

**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 21 November 2011 at 14:15 in GC22

Present

Dr R Harle

(Parts IA and IB Course Director)

Dr R Gibbens

(Representative on Mathematics Faculty Board)

Dr A Moore *(Chairman of SSCoF)*

Prof Alan Mycroft

(Tripos Co-ordinator, Representative for NatSci Management Cttee)

Ms D Pounds *(Secretary)*

Dr I Wassell *(Representative for MPhil in ACS)*

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence

Prof Peter Robinson (Exchange Programme Organiser)

Dr Sean Holden (Part II Course Director and Supervisions Coordinator)

Sabbatical and other Leave

None

2. Notification of any other business

- I. Tripos prizes
- II. Recruitment of Supervisors
- III. Marking and Classing Document

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

4. Matters Arising

- I. Analysis of the correlation between courses offering only examples classes rather than supervisions and low figures for question attempts was deferred to the next meeting.
- II. The committee discussed a request from the Joint Teaching Strategy Committee to consider allowing Part IA students to offer 75% Computer Science (plus a continuous mathematics course) in addition to the existing routes of 25% (NST Part IA) and 50% (current CST Part IA) -- in order to promote recruitment. While it was acknowledged that some applicants may choose to go elsewhere to avoid having to study a science, psychology or additional mathematics in Part IA, the committee remained unenthusiastic and agreed the change would exacerbate the existing problems of disparity in the levels of student attainment already encountered in Part IB. The possibility of structuring Part IB as a fully modular course was considered but rejected as too problematic, partly because each Part IB stream depends on Part IA material; a fully modular course would also require afternoon lecturing. Overall it was felt that supporting both 25% and 75% options was not possible.

[After note from Chair: options are further restricted by our desire that the combined Part IA and IB course should meet or exceed the ACM/IEEE 'core computer science' curriculum guidelines.]

The possibility of strong students taking Part IB, Part II and Part III (instead of Part 1A, Part IB and Part II) for their tripos was also raised. The Committee agreed that, whilst this might address the problem above and would also address the issue of Part IA courses having already been covered by students taking AQA A level in Computer Science, it was also too problematic. The Committee felt a more successful strategy would be to re-explore the possibility of a Technology Tripos in conjunction with the Faculty of Engineering which incorporated electrical engineering rather than the present coupling with Natural Sciences.

5. Correspondence

- I. Academic performance by gender (M Levitt, forward of documents from the Education Section reporting on the findings of the Working Group on Gender Attainment). The Committee considered the report and acknowledged there is a serious problem of gender imbalance within computer science and the field of sciences generally. The Committee felt the document related more to arts subjects than to the Computer Science Tripos where students are not required to write essays. The report's findings on the area of prior knowledge was considered and the committee reflected on measures already in place to address this. The Computer Laboratory Outreach Committee is currently considering ways to improve gender balance through widening participation schemes. The committee felt the role of Women@cl was not relevant to the problem of prior knowledge since its remit is to operate a support framework for women in computer science with a focus on networking and careers.
- II. Special arrangements for a Part IB student. (confidential item). The committee agreed in principle to the arrangements proposed for the student but expressed concerns at the practicalities of Part II (year 3 and 4 of the programme). The Committee anticipated that special arrangements would need to be made regarding examination papers and that the student should be made aware of the possibility of courses changing each year.

6. NSS Student Survey

The Committee welcomed the results of the survey and the very positive comments expressed by the students. With regard to the request for examination questions with solution notes to be made available for revision purposes, the Committee supported the decision to make these available for a short period before examinations but expressed some concerns at publishing marking criteria.

7. Teaching Administration

- I. Student Administration reported that the preparation of examination papers is now being reviewed.
- II. The Committee expressed itself happy with arrangements for Part IA examinations. These will continue to be held in central Cambridge as the numbers cannot be accommodated in the Department. All the administration will take place in the Department.

8. Any other business.

- I. Tripos prizes. These will be awarded as in previous years. The Microsoft Research prize for best individual project has now expired and the Committee

requested that the Department's Development Officer seek a new sponsor for this prize of £500.

- II. Recruitment of Supervisors. In response to concerns raised by SSCoF, Student Administration have begun the process of recruiting for Lent and Easter terms much earlier. The issues raised at SSCoF have been addressed and students should be able to choose their supervisor and group. However, the problem of recruiting enough supervisors is on-going. The Committee noted that, in contrast to many other departments, lecturers and PhD students in this department are not required to offer supervisions and many do not. Student Admin have also received some feedback from a PhD student outlining reasons for not supervising. The student cited a lack of structured exercises and graded questions and examples for use in supervisions. Devising their own material was time-consuming, making the remuneration inadequate for the amount of work. Dr R Gibbens commented on the contrast with Mathematics where he receives plenty of material for use in supervisions. The Committee welcomed the possibility of additional funds for supervisors to prepare material, (as raised by Prof N Dodgson, Joint Teaching Strategy Committee meeting, 10/11/2011) but felt a review of the departmental policy towards supervisions should be conducted and would like this to be brought to the attention of the Faculty Board.
- III. Marking and Classing Document. Prof A Mycroft noted that the Marking and Classing Document is 25 pages long. It was not felt that reducing its length was appropriate but the committee suggested Prof Peter Robinson as the best person to review the document for the future.

9. Date of next meeting

Meetings have now been agreed for the following dates:

16 Jan 2012

27 Feb 2012

23 April 2012

18 June 2012 (if necessary)