

**UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
FACULTY OF COMPUTER SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

Chairman: Prof A Mycroft

Secretary: Mrs D E Pounds

Minutes of the meeting of the Tripos Management Committee
held on Monday 17 October 2011 at 14:15 in GC22

Present

Dr R Harle (Parts IA and IB Course Director)

Dr A Moore (Chairman of SSCoF)

Prof Alan Mycroft (Chair, Tripos Co-ordinator, Rep for NatSci Management Cttee)

Ms D Pounds (Secretary)

Prof P Robinson (Exchange Programme Organiser)

Ms M Sammons (Obs.)

Dr I Wassell (Rep for MPhil in ACS)

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence

Dr Sean Holden (Part II Course Co-ordinator and Supervisions Co-ordinator).

Sabbatical and other Leave

None

2. Notification of any other business

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

4. Matters Arising

The committee discussed the correspondence below (5 i and ii).

5. Correspondence

- I. **Mrs M Levitt regarding committee membership.** The Committee confirmed another member would not be needed to replace Dr M Fiore who is on sabbatical as Dr Sean Holden now takes on Dr Fiore's role in addition to his own. The Committee welcomed the communication that Dr R Gibbens has been approached to become representative on the Maths Faculty committees and hoped he would accept the role and also join this committee.

Afternote: Dr R Gibbens has accepted the role of representative on Maths Faculty committees and expressed his willingness to join the Tripos Management Committee.

II. **Prof Anuj Dawar regarding oral examinations for Part II dissertations (Item 3 ii 3 October 2011).**

The Committee discussed the issue of conducting viva voce examinations for Part II dissertations and how to select candidates. Concerns were expressed as to whether they were to be used as a disciplinary tool for students or as a means of quality control. The committee agreed to recommend to the Faculty

Board that 5 - 10% of the candidates should undergo a viva voce examination. It was felt there should be a suggested default process to select candidates which could be overridden by examiners. External examiners would not be involved in the process. Students will be informed they must be available at the appropriate time.

In conjunction with the above, Dr A Moore also believed the department would benefit from advice on plagiarism detection software and agreed to investigate this.

6. Teaching Administration

I. **Committee member's roles.**

The committee clarified roles and agreed they should be noted at the start of minutes.

II. **Committee circulation list.**

Dr Markus Kuhn requested he be added to the circulation list. The committee agreed for this year while he hands over management of Part IA to Dr R Harle.

III. **Supervision allocation.**

Teaching administration raised the issue of finding sufficient supervisors for Part II students which is proving very difficult. Teaching Admin propose to look at new ways of recruiting supervisors, starting the process earlier and also using the graduate induction day but would also like lecturers to be more proactive in finding supervisors for their courses. The committee recommended that lecturers be reminded of their responsibility. The use of examples classes as an alternative was not advised. The committee also considered that, if courses found difficulty in recruiting supervisors because they are too specialised, the possibility of moving these courses into Part III should be considered.

Action: Chair to contact lecturers.

IV. **Timetable format.**

The committee expressed the wish of keeping the current concise format which gives a full year's view on two A4 sheets but agreed a more up to date programme such as Excel could be used.

7. Deferred items.

I. Examiner's reports (Item 3 i, 3/10/2011)

a. Part IA and Part IB: The committee were generally happy with the distribution of exam question attempts. Part II: The Committee scrutinised the exam question selections of the exam candidates and noted the wide disparity in numbers of attempted answers for some modules. The committee was reassured that the measures put in place last year have produced an increased number of attempts in Security I but was still concerned about the low numbers of attempts for some papers and the correlation between a lack of supervisors, the use of example classes and few attempts at exam questions.

Action: Student Admin to research past minutes to assess trends.

b. The appreciation by students of some courses as mentioned in SSCoF minutes of 15 June 2011, in particular Paper 1 Object-Orienting Programming was noted.

II. Revision of Tripos (Item 6 i, 3/10,2011)

Prof A Mycroft reported he had raised the possibility of moving paper I from MWF10 to MWF11 at a Natural Science committee meeting and the matter was under review.

Dr R Harle recounted his discussions with the AQA GCE examination board. He was concerned that AQA's policy of using material drawn from from 1st year degree courses as A level topics will result in Part IA students who take computer science at A level already having covered the work.

The following possible solutions were discussed:

- Moving to more practical teaching styles as used by MIT.
- Teaching 75% computer science rather than 50% as at present thus boosting admissions.
- Recommending that the Faculty Board revisit the possibility of a technology tripos.

Action: Dr R Harle and Prof P Robinson to further discuss possibilities.

III. Oral examinations for Part II dissertations (3 ii) (discussed above- 7.i)

IV. Review of Staff-Student Consultative Forum minutes.

The minutes were considered but no matters were arising. Dr A Moore noted that the meeting had been positive and brief, largely due to the absence of several student representatives. The Committee were concerned to learn that students were once again experiencing difficulties with the systems and network services in the Intel Lab and noted that Dr S Moore is currently conducting an IT review. The problems recur at the start of every year and are regularly the subject of complaints by students in SSCoF meetings.

Action: The Chair agreed to contact Wednesday for further comments.

Afternote: Ms D Pounds raised the issue with Dr S Moore who asked to see the SSCoF minutes. These have been sent to him.

8. Any other business.

None

9. Date of next meeting

The Committee agreed to schedule future meetings on Mondays at 14:15, approximately two weeks before the meeting of the faculty Board.

Afternote:

Meetings have now been agreed for the following dates:

21 Nov 2011

16 Jan 2012

27 Feb 2012

23 April 2012

18 June 2012 (if necessary)