



Minutes of a meeting of The Directors of Studies in Computer Science Forum

Thursday 19 January 2022 at 14:00 via Zoom

Members

Mrs Helen Averill (Teaching Admin Manager)
Prof Alan Blackwell (DAR)
Dr Luana Bulat (ME)
Ms Marion Cobby (Teaching Admin)
Dr Stephen Cummins (G)
Dr Ramsey Faragher (Q)
Dr John Fawcett (CHU, H, HH, LC, M, N)
Dr David Greaves (CC)
Prof Timothy Griffin (K)
Prof Robert Harle (DOW, F) (*Chair*)
Dr Sean Holden (T)
Dr Matthew Ireland (SID)
Dr Alice Hutchings (K)
Prof Timothy Jones (CAI)
Prof Srinivasan Keshav (F)
Dr Neel Krishnaswami (T)
Dr Jasmin Jahic (Q)
Prof Nicolas Lane (JN)
Prof Cecilia Mascolo (JE)
Dr Russell Moore (CAI)
Prof Simon Moore (TH)

Prof Richard Mortier (CHR)
Prof Robert Mullins (JN, PET)
Prof Alan Mycroft (ROB)
Ms Helen Neal (Teaching Admin)
Prof Larry Paulson (CL)
Prof Amanda Prorok (PEM)
Dr Challenger Mishra (Q)
Prof Thomas Sauerwald (EMM)
Dr Richard Sharp (ROB)
Prof Frank Stajano (T)
Mrs Caroline Stewart (Department Secretary)
Dr Sergei Taraskin (CTH)
Dr Christopher Town (W, JE)
Prof Jamie Vicary (K)
Dr Richard Watts (SE)
Dr Jeremy Yallop (ROB)
Dr Francisco Vargas (CC)
Prof Andreas Vlachos (F)

1 Apologies for absence

Prof Timothy Jones, Prof Srinivasan Keshav, Dr Neel Krishnaswami, Prof Cecilia Mascolo, Prof Robert Mullins and Dr Jeremy Yallop.

2 Minutes from the meeting of 14 October 2022

These were signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 Update on pending actions

- 3.1 **Item 3.5.6.** Results of data analysis of project marks (UTO/Non-UTO supervisors). Further analysis required **Status:** The statistics review had not yet been completed due to the high workload for the Student Admin team over the vacation. The data would be ready for the next DoS meeting in April 2023 if still required.
- 3.2 **Item 5.1.** The date of TMUA registration next year vs UCAS deadline. The entry date for TMUA had changed this year and there was concern as this would have an adverse effect for widening participation as minority groups may feel that they could not apply if they had missed the TMUA deadline. **Action:** To monitor the impact of the TMUA deadline being before application deadline, for discussion at next DoS meeting.

Regardless of the outcome this had been mitigated by changing it this year but it would still be useful to see.

3.3 **Item 5.3.** Ticks and Plagiarism: It was agreed it would be useful for DoS's to be able to have updates of the progress of the students' ticks, and to have an automated system to keep track. It was noted that in previous years we had the automated grader which DoS's had access to which collected the tick marks from Moodle, but tickers had to get the grade onto Moodle for this to work. There is currently no live system in place to track/monitor student tick progress/not progress. **Action:** Rob Harle agreed to raise the need for an automated tick tracking system to TMC who were meeting the following week.

3.4 **Item 7.3.** Due to our large numbers this year the Summer pool had not been utilised, which was felt to be unfortunate as many good students had been missed. It was noted that it was not completely clear what could be done, but it was noted that some colleges had undershot so would probably use the Summer pool. It was suggested by Prof Frank Stajano that our numbers management could cease, due to having not met the targets, but that this would need to be agreed by the new Head of Department. **Action:** Prof Cecilia Mascolo and Prof Robert Harle to discuss ways to keep a number of places back for Summer pool students.

3.5 **Item 8.1.** Future meetings of DoS Group - whether they would be on a Friday or Thursday. Rob Harle to circulate poll/vote via the DoS list email. **Action:** This would be circulated following this meeting (*action: RKH*)

4 Other matters arising

4.1 Robotics assessment (to be considered in item 5.2 below)

5 Tripos matters

5.1 Regulations and teaching guideline updates

5.1.1 Helen Averill updated the forum on the status of documentation that had recently been updated (CST Regulations); the updates had been approved by TMC and Faculty Board, and would now go to the Academic Standards Committee for approval (April 2023).

