

Faculty of Computer Science and Technology
Tripos Management Committee

Chair: Dr Robert Harle

Secretary: Ms Dinah Pounds

Unconfirmed minutes of a meeting of the Tripos Management Committee
on Friday 2 July 2021 at 14:00 via Zoom

Members

Prof Alastair Beresford (*Deputy HoD*) (ARB)
Dr Hatice Gunes (HG)
Dr Robert Harle (*Chair*) (RKH)
Dr Sean Holden (SBH)
Dinah Pounds (*Secretary*) (DP)

Caroline Stewart (CS)
Prof Frank Stajano (FMS)
Dr Ian Wassell (*Chair of Examiners*) (IJW)
Dr Damon Wischik (DJW)

1 Apologies for Absence

Caroline Stewart

2 Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting 17 May 2021

- 2.1 The following modifications were proposed by Prof F Stajano:
- 2.2 It was agreed that the full designation of named people should be used, and that modifications to the minutes of 17 May should be made as follows, to reflect this:
Dr Tim Jones; Prof Paula Buttery; Dr Andrew Caines; Prof Neil Lawrence.
- 2.3 As a follow-on from the corrections above, it was agreed that acronyms against members' initials would be included at the top of the paper and used as reference throughout. Names of non-members would continue to be written out in full.
- 2.4 "TAs should be PhD level" was ambiguous and therefore corrected to read "TAs should be at least PhD level" (*item 4.6.1*).
- 2.5 "Tickers would be appointed by UTOs and trained by them on the use of Moodle" (*item 4.6.2*). This was deemed not to have been what was agreed at the meeting of 17 May. It was suggested that Stewart Carswell should be invited to help if needed, rather than the UTO's or administrative team having this responsibility. It was noted that DJW had already written up instructions for a previous meeting of the TMC and that these should be circulated to all staff and for them to be published on the website.
- 2.6 "Students would be encouraged to submit a phase 1 proposal before the end of full term" (*item 8.4*) was in conflict with "students should not contact UTOs ... until the marking of exams was complete" (*item 8.3*).
It was confirmed that RKH had not set the deadline to the end of Easter term but rather to the first day of Michaelmas full term for 2021/22 and that it would then be reviewed for future years.

3 Update on pending actions

3.1 Publication of information about the roles of tickers and TAs on the website (*item 4.6.5*)

3.1.1 It was confirmed that this would be done in August once the website had been rolled over.

3.2 IB Concurrent and Distributed Systems: report-back about any specific changes (*item 4.8*)

3.2.1 It was noted that the changes were all relatively minor and the committee accepted them in principle. It was agreed that Dr Martin Kleppman would be emailed to inform him of the changes (*action RKH*).

3.3 Interaction Design (*item 7.2*)

3.3.1 It was confirmed that Prof Alan Blackwell would be the named UTO for this during the sabbatical of Dr Hatice Gunes, alongside the deliverer for the unit who had already been identified.

3.4 Confirmation of details for Project Proposal submission procedures (*item 8.7*)

3.4.1 It was confirmed that the deadline had now been set for the first day of Michaelmas full term, which would subsequently be reviewed for future years. All other details of the process remained unchanged.

3.5 Formal Models of Language (*item 9.1*)

3.5.1 It was confirmed that Prof Paula Buttery would be the named UTO for Formal Models of Language, even though she would be on sabbatical, in the full expectation that Dr Andrew Caines would deliver all of it alone.

3.6 Hoare Logic (*item 9.2*)

3.6.1 It was confirmed that Dr Christopher Pulte would teach this in the coming year, with oversight by Prof Peter Sewell.

3.7 Review of student surveys and proposed standardisation (*item 10.7*)

3.7.1 FMS had suggested that surveys could comprise a list of simple statements which cover all that needs to be asked; the same scales could be applied to each question with freeform space at the end, one for positive comments and one for negative comments, but with no freeform space at any other place on the survey. They would still be anonymous.

3.7.2 There was very little support for the process to be mandatory as it was felt that students would object to this for a number of reasons.

3.7.3 It was suggested that the last 15 minutes of a final lecture could be allocated to completion and return of the surveys, whether in-person or on-line.

3.7.4 It was suggested that non-UTOs could have the writing of surveys as part of their remit, although that it may be better covered by a dedicated computer-administrative person.

3.7.5 It was agreed that RKH would talk to Graham Hatt to identify whether or not somebody on his team could take this on with the aim of having it in place for the new academic year (*action: RKH*).

3.7.6 The committee was in general agreement with this idea even if a named person could not be identified at this point.

3.8 Confirmation of the re-naming of Data Science, Principles and Practice following the proposed introduction of a new Part II Data Science 2 unit (*item 11.2*)

3.8.1 The following names were confirmed: IB: Data Science; Part II: Advanced Data Science.

3.9 Confirmation of assistance for examination marking in Discrete Mathematics (*item 13.1*)

3.9.1 It was confirmed that assistance would be given to FMS for examination marking in Discrete Mathematics and that he would be permitted to deliver his lectures as videos next year, as with the current year.

3.9.2 The committee registered their expectation that the Department should commit to allowing these videos to be made at a cost that reflected their quality and that there should be permission for them to be used for several years.

