UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Department of Computer Science and Technology

The Directors of Studies in Computer Science Forum

Thursday 19 October 2023 at 14:15 via Zoom

https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/81626455327?pwd=R3BkUGJYcDRnVENjMzJrcURQTFdVdz09

Minutes

Members

Prof Richard Mortier (CHR) RM X
Dr John Fawcett (CH, HOM, HH, LC, M, NEWN, CATH) JF ✓
Prof Lawrence Paulson (CLARE) LP ✓
Dr David Greaves (CC) DG ✓
Francisco Vargas (CC) FV X
Prof Alan Blackwell (DAR) AB ✓
Prof Robert Harle (DOW) *(Chair)* RH ✓
Dr Dima Szamozvancev *(DOW)* DS X
Prof Thomas Sauerwald (EMM) TS ✓
Prof Srinivasan Keshav (FITZ) SK ✓
Prof Andreas Vlachos (FITZ) AV X
Dr Stephen Cummins (GIRTON) SC ✓
Dr Russell Moore (CAIUS) RUM X
Prof Timothy Jones (CAIUS) TJ X
Prof Cecilia Mascolo (JE) CM X
Dr Christopher Town (JE, WOLF) CT ✓
Prof Timothy Griffin (K) TG X
Dr Apinan Hasthanasombat (K) AH ✓
Dr Alice Hutchings (K) ALH X
Prof Jamie Vicary (K) JV X

Dr Luana Bulat (MUR, ST EDS) LB ✓
Prof Anil Madhavapeddy (PEM) AM ✓
Dr Carl Henik Ek (PEM) CHE ✓
Dr Nic Lane (PET, JN) NL ✓
Dr Ramsey Faragher (Q) RF ✓
Dr Jasmin Jahic (Q) JJ X
Dr Richard Sharp (ROB) RS X
Dr Jeremy Yallop (ROB) JY ✓
Dr Richard Watts (SEL) RW ✓
Mr Matthew Ireland (SID) MI ✓
Professor Frank Stajano (T) FS ✓
Dr Neel Krishnaswami (T) NK ✓
Dr Hatice Gunes (TH) HG ✓
Prof Simon Moore (TH) SM X
Ms Helen Neal (Admin) HN ✓
Dean Dodds (Admin) DD ✓
Mrs Caroline Stewart (Department Secretary) CS ✓
Ms Becky Straw (Teaching Admin Manager) BS ✓
Prof Peter Robinson (emeritus) PR ✓

1   Apologies for Absence

Cecilia Mascolo

Simon Moore

Richard Mortier

Tim Jones

Tim Griffin

Simon Moore

Challenger Mishra

Andreas Vlachos

Dima Szamozvance
Alan Mycroft

Notification of AOB

None raised.

2 Minutes of the meeting of 05 July 2023

RH noted that some actions were not completed due to Helen Avril leaving, but most completed.

3 Matters arising from the meeting of 05 July 2023

3.1 The impact of the TMUA deadline being before the application deadline would be monitored. There was nothing new to report at this stage. RH confirmed that he would talk to JF off-line and would circulate any updates by email. **(action: RH)**.

RH explained there were no updates to circulate before. John would discuss later.

4 Tripos matters

4.1 Extension policy

RH spoke about the new policy regarding extensions. Allows students to self-certify two extensions per year. May come to DoSes if they need a third extension, then proceed as before. Believed policy had been circulated, as for it to be circulated by everyone here. BS will do this.

4.2 AOS timings

RH explained that due to constraints this year, had to bring AOS forward to start early in MT with an assessment at the end of this term. The practical is not examinable if part II students find this too much. Not ideal, but it is what we are doing this year, hopefully will find a better solution for next year.

5 Examinations

RH spoke about the impact of the marking assessment boycott and students have been vocal about this.

AM felt there were a lot of unclassed students in part IIs. CS believed the examiners thought of this carefully. RH had spoken with Rafal and was concerned that our guidance did not include unclassing
All students should now have results, met the deadline unlike other departments.

RH asked how things could be handed differently if this occurred again. No response. RH felt this demonstrated that we did everything we could.

RH noted that all exams were written this year.

AM felt computer science was under some scrutiny at his college due to the unclassing. DG explained the reasoning behind the grading decisions, examiners felt the approach was appropriate. Reiterated that removal of the unclassing information caused confusion.

