

**University of Cambridge Computer Laboratory
Teaching Committee**

Chairman: Dr Neil Dodgson

Secretary: Mrs Fiona Billingsley

Minutes of the meeting of the Teaching Committee held on Tuesday 19 February 2008 in GC22 in the William Gates Building

Present: Dr Neil Dodgson Dr Alastair Beresford Dr Ann Copestake
 Dr Sean Holden Dr Ian Wassell Miss Christine Northeast
 Mrs Fiona Billingsley

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Profs Alan Mycroft and Andy Pitts.

STANDING ITEMS

2. Sabbatical Leave and substitute teaching

Nothing to report

3. Review of lecture course feedback

Nothing to report

4. Review of staff-student consultative committee minutes

- (a) Dr Holden reported that the Part II student rep had asked whether an online sign-up system for supervisions could be introduced to replace the current paper sign-up system. Dr Dodgson reminded the committee that the paper sign-up system had been chosen in preference to an online system for simplicity. The committee was not minded to agree to the request.
- (b) Some students had encountered problems with supervisors who re-schedule supervisions at the last minute. The committee recommended that Dr Holden take the issue up Dr Fiore, Co-ordinator of the Part II Supervision System, who might wish to email supervisors.
- (c) There was a request for lecture course notes to be made available on CamTools. It was agreed that this was unnecessary as they are already available on the Computer Laboratory's webpages and it would be inappropriate duplication of effort to attempt to provide the same material via CamTools.
- (d) The MPhil student rep has met with Dr Copestake to discuss various issues raised at the SSCOM meeting. Dr Copestake will raise some of the issues at the next MPhil organisers' meeting.

5. Revision of the Tripos

The committee considered Dr Beresford and Dr Rice's proposal for the revised Paper 1 [TC0708/11]. It was suggested that the course "Real World Programming" be given a different title. The proposal was accepted by the committee. Drs Beresford & Rice were to work on the details, including meeting with Dr King and Miss Northeast to discuss the timetabling of the practical sessions.

6. Development of the new MPhil in Computer Science

- (a) Dr Dodgson and Dr Wassell reported that they met with representatives of the Education Section and the Board of Graduate Studies to consider how we may run a Part III and an MPhil using exactly the same material. A number of

administrative issues mean that it would be difficult to get approval for this at present. They were advised, therefore, to proceed with an MPhil only. The bigger question of how Cambridge can change to allow the running of integrated masters and stand-alone masters using the same material is being addressed by an ad hoc group to which Dr Dodgson has been invited.

- (b) Dr Wassell will continue working on the documentation required for formal approval of the MPhil. He was delegated to talk to Dr Richard Prager about borrowing modules from the Faculty of Engineering.

7. Liaison with the MPhil in CSTIT

Nothing to report

8. Proposals for new courses, significant changes to courses, and removal of courses

Drs Greaves, Dodgson, S Moore and Mullins propose a new Part II course to replace the current VLSI course. The tentative title is “System on Chip Design.” Dr Greaves will teach the course. Drs Greaves, S Moore and Mullins will work together on a syllabus. The Committee approved this new course *in principle* for the purposes of timetabling, subject to a suitable syllabus being drawn up.

EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS

9. Plagiarism detection

Drs Holden and Dodgson attended a briefing on 18 February on the University’s plan to introduce plagiarism detection, using Turnitin, from 2008–09, with the possibility of trials in the current academical year. The committee agreed that there is not a problem with plagiarism on the Computer Science Tripos. Most work is not susceptible to plagiarism and the work that is, is checked by interviewing the students. The main cause for concern regarding students’ dissertations is that some are tempted to stretch the truth about what they have achieved. The existing policy for dealing with this is that, if the examiners are suspicious of a student’s dissertation, the student is called to attend a viva. The committee believe that the process of interviews and vivas is sufficient for the Computer Science Tripos. It was therefore agreed that the department will not use the Turnitin system.

10. Preliminary reading list for Natural Scientists

The committee was asked to suggest two books that would be useful for new students to read before they arrive at the start of the year. It was agreed that “The Code Book” by Simon Singh and “The New Turing Omnibus” by A Kee Dewdney be recommended.

11. Problem sheets to accompany lecture notes

It was noted that many supervisors are tending to use past Tripos questions exclusively as the exercises set for supervisions. This is inappropriate and Dr Dodgson proposed that the department should provide problem sheets for all courses [paper TC0708/13]. It was agreed that lecturers be encouraged to provide problem sheets to accompany their notes. These problems are to be designed to help students to work up to the level at which they can answer examination questions. It was also agreed that good supervisors be asked to contribute their exercises and material to make a repository of resources for supervisors to draw from. Dr Dodgson was delegated to put into place mechanisms for implementation of both ideas.

12. Timetable for 2008-09

The committee considered the draft timetable [TC0708/14] and agreed the following:

- Dr Dodgson to: ask Dr Harle to lecture “Real World Programming”; ask Dr Parkinson to lecture “Foundations of Functional Programming”; ask Dr Fawcett to lecture “Concurrent Systems and Applications”; chase Dr Kuhn regarding “Introduction to Security”; find someone to teach “Prolog” (Drs Fiore, A Moore, Evans or Evers were suggested possibilities); ask Dr A Moore about lecturing “Distributed Systems”; and discuss further with Alex Benton whether he is likely to be available to cover teaching of “Advanced Graphics” in Easter Term 2009
- Dr Beresford to ask Dr Blackwell to consider lecturing “Principles of Software Engineering”
- Dr Copestake to ask Dr Korhonen if she is interested in lecturing “Natural Languages Processing” in Easter Term 2009

13. Offering Part IB to fourth year undergraduates

The committee considered a request from the Directors of Studies Forum that Part IB be available as a fourth year option, in the same way that Part II (General) used to be. This would allow a student who has read three years of another Tripos to switch to Computer Science as a final year option, and then to graduate with a BA honours degree. There is already the option for students to switch to Part IB after one or two years of another Tripos, in both cases with the ability to continue to Part II in the subsequent (third or fourth) year, subject to having obtained honours in Part IB. The proposed change would not allow a student to continue to Part II in their fifth year; in this case, Part IB would be the final year of a four-year degree. The committee agreed to propose the necessary change to Regulation 12 (changing “nine complete terms” to “twelve complete terms”). This will need Faculty Board approval.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

13. Approval of minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were agreed and signed.

14. Any matters arising not already dealt with

None

15. Any other business

It was noted that Dr Dodgson needs to consider next year’s examinations structure.

16. Dates of future meetings

The next meeting will be on March 18th at 14.15 in room GC22.