



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 Monday 11 October 2021 at 14:00 via Zoom

**Members**

Prof Alastair Beresford (*Deputy HoD*) (ARB)  
Dr David Greaves (*Chair of Examiners*) (DJG)  
Dr Robert Harle (*Chair; Director,  
undergraduate teaching*) (RKH)  
Dr Evangelia Kalyvianaki (*Advisor*) (EK)  
Dinah Pounds (*Secretary*) (DP)  
Dr Thomas Sauerwald (*Deputy Director,  
IA undergraduate teaching*) (TMS)

Prof Frank Stajano (*Advisor*) (FMS)  
Caroline Stewart  
(*Departmental Secretary*) (CS)  
Dr Damon Wischik (*Deputy Director,  
Part II undergraduate teaching*) (DJW)  
Dr Jeremy Yallop (*Deputy Director,  
IB undergraduate teaching*) (DJW)

**1 Apologies for Absence**

None.

**2 Welcome to new members and discussion of the new committee structure**

2.1 The Chair confirmed a new structure of the committee from the beginning of this academic year. Membership was as on the agenda and the following new members were welcomed:

Dr David Greaves, Chair of Examiners  
Dr Thomas Sauerwald, Deputy Director, IA undergraduate teaching  
Dr Jeremy Yallop, Deputy Director, IB undergraduate teaching  
Dr Damon Wischik, Deputy Director, Part II undergraduate teaching  
Dr Evangelia Kalyvianaki, Advisor  
Prof Frank Stajano, Advisor

**3 Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting of 2 July 2021**

3.1 With no corrections to be made the minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### **4 Update on pending actions**

4.1 It was confirmed that information about the roles of tickers and TAs had been published on the website at <https://www.cst.cam.ac.uk/local/teaching/cst/practical-classes>

#### **5 Other matters arising**

5.1 There were no other matters arising.

#### **6 Format of future meetings**

6.1 There was a strong preference for future meetings to be online, as it made it easier to move between meetings more quickly.

6.2 It was recommended that meetings should, ideally, be limited to one hour in length.

#### **7 Examinations**

##### **7.1 Tripos exams report 2021**

7.1.1 A feedback forum had been set up for students to raise any issues and concerns, as a consequence of the briefings which had been held on Zoom with Robert Harle for all students.

7.1.2 Issues raised would then be circulated to TMC and other colleagues when necessary.

7.1.3 The issue of open-book exams was a concern for a number of students who felt that some of the information for answering questions was easy to look up on-line, whereas other information was more difficult to find.

7.1.4 Part II students had felt it was more unfair for them as there was a great variety between their subjects.

7.1.5 A request was made for details of the specific questions which had been highlighted as being easy to look up on-line. The weblink for these was circulated by the chair:

[Department of Computer Science and Technology: Examiners' reports \(cam.ac.uk\)](https://www.cst.cam.ac.uk/examiners-reports)

##### **7.2 Plans for 2022**

7.2.1 It was confirmed that the University rules were not yet clear as to whether open-book examinations would continue, but that the exams in June 2022 would definitely be on-line.

7.2.2 It could be possible that June 2023 exams would be in-person, so Part II students would need to be reassured that a robust procedure was in place as it would be the first time they had taken in-person exams and these would be their finals.

7.2.3 It was noted that the Directors of Studies would need to be encouraged to engage with their students in the practising of uploading their exam answers, to avoid some of the problems which occurred last year when the exams took place.

7.2.4 Dinah Pounds confirmed that she had fed back to Registry that more time would be needed for uploading the answers as some students struggled to complete it within the 10 minutes allowed.

## 8 Teaching

### 8.1 Report on start of term

9.1.1 There had been a lot of feedback. The main issue was that communication about little things had been inadequate, with many queries about masks, testing and other small things.

8.1.2 There was debate as to whether it had been done on the wrong medium (ie on Moodle and not on the website) which resulted in notifications being missed.

8.1.3 IB and Part II students expressed considerable concern about the lack of in-person teaching and wanted to know why the lecture theatres were not being used to capacity.

8.1.4 There were suggestions for a rota system for the use of lecture theatres but it was agreed that this would be complicated to arrange and to manage. It was agreed this should be flagged up to discuss at some level, as yet not identified.

8.1.5 Those lecturers teaching in-person reported great feedback and enthusiasm from the students, who had all engaged well and positively.

### 8.2 Pre-arrival Course

8.2.1 This had taken place as usual but there was now a query as to whether it was still valuable, as it had always been designed on the basis that there were a lot of NST students with no computer science background at all, which no longer applied due to the absence of any NST students and that almost all students now had some computer science background.

8.2.2 It was also noted that the new Foundations of Computer Science also covered a lot of the material in the pre-arrival course.

8.2.3 It was agreed that a paper would be put together about this for a future meeting of the TMC and also that students would be surveyed to find out how long it took them to complete the course. (*action: TMS and RKH*)

### 8.3 Initial feedback on new Part II project timetable

8.3.1 A predictable problem had been that a summer deadline had still only been met at the eleventh hour.

8.3.2 Phase 1 proposals had been submitted in good time but, in some cases, no feedback had been provided by the overseer, which had upset the students.

8.3.3 It was considered that the week's difference had probably not been that beneficial and that it could be re-visited towards the end of term, with the consideration of improved tooling for it as Moodle was perhaps not good enough for this process. (*action: agenda item for November TMC meeting*).

### 8.4 Website course information

8.4.1 A proposal had been made by Thomas Sauerwald to make the website more complete and self-contained, as people need a lot of help to decipher the information. For example, after clicking on a course webpage there is no mention of (i) the term(s) when the lecture takes place, (ii) the time slot and venue and (iii) the corresponding exam paper(s) and number of questions, ticks and lab sessions.

- 8.4.2 It was agreed that this should be quite possible to achieve and that the aim should be for any update made in one place to automatically update wherever else it appears.
- 8.4.3 It was agreed that the proposal was what everybody would want to see happen, but a means to make it happen would need to be identified. **(Action Stewart Carswell)**

## **8.5 Feedback mechanisms for students to the department**

- 8.5.1 It was agreed that as many different feedback mechanisms as possible needed to be identified, eg the student hotline, a forum for posting concerns, a course forum for course-specific issues.
- 8.5.2 Via SSCoF there would definitely be scope for increased feedback, in addition to the course surveys.
- 8.5.3 Lecturers would be encouraged to allow the final 15 minutes of their last lecture to be used for the students to complete their surveys.
- 8.5.4 It was agreed that it was important to feed back to the students on the forums, etc, and that speed was of the essence so that they knew we were listening;

## **9 Process for syllabus change**

- 9.1 It was noted that at present the process was rather informal and that it would be better for it to be tightened up.
- 9.2 All proposed syllabus changes should come to TMC, to enable robust discussions before any agreements were to be signed off.
- 9.3 It was suggested that the newly created Deputy Directors could have the responsibility for signing off changes, having undertaken conversations and discussions with subject-specific colleagues beforehand.
- 9.4 A paper would be written on the process, for distribution and discussion. **(action: RKH)**

## **10 Lecture Video Guidance (standing agenda item)**

There was nothing new to report.

## **11 Any other business**

- 11.1 Robert Harle had produced a paper on themes and issues for each year group, for TMC members to consider.
- 11.2 The individual Deputy Directors were invited to encourage discussion with colleagues in order to move a number of issues and considerations forward and to identify issues and solutions, to bring to the next meeting of TMC. **(action: Deputy Directors and agenda item for next TMC)**

**Date of next meeting: Monday 22 November 2021**