UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Department of Computer Science and Technology

Faculty of Computer Science and Technology
Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting of the Tripos Management Committee

Friday 30 June 2023 14:00 via Zoom

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)
Vacant (*Deputy Director, IA undergraduate teaching)*

1	**Apologies for Absence**
	Damon Wischik, Eva Kalyvianaki, Marion Cobby, Caroline Stewart

2	**Notification of AoB**
	No other business to report/discuss.

3	**Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 15 May 2023**
	The minutes of the meeting of 15 May were approved.

4	**Actions from the meeting of 15 May 2023**

4.1   Discussion with EAMC about Unit of Assessment choices for intermitters *(item 4.1.1).* **Status:** Dr Damon Wischik is scheduled to meet with EAMC team on 7 July and so will report back after this date shortly. *(action: DJW).*

4.2   Discussion about whether 25% penalty for a UoA was too harsh – all UoA lecturers to be invited to submit a short proposal for the coming academic year, which would be reviewed at the next TMC, using DJW wording as a guideline to produce their proposals, including the idea of the addition of any penalties to be applied *(item 4.3.1).* An alternative approach had been agreed, for individual discussions to take place with Prof Robert Harle and Helen Averill, rather than inviting written responses. It was confirmed that no progress had been made on this yet and that it would be rolled over to the next meeting of TMC. Meanwhile, it would be discussed between RKH and HPA in their weekly meetings **Status:** Action still outstanding but it was agreed this discussion would take place prior to Helen's last day on 21 July. *(action: RKH/HPA).*

4.3   A Part III student had expressed concerns over the CST process of awarding final degrees based on a set percentage of students achieving each category, rather than having set boundaries (eg 70% and over for a First). After some discussion it was agreed that very little would be gained by

changing it and that the student would be informed. **Status:** Student has been informed, action closed.

4.4   Proposed re-naming of 'Overseer' to 'Checker' to be recommended to Faculty Board for approval *(item 4.6.2).* **Status:** HPA to double-check on the status with Caroline *(action HPA).*

4.5   Increase of four more lectures in Concepts of Programming Languages - RKH to discuss with Neel and circulate for email approval *(item 6.1.1).* **Status:** Rob to follow-up accordingly *(action RKH).*

4.6   The points raised in response to the Tripos review questionnaire would be anonymised and circulated to the committee once the deadline had passed *(item 6.3).* **Status:** Circulated on 29 June prior to this meeting. **Status:** Action closed.

4.7   It was agreed to include LLMs on future agendas, in order to decide exactly what was going to be said in good time *(item 6.4.8).* **Status:** Action closed*.*

4.8   The Chair confirmed that he would update the committee at the next meeting on discussions about Category Theory *(item 6.5.4).* **Status:** We were understaffed to cover all the Theory teaching but have now managed to redistribute lecturers to cover. Marcelo is covering Category Theory module. Discrete maths will be covered by Marcelo and Jon Stirling (new UTO). Action closed.

5   **Other matters arising**
None.

6   **General Teaching Matters**

6.1   Syllabus and Course updates for 2023-24 (papers).

1. Scientific Computing change approved.
2. Foundations of Computer Science, proposed change in staff approved.
3. Software and Security Engineering. Martin Kleppmann suggested replacement, seen as an excellent suggestion (Frank), and if someone will restructure the course (ie software with a bit of security), then Martin is a good person to do exactly that. ***Action: RKH to talk to Martin.***
4. Interaction Design. Hatice to submit a proposal on how to move the Interaction Design issues forward, to be discussed at the next TMC. ***Action: HPA to speak to Hatice.***
5. Algorithms 2. It was agreed that Damon should use the most recent version of the text (4th edition 2022), for the Algorithms 2 course. Other changes approved.
6. MLRD. Issue noted.
7. Concurrent and Distributed Systems. The option would be for Martin Kleppmann to take over second part of course, or for Tim Harris to continue from last year. ***Action: RKH to speak to Martin.***
8. Data Science syllabus changes approved.
9. Cybersecurity changed approved.
10. Machine Learning and Bayesian Inference. If we run this course as online (video) only then will Sean be in a position to write and submit (late) exam questions? ***Action: RKH to speak to Sean.***
11. Category Theory course updates approved.

6.2   Tripos Review (URL circulated)

Rob was disappointed at the lack of innovative thinking in the responses, but there were still some useful points. A lot of commentary around supervisions in that there aren't enough supervisors. Support for innovative teaching, and an openness to changing things with teaching, but not much in the way of specific suggestions for change. Overall feeling of over-teaching or

the potential that we just rush through for some courses. Thrust towards more practical elements. A core of people who do feel that everything is fine.

Did anyone else see any particular take-way's? 'What is the purpose of the course' question and Rob was expecting a lot more around trying to build best Computer Scientists for research. This was clearly the feeling, and it seems views are now leaning more towards principles and practices in the context of industry.

Rob will give a summary at the offsite meeting next week but in the meantime, please do flag any further comments.

6.3   Part II Module choice numbers 2023-24 (paper)

The Teaching Admin team highlighted some potential issues with provisional student numbers for Modules for 23-24. What has happened in previous years is to suggest students move to second or third options, then when numbers are finalised, contact relevant Module leaders to see if there is any flexibility on numbers where a Module is oversubscribed. We will do the same again this year.