5.1.2 There had been discussion as to whether the Unit of Assessment should be renamed Module, to be more in line with Part III – this had been approved.

5.1.3 Updates had been made to the Marking and Classing document and to the guidelines for extensions and deadlines. These had also been approved by the Faculty Board and the changes would be reflected on the website.

5.2 Robotics – Unit of Assessment

5.2.1 Dr Richard Watts raised the concerns of students who felt there was too much work in the Robotics assessed exercise; it was noted that this had been a problem in the past but that there had been more concerns this year and some weaker students had been unable to submit anything due to the workload required.

5.2.2 It was suggested that it would be worth flagging this up from the start in order to warn students before signing up for it.

5.2.3 It was agreed that this would be taken to the TMC as a specific item of concern (*action: RKH*)

6 Admissions

6.1 Admissions round update (Dr John Fawcett)

6.1.1 The Winter Pool had just taken place and Computer Science had done very well, with 28 offers made which was in line with the long-term average for the department.

6.1.2 It was noted that the number of female applicants had dropped to 17.8%, having previously reached 24% over several years of a gradual increase, which was a notable change. It was noted, however, that although the number of applications from female students was down, they achieved higher average interview scores than their male counterparts.

- 6.1.3 It was noted that from next year, UCAS would allow students to pick from a range of options in the gender column so these stats will be more difficult to compare in a year's time.
- 6.1.4 The question of whether there was a need to continue with numbers management was raised, as the increase in capacity was allowing colleges to admit them all and the capacity of the teaching spaces was able to keep up with current demand. It was suggested that the DoS forum should make a recommendation to be sent to the Admissions Forum and that the Senior Tutors' Committee would make the final decision.
- 6.1.5 It was confirmed that the TMUA process for those interviewed in December 2023 would remain the same as currently.
- 6.1.6 For the round of admissions in December 2024 the interview would not include the TMUA test as Cambridge Assessment had now pulled out of it, along with similar tests for other subjects, for a number of reasons which they felt was making it impossible for them to continue with it. It was reported that the access arrangements for TMUA were unnecessarily complicated with many schools unable to invigilate it themselves, which incurred additional costs for students having to take the test elsewhere, eg British Council, and which had resulted in considerable delays in the results reaching the University. The tight turnaround of results had proved to be highly problematical in terms of logistical problems with schools, marking and those tests taken by overseas candidates.
- 6.1.7 It was suggested that the DoS Forum might write a letter of complaint to Cambridge Assessment about the shortage of lead time between receiving the TMUA results and having to process them (48 hours to process 120 applications).
- 6.1.8 Various suggestions for alternative pre-interview assessment were made, such as CCAT and BMAT, although there were well-documented problems with these in terms of technology capacity in schools, online invigilation problems and high running costs.
- 6.1.9 It was felt strongly that any replacement test should be well-tested and also kept in use for several years to come, as there had been so many changes in recent years.
- 6.1.10 Other options for a pre-admissions test were suggested, such as setting harder offers or having a second pool before deselection. It was agreed that this would create a lot of additional work and that pre-interview reallocation to other colleges could be used to spread the interviewing load; the use of post-docs as pre-screening interviewers was suggested, as well as possibly extending the interviewing period or trying to have a different form of pre-interview assessment. It was acknowledged that this was still very much work in progress.

7 Examinations

7.1 Examination format for 2022/23

- 7.1.1 For the examinations in June 2023 it was confirmed that Part IA and IB examinations would be closed book, in-person, and that Part II would remain online, open-book.

8 Any other business

8.1 Meeting dates for 2022-23 (carried over from previous meeting)

- 8.1.1 The question of whether future DoS Forum meetings should take place on a Thursday or a Friday would be decided by a poll, to be circulated by the Chair following this meeting (as covered in item 3.5 above) – (*action RKH*).

8.2 Proposal to make all ticks non-compulsory and not part of the examination process

- 8.2.1 Initial feedback from students suggested that they were not in favour of this, as they saw value in the ticking process and would have less incentive to attend if it were not compulsory.
- 8.2.2 It was agreed to take this to both the SCoF and TMC for a final decision (*action: RKH*).

9 Date of the next meeting

Thursday 27 April or Friday 28 April 2023, 14:00, via Zoom.