

Faculty of Computer Science and Technology

Meeting of the Tripos Management Committee

Monday 10 October at 14:00 via Zoom

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

Members

Mrs Helen Averill (*Undergraduate Teaching Administration Manager*) (HPA)
Ms Marion Cobby (*Undergraduate Teaching Administration; Minutes*) (MJC)
Prof Robert Harle (*Chair; Director, undergraduate teaching*) (RKH)
Dr Evangelia Kalyvianaki (*Advisor*) (EK)
Prof Rafal Mantiuk (*Chair of Examiners*) (RKM)
Ms Helen Neal (*Undergraduate Teaching Administration*) (HN)
Prof Thomas Sauerwald (*Deputy HoD*) (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*) (JDY)
TBC (*Deputy Director, IA undergraduate teaching*)

1 Apologies for Absence

Dr Evangelia Kalyvianaki

2 Notification of AOB

None to report.

3 Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 1 July 2022

With no corrections to be made these were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Action from the meeting of 1 July 2022

- 4.1 It was proposed that the following should be made clear on the website: that 'making code available either intentionally or otherwise, should not happen before the completion of exams' and that this should also go to Faculty Board for consideration (*item 3.1.1: action RKH*).
- 4.1.1 Prof Harle confirmed that this was still ongoing and would be discussed at the meeting of the Faculty Board on 11 October 2022 (*action: report back from Faculty Board to next TMC*).
- 4.2 Prof Robert Harle intended to compile a list of potential teaching needs over the coming years, to put to the Wednesday Away Day the following week, which would include potential shadowing of the teaching of 1A Scientific Computing, in addition to cover for others including Further Java, Databases and OOP (*item 3.5.1: action RKH*).

- 4.2.1 It was confirmed that the identified teaching needs in the immediate future had been addressed, with details provided at the July Away Day. Scientific Computing shadowing: Prof Andrew Moore; Object-Oriented Programming: Dr Raoul Urma, Affiliated Lecturer; Databases: Dr David Greaves.
- 4.3 Dr David Greaves, Chair of Examiners, was invited to draft a response to the students (regarding dissertation feedback) which would be considered by the committee by circulation, prior to sending to the students (*item 4.2.2: action DJG*)
- 4.3.1 It was confirmed that responses to the students had been drafted by DJG and RKH and that students received the response via the Student Forum on Moodle.
- 4.4 It was noted that the division between Algorithms 1 and Algorithms 2 on the examination structure had not yet been published, and that a detailed distinction of it needed to be taken to Faculty Board for formal endorsement (*item 5.2: action: RKH*).
- 4.4.1 It was confirmed that the division between Algorithms 1 and Algorithms 2 had, in fact, been published since Michaelmas Term 2021 but that some students had missed this information.
- 4.5 It was noted that this change (3.4.1 above) would also need to be reflected on the website once approved by Faculty Board (*item 5.3: action: HPA*).
- 4.5.1 It was confirmed that any changes in examination paper structure for 2022-23 would be approved via the usual process of Form and Conduct Notice to the first Faculty Board meeting of Michaelmas Term. In addition to publication via the examination structure, students would be directed to the link to the document and web page email to ensure they were aware of changes.
- 4.6 A request had been made to change the name of Security to Cyber Security and to move it to Lent Term, to reduce the workload in Easter Term. It was suggested that this could swap with Logic and Proof which was generally supported, unless it would raise any issues. Alternatively it could just move to Lent Term without any swap taking place, but again only if it raised no problematic issues (*item 6.1: action: HPA*).
- 4.6.1 It was confirmed that the course name had been updated. However, it could not move to Lent term due to timetable constraints and limited numbers of supervisors, and would therefore remain in Easter Term.
- 4.7 It was agreed that Prof Harle would talk to Prof Moore about alternative means of communication with students, as proposed, in addition to confirming the need to emphasize to students the departmental policy that emails should be checked and read regularly (*item 8.1.5: action: RKH*).
- 4.7.1 It was confirmed that students had been reminded at the Michaelmas student briefings that they needed to check emails regularly, particularly from Teaching Admin team. This reminder would be re-iterated during the course of the term.
- 4.8 Dr Evangelia Kalyvianaki and Prof Richard Mortier were proposing a re-vamp of the Operating Systems course. The high-level syllabus items were unlikely to change but there would be changes in some of the detail. The proposed changes would be circulated shortly for consideration by correspondence by the TMC (*item 8.5.1: action: RKH*).
- 4.8.1 It was confirmed that the syllabus updates had been circulated to TMC on 21 September 2022 and approved by correspondence. The course pages had been updated accordingly.
- 5 Welcome to new members**
- 5.1 Prof Thomas Sauerwald was welcomed in his new role as Deputy Head of Department. His replacement as the Deputy Director for IA Teaching would be confirmed in the next few weeks.
- 6 Other matters arising**
- 6.1 There were no matters arising.

