



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE
Computer Laboratory

Faculty of Computer Science & Technology
Tripos Management Committee

Chairman: Dr Timothy Jones

Secretary: Ms Dinah Pounds

Minutes of the Tripos Management Committee
held on Friday 28 June 2019 at 14:00 in GS15

AGENDA & NOTES

Members

Prof Alan Blackwell (*Deputy HoD*)
Dr Timothy Jones (*Chairman*)
Dr Hatice Gunes
Dr Robert Harle
Dr Sean Holden

Dinah Pounds (*Secretary*)
Dr Amanda Prorok
Megan Sammons (*Student Administrator*)
Prof Frank Stajano
Dr Damon Wischik

1. Apologies for Absence

Dr Hatice Gunes
Dr Tim Jones (Prof Blackwell to Chair)
Dr Damon Wischik

2. 2019 Examination report from Dr Alastair Beresford.

The 2019 examinations went well. There was one cause for concern. The examination supervisors in the Part II exam hall laid out the wrong papers. The examiner in attendance took remedial action and is confident no student gained an advantage.

- i. Part II dissertation marking. The Chair of Examiners confirmed procedure as laid out in the Marking and Classing document. This year for the first time, dissertations were marked anonymously. Conflicts of interest were avoided, each dissertation was double-marked and marking arranged in a randomised order. Each examiner marked more than 40 dissertations. The marks from each examiner were placed into rank order and the marks normalised. Where a fair final mark could not be agreed, a third examiner remarked the dissertation.

Ten candidates were called for a viva voce examination based on the following grounds:

Three where there was no agreement on the mark; three where the differentiation between marks was large; three where there was evidence of plagiarism. One student volunteered.

The external examiner read a sample of five dissertations and assisted in deciding the final ranking.

The rules regarding plagiarism are clearly documented in the guidance offered to students. The examiners' conclusions following viva examinations

were that those students with evidence of plagiarism had showed poor scholarship rather than a deliberate intention to cheat. Each was given a mark penalty against their presentation and professionalism score.

Issues of plagiarism will in future be addressed in the Part II students' guidance lecture given in Lent term. **Action ARB**

The external examiner expressed concern at the high workload placed on examiners and the quantity of dissertations they marked in a short space of time. This compared unfavourable with other leading universities. Of particular concern was that dissertations from both students for whom English is not their first language and also from less able students are often harder to mark and require more marking time. As student numbers are set to increase dramatically within two years advice for the Department's Teaching Committee to consider a new marking system was given.

From 2020 the dissertation submission date will be one week earlier giving an additional marking week. However, this will not address the issue of only a small pool of examiners covering a wide range of specialisms. Appointing a further two examiners and more concrete marking guidelines for examiners Examiner workload will be further discussed in conjunction with SMT. The Committee also noted other options including a dissertation review room, a confidential supervisor report and more formal use of student presentations to overseers.

Action TMJ/ARB/DP

- ii. Part II Unit marks were normalised, as required by the Classing and Marking Document. The aim of the normalisation was to achieve fairness in two senses: first, to ensure fairness between those students taking the 50% option (and sitting Paper 7) and those taking the 75% option (and therefore studying two Units); and second, for those students taking the Part II Units, that the choice of Unit does not adversely affect their grade. The Examiners looked at whether there was good statistical evidence from the 2018 Tripos results that high-performing students tended to choose specific modules. No such evidence was found, and therefore scores from 9 out of 11 Units were normalised to match the mean and standard deviation of the 2019 Paper 7. Scores from candidates whose work on the Units was incomplete, as well as the remaining two Units (which only had three candidates each) were assessed and adjusted manually. The process generally worked well, however some marks did change by more than 16%, and these were reviewed by hand. In order to better align the raw marks with the normalised marks in future, assessors for Part II Units should be asked to align their raw marks with the mean, median and standard deviation found in Paper 7.

Actions: Clearer guidance will be given to Unit convenors on marking. The Committee will also further consider whether the Marking and Classing document be revised to change the penalty for late submission of Unit coursework from zero marks to the formula applied to Part II dissertations.

AFB/TMJ/DP

3. Notification of any other business

Recording of Lectures.

4. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were approved.

5. Matters arising.

- Guidelines for tickers will be circulated.
- OOP practical timing to be confirmed.

Action TMJ/DP

6. **Correspondence.**

- i. 2019-06-28a. Request from the Graduate Office. Current practice is for Part II students wishing to study Part III to apply by the division of Easter term. This places them at a disadvantage because MPhil students request their project supervisors at an earlier date and Part III students often miss out on the supervisor of their choice. The Committee agreed to move the application for Part III deadline to February. Students should just be asked to specify the field in their application. This change will be brought to the attention of the next Director of Studies meeting. Students achieving a first class degree are automatically entitled to study Part III and may still apply at a later date.
- ii. 2019-06-28b. Hoare Logic and Model Checking. Student request that the course run next year. The mathematical content of the Tripos is currently being reviewed, across all three years and we are optimistic that important elements of this material can be retained, perhaps as a component of other courses. Unfortunately the current situation is that we will not have a lecturer to teach this material in the coming academic year, and that students with an interest in the topic will have to rely on their own reading. The Committee will ask the convenor of the mathematics review to consider future placement of the material. **Action DP/AD**
- iii. Python in MLRD. It was confirmed that Python is not currently taught in MLRD.

7. **Forward planning.** The Committee welcomed a IA Introduction to Probability course proposal to run in Easter term instead of Numerical Analysis. The proposal was particularly welcome as this will maintain a balance in the IA exam papers and will support IB Datascience teaching.

8. **Tripos 2019-20.**

- i. IB Concurrent and Distributed Systems. Request that Martin Kleppman teach the second eight lectures with RMM mentoring. The Committee supported this proposal.

9. **Part II Units.**

- i. Datascience teaching arrangements for 2019-20. DJW has a high teaching workload and has proposed that MJ take over his supervisory role for Part II Datascience unit with a view to a more active future role. MJ will discuss this with the course lecturers.
- ii. Course enrolment numbers. All students have been allocated the units of their choice. All courses have an adequate take-up and none are over-subscribed. Directors of Studies will be alerted if any students have selected two modules in one term which can lead to excessive workload.

10. **Any other business**

Recording of lectures. SScof reps have requested this be arranged on an 'opt-in' basis for lecturers. The Committee confirmed that the Department does not have

reliable equipment or a dedicated person to recordings but supported the request in principle. Our understanding is that the University aims to offer this service across all Departments and lecturers would be given the opportunity to opt-in to this once available.

Tripod Management meetings 2019-20

2pm in GC22

Monday 14 October

Monday 25 November

Monday 20 January

Monday 24 February

Monday 11 May

Friday 26 June – GS15