

## The Directors of Studies in Computer Science Forum

Wednesday 17 October 2024 at 14:00 via Zoom

<https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/87829597269?pwd=AW6EzwNklluuveaE47I2NNaFNcXgoK.1>

### UNCONFIRMED Minutes

#### Members

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

#### 1 Apologies for Absence

Rob Mullins  
Richard Mortier  
Alice Hutchings  
Cecilia Mascolo

Hatice Gunes

Nic Lane

## Notification of AOB

### 2 Minutes of the meeting of 3 July 2024

Approved.

### 3 Matters arising from the meeting of 3 July 2024

#### 3.1 RM suggested a clear statement from the department, the first late submission results in a warning, second a penalty. JV asked BS to draft a firm standard email. **(Action: BS)**

BS discussed with JV who suggested: *"We have noticed your Y submission is overdue. Please submit your work as soon as possible. Most late submissions will result in a mark penalty as per regulations, but if you feel you have extenuating circumstances, please let us know. This will be considered by the Examiners at the end of the academic year."*

RKH explained that new text had been written, addressing the issue with students believing they could submit late work. Found this text to be reasonably soft for distressed students while also clarifying.

No objections to this text.

#### 3.2 RH and JF will send an email suggesting what pool reports should include. **(Action: RH & JF)** Will be completed before admissions.

#### 3.3 JF spoke about the renewal of the subject convenor role. JF was happy to do this again but wanted to give others the opportunity to attempt it if they wished. RKH suggested an offline vote to give people time to consider, asked people to email him and then have a vote next week. **(Action: All).**

No one nominated themselves, therefore JF has been put forward as the subject convenor. RKH thanked JF.

### 4 Tripos matters

#### 4.1 Changes this year

- Concepts in Programming Languages
- Algorithms
- Computation Theory
- SWSEng
- Project supervisor UTO requirement

RKH explained that Concepts in Programming Languages had been removed as most was duplicated elsewhere, with the exception of history. Anil has volunteered to give lectures on history. This will free time.

Algorithms will not be taught by a UTO but JF will teach this. RKH thanked JF for this. In the future we will search for a UTO. JF did not plan on changing the syllabus at this time.

Computation Theory. Difficulty finding someone to take this, however TG has agreed to teach. RKH thanked TG.

Software and Security Engineering will be taught by multiple people this year as last year, will be revised next year. FS had emailed about this but had not received a response, RKH explained he had not received this. FS wished some things to be changed as it impacts his Cybersecurity course. According to RKH the security engineering did not map in perfectly and will be stripped out next year.

RKH explained there had been discussion about who could be a UTO marker. In the past there was some flexibility for fellows. Following advice from examiners, next year only UTOs will be allowed, softly introducing this year.

TS found it difficult to find dates and information on the website. RKH thanked TS for the feedback and agreed deadlines were not clear, would look into this and the role of checkers. **(Action: RKH & BS).**

#### 4.2 Policy for missed supervisions (paper)

RKH explained this had been discussed before but wished to raise it here for clarity.

RKH referred to a document offering guidelines for supervisors and students. SH did not believe his senior tutor would agree to pay for missed supervisions. RKH disagreed this was the university's policy. SH believed supervisors would be paid for the first missed session but not subsequent. RKH clarified that supervisors should be paid for all supervisions where students were expected to attend, SH found the wording ambiguous

FS believed supervisors should be paid if a student doesn't show up, as the fault lies with the student and the supervisor has done nothing wrong so should not be penalised.

RKH believed this should be rewritten.

RW suggested supervisors could just email out times without waiting for a response from students and then bill the college. RKH suggested adding an exception on the supervisor to alert the college about non-attendance and to properly communicate their times.

Three changes, wordsmithing the first section, adding an exception on the supervisor to clearly communicate when and where the supervision will be and to inform the college about non-attendance.

#### 4.3 Feedback from SSCOF: Revision Supervisions

Student raised an issue with inconsistent revision supervisions. RKH noted that colleges are free to teach differently.