3.9.3 It was noted that this recognition and support by the Department had been confirmed earlier in the year.

4 Other Matters Arising

- 4.1 Proposal for a course on Mathematics for Computer Science students, from Prof Anuj Dawar, presented to TMC meeting 01 March 2021 (attached). Comments from Committee members to be sent to the Chair about what they felt should be taken out of or not taken out of the proposal, before responding to the Mathematics department.
 - 4.1.1 DJW confirmed that he had discussed this in an earlier meeting of the TMC and had sent his comments to the Chair at the time (Dr Tim Jones), which he also summarised at this meeting.
 - 4.1.2 DJW was invited to tweak the proposal to incorporate his changes, working alongside Prof Anuj Dawar, and to then send it to the Mathematics department to see if they would deliver it.

5 Reports from other committees

No committees had met since 17 May 2021.

6 Correspondence

There was none.

7 Easter Term examinations update

- 7.1 IJW confirmed that the Part II results had been published. The Part IB Examinations meeting had taken place on 30 June, with publication of results to be on 6 July. The Part IA Examinations meeting would take place on 8 July with publication of results to be on 9 July.
- 7.2 Part II units of assessment versus the Paper 7 questions: it was noted that the units had been marked more generously than Paper 7 questions, so an increase adjustment was made to the paper 7 students which was supported by the external examiner.
- 7.3 It was noted that there was significant difference in the average marks for Papers 8 and 9 in comparison with the units (62%/80%).
- 7.4 After much discussion it was agreed that no change for next year should be proposed, as it would be the final cohort that would be taking Paper 7, but that conversations would take place with other examiners to formalise a proposal to ensure the median was met when the marking took place. A suggestion paper would be produced about how best to address this for the future and to include a summary of what was done this year (*action: IJW*).

8 Prof Frank Stajano discussion paper

- 9.1 Student feedback forms – covered in item 3.7 above.
- 9.2 Dr Markus Kuhn recognition
 - 9.2.1 It was agreed that Dr Markus Kuhn should be recognised for his additional work and support but the Chair was keen to recognise others too who had made significant contributions, eg Stewart Carswell and the administrative team.
 - 9.2.2 It was agreed that the recognition for Dr Kuhn's contribution should be raised at the HoD Team meeting (*action: ARB*).
 - 9.2.3 It was proposed that thanks should be recorded to Dr Stewart Carswell for returning the exam scripts for marking on the same day that they were submitted, which had been very impressive.
- 9.3 Centralised mail merge for giving individual marks to students
 - 9.3.1 It was noted that the current system of a complete spreadsheet being sent to all Directors of Studies was not popular and that a different presentation of the results would be preferable.
 - 9.3.2 It was agreed that this could form part of the conversation with Graham Hatt about a potential dedicated IT programmer post for the department.
 - 9.3.3 It was agreed that a short document would be produced to circulate to all examiners, seeking their input as to their preferred format for the distribution of marks (*action FMS*).
- 9.4 Ticks in Easter term
 - 9.4.1 Suggestion had been made on student feedback that ticks should be restricted to Michaelmas and Lent terms only, in order to take pressure off revision time for exams in Easter term. There was concern that moving all ticks to the first two terms might create timetabling problems.

9.4.2 It was noted that this had been a particular issue for Security, but as this was being re-visited for next year this would be considered as part of the whole process (*action FMS*).

9.4.3 It was agreed that the whole provision would need to be examined but that the committee was not in a position to make any promises at this stage.

10 Some Thoughts on Tripos from a Part II student

10.1 These anonymous comments had been received from a very high scorer – although interesting points were raised it was acknowledged that they were largely anecdotal with very little data to back them up.

10.2 It was agreed that due to the tight structuring of the Part II project reports there was less scope for a range of marks across the board and that even if the weighting was not ideal it was the responsibility of the student to ensure that they worked within these parameters.

11 New syllabus for Security

11.1 This outline had been provided for approval, with work on the more detailed syllabus, including the identification of a textbook, to take place over the coming months (*action FMS*).

12 Any Other Business

12.1 Compiler Construction: it was proposed and agreed that Dr Jeremy Yallop should shadow Prof Tim Griffin's Compiler Construction in 2021/22 with a view to taking it over from 2022/23.

12.2 Re-naming of Algorithms: this would now be taking place as two separate courses in the same year, so it was proposed and agreed that they should be named Algorithms 1 and Algorithms 2.

12.3 It was proposed and agreed that the newly combined course on Papers 8 and 9 should be re-named Randomised Algorithms.

12.4 Information Theory: it was noted that the updating of this syllabus was taking longer than had been expected, with the plan to amend the syllabus to take into account some of the current material already being repeated in Digital Signal Processing. The new syllabus would be completed over the summer vacation (*action: RKH*).

12.5 Multicore Semantics and Programming: as with many other Part II and Part 3 units this had been over-subscribed for next year, but due to the large number of Part II who had selected it it was agreed they should be, exceptionally, capped to allow enough Part 3 and ACS students to be able to take it also.

12.5.1 It was agreed that the Part II places would be allocated randomly, as published, and not based on any previous marks achieved.

Date of next meeting: 16 October 2021, 2 pm.