7 Examinations

7.1 Tripos Examiners' Report 2022

- 7.1.1 There was nothing specific to discuss – some issues had been raised in the reports which had been addressed.
- 7.1.2 It was agreed that if anything was still outstanding it could be addressed either by correspondence or brought to the next meeting of TMC (*action: HPA*).
- 7.1.3 A proposal was made for a lightweight review of Discrete Mathematics as the marks had been noticeably lower this past year, although this was the first time it had occurred. It was agreed that input would be required from Prof Rafal Mantiuk, as Chair of Examiners (*action: RKM*).

7.2 Examination plans for 2023

- 7.2.1 The Chair reported that the proposal going from TMC to the Faculty Board would be for IA and IB examinations to be in-person, closed book, and that Part II would remain online. It was noted that this had not been a unanimous decision of the TMC.

8 General Teaching Matters

8.1 Report on start of term - including feedback/discussion points from briefing lectures

- 8.1.1 The Chair reported that the introductory briefing sessions had gone well and had been well-attended. Students attending had been enthusiastic about plans for the coming year and were supportive of proposals being made (eg project marking, exam content, etc).

8.2 Part II Project marking

- 8.2.1 It was noted that this had already been discussed before the summer and subsequently slightly refined by Prof Mantiuk, Chair of Examiners, which would be considered by the Faculty Board meeting later in the week.
- 8.2.2 The proposal going to Faculty Board would be for each project to have two markers – the supervisor and an examiner, in order to ensure that each project was assessed by an expert and that the supervisor would understand the final mark. This would also enable supervisors to provide feedback to students, which had been frequently requested.
- 8.2.3 It was agreed that allowing SRAs and Affiliated Lecturers to mark would be a great benefit.
- 8.2.4 It was acknowledged that agreement from Faculty Board would be very helpful, but that they would have the final decision.

8.3 Statutes and Ordinances - Regulation Changes

- 8.3.1 It was reported that the Regulations contained a number of contradictions. Helen Averill had drafted suggestions of updates, in consultation with Caroline Stewart, Departmental Secretary, and Emma Paulus from the Academic Division, although acknowledged that no updates would be in place before the beginning of the next academic year.
- 8.3.2 The updates were not contentious but rather a tidying-up process of outdated information which had evolved over a number of years.

8.4 Marking & Classing and Deadlines & Extensions guidelines

- 8.4.1 A paper had been circulated, outlining suggested updates to the Marking and Classing document, and Guidelines for deadlines for extensions web page.
- 8.4.2 It was noted that the paper needed the approval of the Chair of Examiners who was not present at the meeting (*action: RKM*).
- 8.4.3 Concern was expressed about the dropping of norm-referencing as it was felt that this had not been discussed at the TMC. It was proposed that the Chair of Examiners should consider it for approval, with any necessary conversations with concerned individuals beforehand (*action: RKM*).
- 8.4.5 Once approved by the Chair of Examiners this would go to Faculty Board for final approval (*action: RKM*).

8.5 Lecturing in-person/virtually – pedagogical reasons

- 8.5.1 Unless there were pedagogical or exceptional reasons for not doing so, it was confirmed by the Chair that all lectures should definitely be in-person.
- 8.5.2 A number of requests had been received which had been approved. Details had been circulated to the committee prior to the meeting.
- 8.5.3 The Chair asked for an additional request to be considered, namely his delivery of Information Theory (Part II), which was approved by the committee.
- 8.5.4 It was confirmed that Discrete Mathematics in Lent Term would be delivered online as students would be unable to travel between sites in time to attend in-person.

8.6 Ticks and Plagiarism

- 8.6.1 Prof Frank Stajano had circulated a paper concerning the plagiarism in ticks which had been detected during the previous academic year; his proposal was for eliminating the marking aspect of ticks in order to remove any incentive for cheating.
- 8.6.2 It was noted that DoSs found ticks useful in terms of providing early feedback on student progress, so if they were to be eliminated there would be a need for some alternative form of progress reports.
- 8.6.3 There was mixed opinion in the meeting as there was concern that some students may not make the most of the tick opportunities available to them if they were to become optional.
- 8.6.4 It was agreed for a wider response to be sought, by seeking opinion from both the student and the wider academic bodies by raising the issue at SScOF, DoS Forum and, potentially, the Wednesday Group.
- 8.6.5 The outcomes of these would be presented to the next meeting of the TMC to ascertain whether or not further discussion was warranted (*action: agenda item for next SScOF, DoS and TMC meetings*).

