UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Department of Computer Science and Technology

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

Thursday 27 April 2023 at 14:00 via Zoom

Members

Mrs Helen Averill (Teaching Admin Manager)	Prof Simon Moore (TH)
Prof Alan Blackwell (DAR)	Prof Richard Mortier (CHR)
Dr Luana Bulat (ME)	Prof Robert Mullins (JN, PET)
Ms Marion Cobby (Teaching Admin)	Prof Alan Mycroft (ROB)
Dr Stephen Cummins (G)	Ms Helen Neal (Teaching Admin)
Dr Ramsey Faragher (Q)	Prof Larry Paulson (CL)
Dr John Fawcett (CHU, H, HH, LC, M, N)	Prof Amanda Prorok (PEM)
Dr David Greaves (CC)	Dr Challenger Mishra (Q)
Prof Timothy Griffin (K)	Prof Thomas Sauerwald (EMM)
Prof Hatice Gunes (TH)	Dr Richard Sharp (ROB)
Prof Robert Harle (DOW, F) *(Chair)*	Prof Frank Stajano (T)
Dr Sean Holden (T)	Mrs Caroline Stewart (Department Secretary)
Dr Matthew Ireland (SID)	Dr Sergei Taraskin (CTH)
Dr Alice Hutchings (K)	Dr Christopher Town (W, JE)
Prof Timothy Jones (CAI)	Prof Jamie Vicary (K)
Prof Srinivasan Keshav (F)	Dr Richard Watts (SE)
Dr Neel Krishnaswami (T)	Dr Jeremy Yallop (ROB)
Dr Jasmin Jahic (Q)	Dr Francisco Vargas (CC)
Prof Nicolas Lane (JN)	Prof Andreas Vlachos (F)
Prof Cecilia Mascolo (JE)	
Dr Russell Moore (CAI)	

1   Apologies for absence

Prof Hatice Gunes, Prof Simon Moore, Prof Richard Mortier, Prof Robert Mullins.

2   Minutes of the meeting of 19 January 2023

With no corrections to be made the minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting of 19 January 2023.

3   Update on pending actions from the minutes of 19 January 2023

3.1   Results of data analysis of project marks (UTO/Non-UTO supervisors - further analysis required *(item 3.5.6).* It had been reported that 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.

3.1.1   It was agreed that although the system had now slightly changed it would still be useful to the analysis of the current year's marks as soon as available, of those students without a UTO as a direct supervisor *(action: HPA).*

3.2   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 *(item 5.1).*

3.2.1   It was confirmed that the impact of the TMUA deadline being before the application deadline would be monitored, for discussion at the next DoS meeting.

3.2.2   John Fawcett confirmed that the deadline had originally been changed due to a difficulty in recruiting staff last year, but that the long-term aim was to have a longer lead time.

3.3   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 *(item 5.3).* Rob Harle had agreed to raise the need for an automated tick tracking system to TMC who were meeting the following week.

3.3.1   It was confirmed that TMC did not disagree with this suggestion but that the technical systems were not in place to do this.

3.3.2   It was agreed that the Tripos review should include this requirement and that it should remain as an agenda item for the long-term planning process.

3.4   Summer Pool (*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.

3.4.1   It was noted that discussions have not yet taken place but that it could be considered by circulation *(action: RKH/CM).*

3.5   Future meetings of DoS Group *(item 8.1)* - whether they would be on a Friday or Thursday. Rob Harle to circulate poll/vote via the DoS list email. This would be circulated following the meeting of 19 January *(action: RKH).*

3.5.1   This had not yet been circulated so was put into the Zoom 'chat' and would be discussed in item 8 below *(action: RKH).*

4   Other matters arising

There were no other matters arising.

5   Tripos matters

5.1   Tripos Review

5.1.1   Prof Harle confirmed the scope of the imminent Tripos review, which would be a root and branch approach, to examine everything in detail and address questions such as coping with increased numbers should the numbers management process disappear.

5.1.2   The aim would be to produce a discussion paper by the end of term, with a phased implementation to begin at the start of the 2024 academic year.

