

The Directors of Studies in Computer Science Forum

Thursday 18 Jan 2024 at 14:00 via Zoom

<https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/85221488713?pwd=SzJFZFhFR2NOK3BtdVpxSGhPUDdEUT09>

Unconfirmed Minutes

Members

Prof Richard Mortier (CHR) RM ✓	Dr Luana Bulat (MUR, ST EDS) LB ✓
Dr John Fawcett (CH, HOM, HH, LC, M, NEWN, CATH) JF ✓	Prof Anil Madhavapeddy (PEM) AM ✓
Prof Lawrence Paulson (CLARE) LP ✓	Dr Carl Henik Ek (PEM) CH ✓
Dr David Greaves (CC) DG ✓	Dr Nic Lane (PET, JN) NL ✓
Francisco Vargas (CC) FV X	Dr Ramsey Faragher (Q) RF X
Prof Alan Blackwell (DAR) AB ✓	Dr Jasmin Jahic (Q) JJ X
Prof Robert Harle (DOW) (<i>Chair</i>) RH ✓	Dr Richard Sharp (ROB) RS X
Dr Dima Szamozvancev (<i>DOW</i>) DS ✓	Dr Jeremy Yallop (ROB) JY X
Prof Thomas Sauerwald (EMM) TS ✓	Dr Richard Watts (SEL) RW ✓
Prof Srinivasan Keshav (FITZ) SK ✓	Mr Matthew Ireland (SID) MI ✓
Prof Andreas Vlachos (FITZ) AV ✓	Professor Frank Stajano (T) FS X
Dr Stephen Cummins (GIRTON) SC X	Dr Neel Krishnaswami (T) NK X
Dr Russell Moore (CAIUS) RMO ✓	Dr Hatice Gunes (TH) HG ✓
Prof Timothy Jones (CAIUS) TJ ✓	Prof Simon Moore (TH) SM X
Prof Cecilia Mascolo (JE) CM X	Ms Helen Neal (Admin) HN ✓
Dr Christopher Town (JE, WOLF) CT X	Dean Dodds (Admin) DD ✓
Prof Timothy Griffin (K) TG X	Mrs Caroline Stewart (Department Secretary) CS ✓
Dr Apinan Hasthanasombat (K) AH ✓	Ms Becky Straw (Teaching Admin Manager) BS ✓
Dr Alice Hutchings (K) ALH ✓	
Prof Jamie Vicary (K) JV X	

1 Apologies for Absence

Prof Cecilia Mascolo (JE)
Dr Neel Krishnaswami (T)
Dr Sean Holden (SH)
Prof Simon Moore (TH)
Dr Stephen Cummins (GIRTON)

Notification of AOB

TJ wishes to discuss supervision, will discuss later in the meeting while discussing Tripos matters.

2 Minutes of the meeting of 10 October 2023

Approved.

3 Matters arising from the meeting of 10 October 2023

3.1 (item 5) 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).

Rob Harle summarised, no comments were made and he was not contacted via email regarding this.

3.2 (item 6.1) Numbers management: RH would email DoSes and discuss the numbers they would like. RH asked if anyone objected, did not. (Action: RH)

No comments.

4 Tripos matters

4.1 MLBI

RH explained that with the lecturer on sabbatical, Sean Holden agreed that lectures could be delivered via previously recorded videos. Supervisors still assigned but no other changes. A slightly unusual arrangement, but was considered preferable to cancelling the course of finding a replacement lecturer.

TJ spoke about supervisors, sought clarification on cases where students drop supervisions and if those sessions are still paid for. RH explained that if a supervision is scheduled within two days of cancellation, the college should still pay as supervisors have already begun to prep, but if they are further in the future, no.

AM asked if supervision delinquency was increasing. RH believed it was hard to compare as students seem to spread themselves too thin. AM believed we should try to avoid inconveniencing supervisors as they are a scarce resource.

RH asked if there were any objections to this arrangement. RW believed this was reasonable but thought college officers may disagree. RW also found it was unclear which supervisions his students were supposed to attend, which made it hard to encourage them. RH believed some drop out were to be expected and should be encouraged as students discover their interests, the issue was etiquette and timing. RH wondered if this problem occurred in other triposes.

TJ intended to speak to his senior tutor and obtain more information and encouraged others to obtain feedback. RH wished to move quickly before TMC on Monday.

5 Examinations

5.1 Summary of examiners report

Has not been circulated, defer to next time.

