UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Computer Laboratory

Faculty of Computer Science & Technology
Tripos Management Committee

Chairman: Dr Timothy Jones   **Secretary: Ms Dinah Pounds**

Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Tripos Management Committee
will be held on Monday 21 January 2019 at 14.15 in GC22

AGENDA & NOTES

Members

Prof Alan Blackwell (*Deputy HoD)*   Dr Amanda Prorok
Dr Timothy Jones *(Chairman)*   Megan Sammons *(Student Administrator)*
Dr Hatice Gunes *(on leave)*   Prof Frank Stajano
Dinah Pounds *(Secretary)*   Dr Damon Wischik

1. **Apologies for Absence**
   None

2. **Notification of any other business**
   None

3. **Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting**
   The minutes were approved

4. **Matters arising.**
   i.   Item 6ii. It was confirmed that the Foundations of CS practicals which are changing from using ML to OCaml programming language next year will offer more 'hands on' programming. The course will be run by Dr Madhavapeddy who is also overseeing the introduction of OCaml. A report is elicited for the next meeting of this Committee. **Action ASP/AVSM**
   ii. The Committee welcomes the proposal to extend Part II Quantum Computing to 16 lectures. They request an outline of the new course and that Prof Dawar oversees the course next year. **Action DP**

5. **Correspondence.**
   i.   **Exam structure.** There is a concern that the structure of Paper 1 and Paper 3, whereby students are asked to answer M questions out of N in a section where the N questions are not all set and marked by the same person, leads to perverse incentives whereby question setters compete against each other on creating the least desirable questions in the hope of attracting fewer scripts to mark. This problem had been observed in past years and the solution implemented then was to set section boundaries so that the questions of a given section would be marked by the same person. This is no longer the case. The matter will be brought to the attention of the examiners. **Action DP**

ii. **University-wide proposal to pilot a transition year.** Initially this will be restricted to Arts and Humanities. The Committee welcomed this initiative but, whilst acknowledging that the Department does not currently have the resources to teach this, expressed a willingness to if resources were forthcoming. Concern was expressed that unsuccessful students might feel they had wasted a year. The Committee noted that Computer Science admissions are above the University target for state school educated students.

6. **Reports from other committees**
   i. **SSCoF.** ASP reported. Part II students have requested that published solution notes more exactly match the marks awarded or that a note be put on the website explaining that solutions are not straightforward answers to questions. The Committee confirmed that solution notes are for the benefit of supervisors and are intended to be open ended. A clarification will be put on the website. **Action MGK/DP**
   IA students have requested model solutions to supervision exercises. The Committee felt strongly that this was not in their best interest. Our aim is to train students to be thinkers not to just be able to pass exams. Students should be able to work out answers from the lecture notes if they are well structured. Publication would also require lecturers to write new exercises every year, adding a considerable burden.
   ii. **Directors of Studies.** DoS have expressed concern that numbers management has resulted in a disproportionate number of female students being pooled and this may impact on diversity, particularly gender.

   Feedback from Part II students to DoS suggests they have reacted very positively to the new units but would like more guidance on tackling coursework. DoS also request there is more oversight on individual course workload and assignment timing. For Lent term, this will be provided by mentors at professor level who will support each of the units. DoS also thought it would be helpful if courses were labelled, eg. 'R' for research-based courses. **Action DP**

7. **Report on Michaelmas term Part II units.**
   Most units ran smoothly. Cloud Computing experienced technical problems. All students were given extensions to accommodate the delay and the situation was managed. One unfortunate consequence was that all deadlines were then bunched at the end of the course adding to student pressure. There was also some confusion on the part of two students as to the procedure for requesting extensions. It is noteworthy that the students experiencing difficulties with workload attempted to take two units in Michaelmas term, contrary to strong advice from the Department. To help prevent any repetition, professors have been appointed as mentors for the Lent term courses and briefed with issues that arose last term.

   The Committee also observed that students have not had any experience in this type of study in previous years and support the introduction of assessed study in Part IA and IB. The IA OOP course lecturer would like to replace ticks with assessed study. The Committee welcomed this and request a draft syllabus for the next meeting. The Committee will also consider whether a current Part IB course could include assessed exercises. **Action ACR/DP**

8. **Part II Units of Assessments 2019-20**

    i.   **Proposals for 2019-20.** Computer Music will not be offered next year due to sabbatical leave. Metaprogramming and Multicore Semantics have yet to be confirmed. The rest of the current courses will be offered. In addition, ACS L41 will be offered.

    ii.   **Deadlines.** Currently all unit work has to be completed within the term of the lectures. The Committee reaffirmed this policy which it was felt is in the students' best interest. It removes the possibility of impacting on other parts of Part II such as projects and also of disadvantaging students unable to work during vacations.

    iii.   **Limiting students to one unit per term.** DoS suggest this may be too restrictive and would prefer that they should just be given advice on workload management. The Committee endorsed this and are content for this to be guidance only.

    iv.   **Mobile Robot Systems.** The Committee considered a proposal to open the course to 3rd year Engineering students. We do not currently have any interaction with Engineering Tripos undergraduates. The Committee could not foresee any difficulties in terms of delivery of the course and request Dr Prorok discuss further with Engineering. **Action ASP**

9. Tripos Revision

    i.   **Interaction Design.** Student feedback indicates there is too much memorising of material and practical work fitted into the short Easter term and that this interferes with exam revision. The Committee agreed that exam questions can be based on practical work. With regard to poor attendance at the presentations, the Committee suggest that either all students be asked to present or the presentations are considered optional.

    ii.   **IB Computer Design.** The Committee welcomed the proposed revisions. It is proposed that ECAD be separated out into a standalone course and further online teaching be introduced into Computer Design. There will also be some revision of IA Digital Electronics and Part II Comparative Architectures to further streamline the courses across the Tripos, beginning with Part IA Digital Electronics from Michaelmas 2019.
Action IJW, SWM, TMJ, RDM

10. Student surveys for Michaelmas term 2018. Staff would benefit from more guidance on online teaching. ACR has written a paper and the Judge Business school are also well-versed in online teaching. **Action TMJ/DP**

C++ has proved very popular. In future, the course will have 9 lectures on C and three lectures on C++, delivered by Dr Krishnaswami.

Date of next meeting – Monday 25 February 2019, GC22