6.4   TA support for Courses – Advice for Course Leaders

The only advice is that Course leaders really need to find confirmed TA's before committing to larger student numbers. They shouldn't assume TA's can be recruited later on in the course, and it is not ideal practice to recruit TA's via arm-twisting!

Issues with DNN were discussed, in terms of the late changes with the course in 22-23, thus resulting is students working on the assignment over the late vacation. There should be some official discussion with the course leaders regarding the issues that arose. ***Action: RKH.***

6.5   Sabbaticals (paper)

Simone Teufel's application was considered. The committee felt that everything was covered from a Tripos perspective. No objections to the request, and so approved by the TMC.

6.6   Cybersecurity TA sessions (FMS)

Frank used TA's for both 1A and 1B. They put in lots of work and effort and they should be recognised and rewarded. For Cybersecurity, based on last year's feedback that a number of students found the optional SEED labs difficult, Frank offered optional helpdesk sessions run by two TAs. But not many people turned up, although those who did benefited from them. Fewer sessions will be offered next year (use it or lose it). If a course convenor runs practicals, encouraging use of TAs allows the option to offer more feedback so should be encouraged.

6.7   Easter Course feedback (URL circulated)

Biggest concern is still the lack of response. If we really need the feedback do we make it mandatory? (Frank). It was agreed that making the course surveys mandatory would be difficult to implement as we would then be required to make them examinable, and this isn't a feasible option. Another option is to drop the feedback forms altogether, however it was noted that the existence of the surveys is for our optics and all agreed that the forms provide a different kind of feedback to other means (ie SSCoF). Unfortunately, this continues to be a perennial problem, and hopefully the tripos review will help in that it will provide students with more confidence that any issues with courses will be addressed.

6.8   LLMs – current status

Tripos review survey had a question re LLMs and a huge number of people misinterpreted it as in the context of exams. No specific update, but there will be no online exams this in 23-24 so the worry of LLMs in exams is removed. In the context of coursework, the concern has not gone. The question is, 'how do we make positive use of these tools?', but it is likely too early to decide. Personally (Rob) feels that LLMs are a good supplement to supervisions and may go some way to resolve the supervision issue (ie reduce the load).

7   Exam-related (RKM)

7.1   Feedback on UoA/Module marking – scatter plots

The current Chair of Examiners for Part 1B/II reported on the recurring issue that the UoA (Module) marks are high. Showed scatter plot of UoA marks (y axis) against average of p8, p9 and dissertation marks (x axis). Scatter plot of each UoA show very high average for some UoAs. There were long discussions in the examiner meetings regarding fairness but it seemed impossible for examiners to make any adjustment of marks. It was agreed that we should encourage those who run UoA's to mark fairly. Rafal volunteered to generate more stats and send to UoA leaders and ask them to do what everyone does for the papers, eg comment on how the marking went, reflecting on the marks and making some adjustment for the future. This is his proposal in order to try and fix the issue.

The 23-24 Chair of Examiners confirmed that the examiners have begun these conversations with a select few UoA's. One case a new UoA and so the course leaders were less experienced. They agreed to review marks. The other case was due to issues with the assessment. Plans are in place to have discussions with course leaders as appropriate, particularly where there is a large number of students taking a specific UoA/Module.

7.2   Part 1B progression and Part II 'unclassed' boundaries in the 'Marking Scheme and Classing Convention' document.

We have clear criteria for 1A but not for 1B or Part II in terms of the boundary between 3rd and unclassed. This year everyone will proceed from 1B to Part II. For some students this year, we still need to make a decision whether to be classed or unclassed, and it would be helpful if there was some guidance in the Marking and Classing document. A guideline of marks would be helpful. Rob asked for a delta. Rafal confirmed that for Part II we have 4 students who have less than 30% and therefore very difficult for us to class those students (117/400 or below). The next mark is around 190/400 highlighting a large gap between those students at risk and those above.

Question regarding whether a student was either unclassed or failed, so do they get a degree regardless? ***Action: HPA to obtain clarification.***

Previous to now, it has always been examiner's discretion. ***Action: Jamie/Rafal to devise a proposal to approve for early Mich 2023-24.***

7.3   Plagiarism reminder

We had some cases for students taking the exams online, and there was copy and paste of text either from lecture notes or internet without acknowledgement. We need to ensure that students are clear that this is definitely not acceptable. We certainly need to reiterate what is right and what is wrong in terms of plagiarism.

7.4   1A and 1B exam Moodle submissions (FMS)

The Moodle exam submissions for students who took in-person exams under special circumstances were a mess this year. Often the submission was one bundle per paper, in some cases without page breaks. Helen confirmed that all our issues with missing marks or scripts this

year are directed related to these submissions, without exception. The plan is to contact the exams office with details of the issues. Frank offered to add a paragraph of support. ***Action: HPA.***

Assessment criteria for dissertations

This item was not on the agenda but the 23-24 Chair of Examiners raised for discussion. The examiners would like to revise the assessment criteria for dissertations. It was suggested that the examiners draft a proposal for review at the next meeting. ***Action: Jamie to bring to first TMC of 23-24.***

7   **Any Other Business**

None.

Date of next meeting: October 2023