6 Admissions

6.1 Winter pool outcomes

JF stated that 43 candidates went into the pool and taken out to make an offer. There were 261 candidates in the pool in total. A large winter pool this year, enough for the total number of offers we make from the pool. Any larger would make it difficult to read all the files in the time available

RM wondered if the widening participation field is skewed in future years towards some colleges then they should pool proportionately more of their direct applicants. JF had looked for but did not find evidence of a skew, for now, the distribution of open applications combats the skew but there is no guarantee that will always be so. The consensus was that the quality of candidates in the pool was good, but a question was raised whether the rules of the pool-with-tag system are the best the university can come up with as the current rules lead to colleges acting strategically.

RH asked if the profile of the pool changed or just the numbers. JF stated that 41 offers were made in the pool meeting and two after that due to available places and numbers management. Believed the quality of the pool was good, particularly concerning overseas males. A few were pooled due to argumentative students, to give them every possible chance. Most had a low TMUA score, however a few had a high score.

Had a significant number of applicants with TMUA scores above six, differing from previous years.

TJ stated that he did not like how the pool worked. Had put in two candidates with strings, saw candidates who were better than his own, would have liked to have taken them, but didn't want to risk losing the two had had, did not participate in the pool for the first time since becoming a DoS. Felt that the computer science department could create an algorithm, which would be easier and better for the candidates. TJ did not expect this to be done but suggested it.

JF stated there was a process for suggesting this, although noted that the process was not for TJ's benefit. TJ explained it wasn't for him, but for students he felt may not get a place elsewhere who were better than students who did.

6.2 Review of 2023 admissions

JF stated that everything ran smoothly, Cambridge Admissions Office were not held back by UCAS delays, all of the paperwork was submitted, except for one college which had two candidates come in slightly late. Placed an extremely heavy burden on central admin staff, who were working until ten pm, wished for their work hand checking every detail to be acknowledged.

St. Johns did not go as smoothly as accessing data caused an access denied error, CAO are aware and looking into it.

Numbers management didn't do much, JF suggested that the quotas this year had not been limiting most colleges in the number of offers made many colleges did not use all of their quota and just 3 colleges asked to make an extra offer, due in part to this year's unusually skewing of the field towards overseas offers, which have a much lower conversion ratio. Colleges are limited by the number of bedrooms and the size and shape of their cohorts. That means numbers

management is an unnecessary consideration that weighs on DoSs' and admissions tutors' minds when there are already enough things to worry about. JF stated that we could not take a vote with some DoSs sending apologies but we would survey DoSs after the meeting. The DoSs can only make a recommendation to the Admissions Forum, who in turn make a recommendation to the Senior Tutors' Committee, who have the authority to make a decision.

Mort stated that the feeling he had from admissions tutors was that we should come out of numbers management. Noted that we are constrained by size of lecture theatres, wondered how that was managed, do certain students not attend. RH stated that there was a limit, lecture theatre had been mildly increased. Believed we could often find ways of working around out limits.

TJ believed that finding supervisors was a limit with our current number of students and would cause problems if we expanded. RH believed we had to find ways for the tripos to adapt considering the popularity of the course.

RM wished to discuss in a departmental setting. RH stated that the supervision group had been expanded and believed this could work with some thought.

JF asked how they were grouped together. HN explained we allowed them to choose and had increased the group sizes from last year, some negotiation, cutting down the number of supervision sessions from four to three would also help.

RH believed scheduling supervisions, especially when students lacked time, was an issue, expected more information soon.

JF expected 140.

RM enquired about labs and practicals. RH stated that the current system can't scale. Less than one third of PhDs don't supervise.

JF wished to organise a vote regarding existing numbers management. RH asked BS to create a poll per college. **(Action: BS)**.

6.3 TMUA replacement

Pearson will administer TMUA in the future. Very similar, but there will be a bursary to take the test for free, jointly funded by Imperial College London and us. Support for financial hardship is now provided in advance of registration (improving on payment + claiming back, which has been used in recent years); and for the overseas field, the higher fee (£130) is broadly similar but the new provider has 180 of their own test centres, worldwide, which will not charge an additional fee for invigilating the exam (improving on the current situation), and more candidates will have a more local test centre.

The new TMUA will include more detailed statistics. Does not preclude colleges from offering their own test.

AH asked how invigilation worked in other countries. JF stated that Pearson have invigilators worldwide, two sittings, perhaps three due to time zones. Pearson can tailor exams for each timezone.

Cost had not been disclosed.

RM asked if colleges would end up paying. JF stated colleges had been involved.

7 Any Other Business

None

8 Date of next meeting: 25 April 2024 2024 14:00