8.7 Tripos Lecture timetable

- 8.7.1 Concern had been raised by Prof Frank Stajano about some lectures now taking place in the afternoons, as it had the potential to create problems in arranging supervisions.
- 8.7.2 It was noted that the occasional afternoon lecture had been scheduled due to larger group sizes and fewer suitable available venues.
- 8.7.3 It was noted that this was more of an issue for Michaelmas Term (MT) as more Part II units had chosen to move to MT than in previous years.
- 8.7.4 It was suggested that a compromise might be to keep IA and IB lectures in the mornings only, even if Part II and MPhil occasionally used the afternoons.
- 8.7.5 Prof Harle agreed to have offline discussions with Helen Averill to see if the timetable could accommodate the proposal of IA and IB lectures to be in the mornings only and would report back to the next TMC (*action: RKH, HPA*).

- 8.7.6 It was also reported that some IA and IB students felt that they had too much morning teaching already, so it was agreed to take this issue to SSCoF for more detailed feedback (*action: add to next agenda of SSCoF*).
- 8.8 Part II Units of Assessment (3 items under this heading)**
- 8.8.1 Blind Marking**
- 8.8.1.1 Part II unit leaders had been asked to confirm to Student Administration whether or not their units should be blind-marked which had caused concern for those who had group-based work, eg Dr Evangelia Kalyvianaki and Cloud Computing.
- 8.8.1.2 It was reported that the question had been asked in response to concern from some students who felt there could be bias in the marking if the identity of students was known.
- 8.8.1.3 It was agreed that the current units should be reviewed in order to identify any which could not be blind-marked and to then make the assumption that all others would be blind-marked, including any new ones.
- 8.8.1.4 Dr Damon Wischik, Deputy Director, Part II undergraduate teaching, expressed concern that this had never been discussed formally. He was invited to put his thoughts into a paper for the next meeting of TMC, having also identified what the current *status quo* was between blind-marked units and not (*action: DJW for the next TMC meeting*).
- 8.8.2 Letter grades for assignments**
- 8.8.2.1 It was reported that ACS were changing to a grading system of fail/pass/merit/distinction, rather than using marks.
- 8.8.2.2 The committee was asked whether or not they wished to remain with the A-F grading, or to change to the ACS model. It was noted that the median for ACS differed from that of the Tripos, so it was felt there was no need to change the current Tripos model.
- 8.8.2.3 However, the committee recorded their formal agreement for ACS to make their change.
- 8.8.3 Unit of Assessment choices for intermitters**
- 8.8.3.1 It was noted that clear guidance was needed for intermitters in relation to their choice of units.
- 8.8.3.2 It was felt that students who had left mid-year and had completed a unit would have an unfair advantage if they chose the same unit again when they returned from intermission.
- 8.8.3.3 There was strong support for the idea to consider each case individually rather than having a hard and fast rule.
- 8.8.3.4 Dr Damon Wischik, Deputy Director, Part II undergraduate teaching, agreed to talk to someone from EAMC about this and to report back to the next meeting (*action: DJW*).
- 8.9 Lecture-recording policy**
- 8.9.1 The lecture-recording policy paper had been circulated for information, not for comment.
- 8.9.2 It was noted that there was a degree of opposition to the policy and it was felt that the department should have a stance in place to protect academics.
- 8.10 Proposed name change for Part II Project Overseers**
- 8.10.1 A request from Prof Neil Lawrence had been received to replace the term 'Overseer' with 'Checker'.
- 8.10.2 After discussion it was felt that there was no need to change the word 'Overseer', nor that 'Checker' was a good replacement.
- 8.10.3 However, Prof Lawrence would be invited to make a written case for the proposed change if he felt strongly about it, although nothing would be implemented in the current academic year (*action: RKH to NL*).

9 Any Other Business

9.1 Governance

- 9.1.1 Concerns were raised regarding the management style of the department, including, amongst other issues, the policy for lecture-recording. Prof Frank Stajano reported that he was representing the thoughts of other colleagues who had confided in him with their concerns. Some had felt under threat from students when told that they were not permitted to access the lecture recordings due to the lecturer's preference not to release them (apart from to the students in possession of an SSD).
- 9.1.2 It was confirmed that any governance concerns should be addressed to the Chair of the Faculty Board, Professor Paul Hewitt, rather than to the TMC.
- 9.1.3 There was concern that the policy differed from other departments and that it had never been discussed by the TMC. It was agreed to feed this concern back to the HoD Team (*action: TMS, Deputy HoD*).
- 9.1.4 It was noted that some concerns over the lecture-recording policy had been expressed at the meeting, including that there had been no consultation with the TMC, and that these concerns would be referred to the Faculty Board (*action: item to be referred to next meeting of Faculty Board*).

Date of next meeting: 21 November 2022, 14:00, via Zoom.