishnaswami (T)
Prof Neil Lawrence (Q)
Prof Cecilia Mascolo (JE)

Dr Russell Moore (CAIUS)
Prof Simon Moore (TH)
Prof Richard Mortier (CHR)
Prof Robert Mullins (PET, JN)
Prof Alan Mycroft (ROB)
Ms Helen Neal (Admin)
Prof Lawrence Paulson (CLARE)
Prof Amanda Prorok (PEM)
Prof Thomas Sauerwald (EMMA)
Dr Richard Sharp (ROB)
Professor Frank Stajano (T)
Mrs Caroline Stewart (Department Secretary)
Dr Sergei Taraskin (CATH)
Dr Christopher Town (JE, WOLF)
Prof Jamie Vicary (K)
Dr Richard Watts (SEL)
Dr Jeremy Yallop (ROB)
Dr Zheng Yuan (CC)

## 1	Apologies for Absence

Dr Luana Bulat
Dr Stephen Cummins
Dr David Greaves
Prof Tim Griffin
Prof Richard Mortier
Prof Robert Mullins
Dr Jeremy Yallop

## 2	Minutes of the meeting of 29 April 2022

2.1	These were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.
2.2	It was confirmed that IA results would be published at 14:00 on Friday 8 July.

3 Matters arising from the meeting of 29 April 2022

3.1 Statistics showing impact on the number of applicants as they were now required to pay for TMUA individually up-front (John Fawcett) – *item 4.1.2.*

3.1.1 The charge for the TMUA had increased to £77, with the additional requirement for candidates to travel to a test centre. However, it was confirmed that Prof Graham Virgo had reported that the fee would be reduced to a figure as yet unknown and that attending at a test centre would not be required. Full details were yet to be given but DoSs were given this update in case any other information was being sent to individual colleges.

3.1.2 It was noted that the dates for registration for the TMUA had recently changed and that this would be highlighted at the Open Days.

3.1.3 As students would now need to apply for the test before applying to Cambridge, it would be important to ensure that the website reflected this.

3.1.4 It was noted that as TMUA was now used by a number of different universities, some applicants to Cambridge would have already taken it anyway.

3.1.5 It was noted that the proposed new dates could be disadvantageous due to how they tie up to the application date; the registration date would now be before the UCAS deadline.

3.1.6 The committee asked Dr Fawcett to express the concern of the group that they had not been consulted about this change in timings. There was concern that this new procedure would further disadvantage those who were not already familiar with the system and would therefore not find out in time.

3.2 Request for a page at a fixed address on the CL intranet, with all relevant dates for undergraduate Directors of Studies, and possibly an ical feed to be raised at departmental level (Prof Robert Harle) - *item 4.2.1.*

3.2.1 This was in progress and would be completed over the summer.

3.3 Feedback from the questionnaire distributed to students about examinations by Prof Anuj Dawar – *item 5.1.5.*

3.3.1 It was agreed that this would be covered in item 5.

3.4 Addition of a link to the Mathematics examination information from the CST webpage (Helen Averill) – *item 6.5.*

3.4.1 This had been done.

3.5 Advice given to Part II students re dissertation supervisors (Prof Cecilia Mascolo) – *item 7.1.4.*

3.5.1 Results of data analysis of project marks over a number of previous years had been circulated to the group. The initial indication was there was little difference between the results of UTO/non-UTO supervisors.

3.5.2 However, it was felt that further analysis of the data was needed before reporting to students, as it was felt it might not be a realistic representation of what took place. There was some belief that there were various layers of supervision taking place, with experienced supervisors supporting the officially-named supervisor.

3.5.3 It was noted that some of the data for 2020 was incorrect and would need further attention.

3.5.4 One DoS reported that they often intervened to help students who were struggling, which would also affect the statistics.