5.1.3   It was confirmed that DoSs would be invited for their comments and suggestions throughout the process.

5.2   Chat GPT
5.2.1   Discussion about a disclaimer in relation to ChatGPT was underway, and once confirmed would be circulated to the student reps for comment before distribution to all students and DoSs, to give more direction about what could and what could not be included in terms of ChatGPT and AI.
5.2.2   It was reported that the Honour Code was being updated to include the use of AI.

5.3   Marking and assessment boycott
5.3.1   No updates on this were available as it was all still subject to negotiations with the unions.

6   Admissions

Dr John Fawcett presented the following updates:
6.1   The current round for offer holders was progressing as expected; once they were to receive their results in August the usual reconsideration pool would take place, to consider those who were interviewed but had not been made an offer for any reason. If their results were to be better than anticipated they could be considered for an offer.
6.2   It was confirmed that the interviews in December 2023 and March 2024 would run with TMUA, as usual, so there would be no changes to the next academic intake due to this.
6.3   It was confirmed that the December 2023 interviews would remain on-line, as the department had voted for this initially and the threshold of 17 colleges to make in-person interviews compulsory had not been met.   It was noted that some colleges had made special exemptions for this. The department was hoping that there would not be a poll about this every year, but accepted that it may continue for one further year.
6.4   It was noted that the TMUA dates would be a little earlier than last year, but otherwise the whole process would be the same.
6.5   It was confirmed that by the time of the interviews in December 2024 the TMUA replacement would be in place; it was looking increasingly likely that it would still be TMUA but with a different name, as it had been concluded – after a range of testing – that TMUA worked well and that future tests would be very similar.
6.6   Procurement would be inviting for bids to undertake the development of a replacement, with two options – either to buy in questions or to set the questions using experts.
6.7   It was confirmed that any new TMUA test would be used by a variety of universities for Computer Science, Maths and Economics, many of whom are our competitors, so any students applying to these universities as well as Cambridge would already have paid the test fee. However, it was also confirmed that a bursary scheme would be in place for any student who was required to pay for the test, which was well supported by the meeting. There was a preference for an advance fee waiver for it, rather than having to pay and then claim back, if at all possible.
6.8   There was general concern about the quality of any company chosen for this, and several members expressed their wish to have some input into the selection process, given that individual colleges would be sharing the costs. There was opinion that there was enough time to discuss what was really required from the test, given that it would not be introduced until 2024 and that, after having input into the design of the specification of the test, other Russell Group universities could be consulted so that the test suited a range of universities.
6.9   It was reported that the gender balance in student applications was regressing once more, having increased gradually during the pandemic, but that the University admissions office did not have any useful statistics to analyse.
6.10   It was confirmed that the departmental Outreach programme was being re-vamped, with the aim of talking to children earlier on in their schooling so that they may perhaps not drop out of Computer Science as often as they did currently.
6.11   It was also confirmed that the drop in female numbers was in applications, and not conversions from offers to places.

6.12   It was noted that a considerable number of female applicants were from eastern Europe, and that the university was investigating the scope of some bursaries being offered for such applicants.

6.13   It was confirmed that a new Outreach administrative post was to begin in early June and that they should be part of the TMC membership. The Chair also requested outline details of the outreach plans from the Outreach Committee chairman, Prof Tim Jones *(action: TMJ)*.

7   Examinations

7.1   There was nothing further to add to the fact that exams would be going ahead as planned, with Part II papers 8 and 9 online and Papers 1-7 in-person.

7.2   It was agreed to ask the SSCoF if the Part II students would like a 'mock' to practise uploading their exam solutions to Moodle.

8   Any other business

8.1   Preferred days of the week for future meetings of the DoS Forum

8.1.1   Following the poll that had been put into the 'chat' at the start of the meeting it was agreed that the meetings would remain on Thursdays for the time being, but the Chair agreed to circulate to those who had not been at the meeting, on the assumption that Thursday would not be their ideal choice due them not having been able to attend on this occasion *(action: RKH)*.

9   Date of next meeting: 5 July 2023