NK agreed that markings were given by percentage and not much room to change. RH wished to discuss this offline and could be brought to examiners report and requested that people email him. **(Action: RH & ALL)**.

6 Admissions

JF explained we did not have application breakdowns by gender, socioeconomic background or country yet, because applications are closing at the moment and we're still getting the last cases from UCAS. Totals are (roughly) known: last year 1591, this year 1875 (will change a little but unlikely significant shift), year-on-year change is +18%. UCAS will now include additional gender options not available in previous years, so the stats will not be directly comparable.

Admissions will be similar this year but will change the following year.
We're using the SMI (subject moderation interface, the web-based system many of us have used before) for metadata again.
We are using Google drive for CAPO (Cambridge application printout) files again.
Online interviews except for colleges choosing to do otherwise; those colleges know who they are and their admissions offices will explain how their arrangements will work -- same SMI and Google Drive for everyone.

JF offered to discuss this with anyone offline.

For online interviews, CCTL recommends not using a whiteboard because current lower-sixth form students aren't as familiar as previous cohorts due to not having had to use it heavily during the pandemic. Definitely no hard requirements to avoid whiteboards; just something to consider. CCTL suggests we consider pen + paper (viewed via webcam), or text-based questions, as alternatives.

6.1 Application numbers

JF explained that EU students will need to apply for a tuition fee loan through UK Student Finance. Some are eligible for a maintenance loan as well but need to check residency status and entitlement. The Cambridge Bursary scheme is also available.

The interview period is Sat 2 -- Sun 17 Dec.

RH asked if we were still in numbers management and JF informed us that we were, but only because we had not withdrawn. JF explained the numbers and the reconsideration pool. RH believed we should decide what we want to do quickly, felt we should stick with the quotas we had before, but with some flexibility. Did not feel like we could cope with a massive expansion of students. Some colleges wished to take more. JF felt the restrictions were on the colleges not the departments due to a lack of room. RH would email DoSes and discuss the numbers they would like. RH asked if anyone objected, did not. **(Action: RH)**.

6.2 Pool dates

The winterpool will open on Tuesday the 9th of January to Friday the 12th with tags expiring on the 11th and meetings on the 12th. SMI will be used throughout for metadata about applicants, poolside meeting via Zoom on 12th.

6.3 TMUA

The TMUA deadline was the 29th of September and has passed, applicants can contact college admission officers and can be snuck in at this point, college will speak to central admissions and retroactively add them. The cost of the TMUA this year is £78 for UK/EU and £104 elsewhere, with retrospective "claim cost back" option, on a needs-assessed basis, however students will need to pay upfront first.

FS asked if TMUA charged the university as well as the student, JF explained that under the present arrangement, which ends this year of course, the Collegiate University hands over a sum of money each year and the candidates also make a contribution. The amount paid by the university is a commercially confidential figure and even JF was unaware despite being on the committee which planned the replacement.

On the future of the TMUA, the office for intercollegiate affairs put out a tender request for providers to run it for us; currently live with decision and award of 3- or 5-year contract due this term or start of Lent. Conversations with several other universities are well established and it is expected that a "TMUA consortium" will mean the Cambridge applicants will need TMUA for their other UCAS choices -- so the cost is not a "cost of applying to Cambridge", and it's not "yet another hurdle" that is specific to Cambridge. The questions are likely to operate on a "question-bank" basis that will allow 2 or 3 test dates and avoid test-takers around the world having to sit the test at awkward times of day/night (for test security). Expected that good statistical information will be available to put numeric marks in context. Expected that financial support will continue to be available.

Questions would only be used once, but questions generated would be stored for later use. FS asked if the tender required this model. JF stated it did not, but was good practice among exam boards so used by those bidding.

7   Supervisions

RH spoke about the difficulties finding supervisors. Currently unable to find supervisors for all part II students. In the past we have not offered supervisions due to this and offered examples classes, which students did not respond well to. In the past the standard group size was three, will increase group size, new default will be three where we can, four where we can't and possibly more.

FS spoke about the department ensuring sure that in a group of four, students are similarly skilled. RH spoke about allowing students to choose which group to join. RH asked BS and HN to look at, but difficult to achieve. **(Action: BS & HN)**.

RW spoke about preferring to increase the amount of supervision time rather than group size. RH will look at this option, but not for this term.

8   Any Other Business

None raised.

9   **Date of next meeting:** 18 January 2023 14:00