3.5.6 It was agreed that additional breakdown was needed and that this would be provided for the next meeting *(action: Helen Averill).*

4 Tripos matters

4.1 It was confirmed that Open Days were to take place over the next two days – details of the programme were provided.

4.1.1 A request was made for more volunteers to help as the numbers attending would be high. The pre-booking of tours was already full, with a long waiting list for both days.

4.2 Students had expressed disquiet about having to write code for Interaction Design as they felt it had interfered with their revision. It was confirmed that pre-pandemic this had always been part of the course

but that it had been removed for the online delivery during Covid. Prof Robert Harle agreed to look into this for future deliveries *(action: Prof Robert Harle)*.

4.3 It was confirmed that there was no specific steer from the department, as yet, regarding in-person lectures returning in full next academic year. There was clearly a preference for it from both students and the centre, and there was a general expectation that this would be the case.

4.3.1 It was requested that a clear steer should be provided from the department, in order to avoid the hybrid offerings of the past year.

4.3.2 It was suggested that there should be a default to in-person teaching and that any exceptions should seek TMC approval, prior to the start of teaching *(action: Prof Robert Harle to implement this and inform lecturers)*.

5 Examinations

5.1 No insurmountable problems had been encountered, although the submission of scans of answers online had been challenging for some which had created a larger amount of follow-up administrative work in order to sort out problems such as mis-labelling and mis-filing.

5.2 It was agreed that if exams were to continue online the system would need to be more robust in future to reduce the number of these problems.

5.3 It was suggested that the re-introduction of a cover sheet would help as this was part of the checking procedure.

5.4 There was concern that a large number of dissertations had not been proof-read by the supervisors, as there had been a lot of typos and errors. DoSs were advised to ask supervisors to ensure that the proof-reading took place in future years, although there would have to be some flexibility with those which were submitted at the last minute and therefore too late to be proof-read thoroughly.

5.5 It had been noticed that the number of students working right up to the submission deadline had greatly increased, following the changing of the deadline to be one week earlier than it had been previously (even though this had been at the request of the students in the first place).

5.6 Re the additional dissertation feedback and breakdown, it was reported that students had not found this particularly useful (the top/middle/bottom ranking information) and that they would have preferred information and advice on working and writing standards, etc, in order to improve the quality of their dissertations.

5.7 There had been an increased number of cases of plagiarism in the ticks, some of which had been resolved with the use of vivas. It was suggested that students should be made clearly aware that there would be consequences if they plagiarised and that vivas had taken place this year to address this issue.

5.8 It was agreed that DoSs should have been notified about vivas as one student missed their viva due to not having seen the email and the DoS was unaware of it. There was a request for key notifications to be copied to DoSs in future, with a bcc to the college tutor when necessary, which was agreed.

5.9 'Donor plagiarism' had now also been identified and the TMC had proposed that the following should be made clear on the website: that 'making code available either intentionally or otherwise, should not happen before the completion of exams'. This would also be taken to the Faculty Board.

5.10 It was noted that in the 1A marking/classing document it stated that Papers 1 to 3 had to be norm referenced, whereas others did not, nor did Mathematics. It was suggested that the removal of norm referencing would make things more 'normal' and was agreed to take to the TMC for discussion *(action: Prof Robert Harle)*.

5.11 It was noted, with regret, that DoSs no longer received copies of the Overseers' reports, although the reports did go to the Examiners.

5.12 It was confirmed that no decisions had yet been made about examinations in the future but that recommendations had been submitted as follows:

For written exams: to be timed, in person, on computers, open-book with online resources (ie in an exam hall with internet access).
For practicals: to retain ticking and not with fine-grading of marking; but that IB should have a substantial programming exercise added with the removal of the main programming-related ticks.

It was reiterated that these were only recommendations at this point and that more work would be done on this to make a more formal recommendation.

6   Any Other Business

6.1   There was a request for DoSs to have access to part II unit materials in order to advise students, which was supported and agreed.

6.2   Dr John Fawcett was asked to update all members of any developments re TMUA *(action: Dr John Fawcett).*

7   Date of next meeting

Thursday 13 October 2022