

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
FACULTY OF COMPUTER SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Chairman: Dr David Greaves

Secretary: Ms D. E. Pounds

Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Tripos Management Committee
held on Monday 24 February 2014 at 14:15 in SW00

Present

Dr Richard Gibbens (*Representative on
Mathematics Faculty Board*)
Dr David Greaves (*Chairman*)
Dr Robert Harle (*Parts IA and IB Course
Director and Chair of SSCoF*)

Dr Sean Holden (*Part II and Supervisions
co-ordinator*)
Prof Ian Leslie
Ms Dinah Pounds (*Secretary*)
Dr Simone Teufel (*representative from the
ATCMC*)

1. Apologies for Absence

Prof Ann Copestake (*Deputy Head of Department*)
Prof Peter Robinson (*Exchange Programme Organiser*)

2. Sabbatical and other leave

None requested.

3. Notification of any other business

- I. Monitoring syllabus content for new Part IA and Part IB courses (RKH).
- II. Part II courses.
- III. Proposals for the possible options for the third paper in Part IA.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were approved and signed.

5. Matters arising

The Committee welcomed the appointment of Dr Robert Harle as Chair of the Director of Studies forum and Dr John Fawcett as Subject Convenor from October 2014 following the retirement of Dr Robin Walker. The Committee expressed their gratitude to Dr Robin Walker for his many years of dedicated service as subject convenor for the Department.

REPORTS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

- 6.** The Committee received the minutes from the Staff-student Consultative Forum. Dr Harle confirmed that the minor points raised have been addressed. It was noted that some Directors of Studies were having difficulty recruiting supervisors, particularly for Part IB Computation Theory.

Students also expressed a view that the problem sheets for several Part IB courses are of a poor quality. The Committee discussed in depth the provision of examples sheets by lecturers for the use of supervisors and it was noted that some lecturers were not conforming to the recommended practice which is to provide exercises on separate sheets, organised into 'supervision size' chunks with answers provided and

placed at the end of the printed course notes. A minority of the Committee suggested that providing past exam papers and solution notes was found to be of more use in supervisions. The Committee discussed the current practice of publishing exam question solution notes and agreed it would be helpful to make answers to new exam questions available to only lecturers and supervisors for two years for use as a teaching resource before publishing them for use by students. This will be discussed further and a recommendation sent to Faculty Board.

It is hoped that the Otter system will facilitate the sharing of material. The lecturers of courses highlighted as having poor provision at the SSCoF meeting will be contacted. **Action RKH, DJG**

7. Correspondence

The Committee will respond to the Undergraduate Admissions Committee on consultation and future arrangements for admissions when this is requested.

EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS

8. **Revision of Part IA practicals.** Concerns have been raised about the timing of ML and Java ticks and there have been some comments by students that Hardware practicals take longer than the allotted time. Generally, students have been slow to complete their ticks. The Committee agreed that more defined deadlines are desirable with shorter cut-off dates for ML and Java and two hardware ticks to be completed by the end of Michaelmas term. Some revision of the Head of Department's notices will be needed to reflect this. **Action RKH, DP.**

9. **Progress on the framework for Part IB practicals.** The framework is intended to support the introduction of more practical work in Part IB and to offer guidance to lecturers. The Chairman confirmed that lecturers may substitute a practical session for a lecture to deliver important examinable material. Alternatively, there may be an increase in the number of ticks with a ratio of one tick per four practical sessions. A maximum of four lectures out of a twelve lecture course may be replaced by practicals. Lecturers wishing to introduce practical elements to their courses will be informed that they should bring detailed proposals to the first meeting of this Committee in Easter term for approval. **Action DP, DJG**

Work on preparing the 2014-15 timetables will begin at the start of the Easter term. The spreadsheet used for formulating the timesheet is in need of revision. **Action DP**

10. Any other business

- I. Dr Harle expressed concern that the new Algorithms course contains some material for which Part IA students do not have the requisite background knowledge. This problem has been remedied by the lecturers concerned. The Committee reiterated the established policy that no changes to Part IA courses should be made without the approval of this Committee.
- II. The Chairman reported that Dr Markus Kuhn will be submitting a detailed proposal for changes to the Security courses at the next meeting.
Action DJG
- III. Following further consultation, the Chairman outlined the first detailed suggestion for the new Part IA paper. The new paper will incorporate some material from the present Part IB which will be compulsory. The second half of the paper will have two optional streams as follows:

Stream one: Electronics

Stream two: Cognitive and Social Systems.

With regard to electronics, the Chairman reported on his visit to Engineering and confirmed that CS students would usefully be able to use Lego robotics with Matlab, currently only used by Engineering students in the first week of Michaelmas term. Dr Teufel presented an outline of stream two which may include some elements from the PBS tripos together with elements of HCI, NLP and IR.

It was noted that students who study the current physics option gained valuable practice in writing reports on experiments and in statistical analysis. Consideration will be given as to how these skills could be incorporated into the new courses.

The Committee drafted one possible option for a Part IA timetable which will be presented to the Department at a structured meeting of 'Wednesday' group on 12 March 2014 and agreed to prepare alternative options in preparation for this discussion. **Action DJG, IML, RKH.**

Date of next meeting: Monday 28 April 2014 at 14:15 in SW00