JF believed the supervision norms did not add up. Suggested the gap was too big.

RKH wished to Revit the document.

## 5 Examinations

JV summarised his examiners report.

Modules, a great strength of the course and a diverse range of modules. However, there were concerns about fairness and comparability of module marking. Some involve course work, others via mini exam type questions. Students are all achieving high marks, perhaps explained clerly what they have to do to succeed. Some students also spend an unreasonable amount of time on their module work, more than they would on their dissertation.

JV was happy that students had been treated fairly this year but believed with the tripos review there should be some work done to normalise the modules and introduce more uniformity.

JV asked DoSes to discuss with their students.

JV then spoke about Part II projects. Every project needs a UTO but can delegate to a supervisor, which can go wrong, if so the UTO is responsible. Wished to encourage students to contact UTO.

Still a lot of debate regarding what is appropriate for a part II project. Some students solved problems which were not obvious at first but became easy as the project continued, others did not write about the challenges they overcame. JV wished to encourage discussion and for a consensus to be reached regarding what a Part II project should involve.

There were five misconduct investigations. One student used an AI tool and denied it. Five cases with four misconduct findings. JV believed this was a weakness of the tick system. JV encouraged DoSes to tell students that they will be penalised for this and also for late submissions as one student was unaware of this.

FS believed obligatory and assessed ticks were not fit for purpose, should not award marks but should be presented as beneficial to the students learning only, which would remove the incentive to cheat.

AB spoke about being part III examiner and modules which are shared. According to the normalisation procedures a part II student must get a lower mark than a part III student, however this year one exceptional student exceeded part III students. RKH wished this to be raised at TMC. **(Action: RKH & BS).**

SK asked how JV reached the conclusion that students were selecting 'easier' modules, was it anecdotal or based on a survey. JV explained he had not stated that but was concerned it would be possible for students to choose modules based on difficulty rather than preference. RKH had found anecdotal evidence of students looking at exam results and choosing easier modules based on that.

SK did not believe there could ever be a standard course or module, believed standardisation was taking enormous effort. JV explained one module had everyone getting 45% while another had students receiving only between 10 and 20.

TS thanked JV. TS spoke about an earlier report by DG and Alan Mycroft which was similar and suggested JV read that.

## **6 Admissions**

### **6.1 Application numbers**

Applications down sever percent. JF believed Computer Science was down due to recent news about layoffs in tech which discouraged applicants, will have more numbers soon but don't have that at this stage.

### **6.2 Process this year (Numbers management etc)**

The winterpool is the 13 to 16<sup>th</sup> of Jan. JF will discuss the pool process offline with new DoSes **(Action: JF)**.

Informal investigation into generative AI and if it could be used to cheat in admissions interviews. Found there is potential for a voice activated AI assistant with the 01 model which can complete maths tasks and reason. May need to think about this in the future and if online interviews were ideal. This made quite a few colleges nervous.

For this year, everyone who tried to use a GPT, the computer speakers were not good enough and students did not perform well. Every student who was allowed to cheat due to the trial, felt they performed worse.

There is mandatory interview training for new DoSes who are interviewing for the first time. Colleges will circulate details later.

TMUA ran, expecting results on the 15th of November. There will be no March round.

CAPPOS will not have a photograph. Security check of confirming that the person matches the photo has been removed. New security check will involve asking candidate to hold up identification. DoSes are not expected to be an expert on this and will not be penalised for making an error.

FS asked about numbers management. RKH explained that in a previous meeting DoSes did not wish to support this. Numbers management has been removed but keeping the mechanism.

## **7 Any other business**

### **7.1 Keeping lectures between 09 :00 and 13:00**

RKH explained this was still the goal, however ACS tended to use later times which pushes shared modules into these times. RKH believed it was hard to fix this, but was a small number of courses.

FS stated a meeting held yearly could not be run due to a lot of students taking courses at clashing times.

**7.2** Part II Projects

Covered elsewhere.

**8** **Date of next meeting: 23 January 2025 at 2pm**