



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Department of Computer
Science and Technology

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

Monday 26 Feb at 14:00 via Zoom

<https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/86408067793?pwd=c05HT0xNVEg4eHFPOUJyNHJmWlk3Zz09>

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

Members

Prof Robert Harle (*Chair; Director, undergraduate teaching*) (RKH) ✓
Prof Paula Buttery (*Advisor*) (PB) X
Prof Anuj Dawar (*Advisor*) (AD) X
Dr Carl Henrik Ek (CHE) ✓
Ms Helen Neal (*Undergraduate Teaching Administration*) (HN) X
Prof Thomas Sauerwald (*Deputy HoD*) (TMS) ✓
Caroline Stewart (*Departmental Secretary*) (CS) ✓
Becky Straw (*Undergraduate Teaching Administration Manager*) (BS) ✓
Dr Jamie Vicary (*Chair of Examiners*) (JV) ✓
Dr Damon Wischik (*Deputy Director, Part II undergraduate teaching*) (DJW) ✓
Dr Jeremy Yallop (*Deputy Director, IB undergraduate teaching*) (JDY) ✓
Dean Dodds (*Undergraduate Teaching Administrator*) (DD) Minutes ✓
Lise Gough (*Postgraduate Education Manager*) (LG) ✓

1 Apologies for Absence

Paula Buttery
Anuj Dawar
Helen Neal

2 Notification of AoB

JV wished to talk about how plagiarism and misconduct is communicated to students.

3 Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 20 November 2023

DJW corrected 4.3, which described this as DJW document, but it was JV, AB and DJW's document.. Also incorrectly stated the document was being circulated to PVC which was corrected to faculty board.

4 Action from the meeting of 22 January 2024

Completed actions from the last meeting can be found in the document 'completed TMC actions'

BS explained a new method of circulating completed actions.

- 4.1 Unclassing: JV explained that only a sentence in the document was up for discussion 'Examiners will use their judgement to decide which candidates have not reached a suitable level to be awarded honours. In recent years this has been around 40%, a threshold which may be varied at the discretion of the examiners, who will also take into account whether there is a significant gap below the lowest classed candidate, or whether the candidate has otherwise not achieved a reasonable minimum standard for an Honours degree.'

RKH happy with this, next stage is for this to be seen by the faculty board **(Action: CS)**

CS explained this would be going to faculty board tomorrow.

- 4.2 Shabbat: RKH explained that a student is not able to work on Friday due to Shabbat, which conflicts with MLRD. Solved for this year, but questioned if we had accidentally created a situation where we structurally discriminate against a group, which was not our intention. RKH believed we should seek out a central response, but not sure who. CS will find the correct person to speak to. **(Action: CS)**.

CS explained there was no formal university guidance. We should decide how to respond as a department. RKH was surprised by this. CS stated there was some guidance, but minimum. RKH believed this was the first time this had occurred and is not currently pressing, could be dealt with on a case by case basis. No objections to this. RKH stated that if this becomes a bigger issue, we can discuss creating a policy.

- 4.4 Tripos Review: RKH explained the process would be to setup individual working groups, research and collate multiple recommendations. JV agreed although wished this to be stated in the document. RKH will pass on to other members of TMC who are not present. **(Action: RKH)**.

Will be discussed later

5 **Other matters arising**

None.

6 **General Teaching Matters**

6.1 LLM policy (paper)

RKH spoke about the text from JV and an email from the university, not in conflict with each other. RKH found JV's document to be well written.

JV believed the document should explain what is permitted. JV did not believe there would be any point where an AI tool would be permitted during an examination. RKH noted that technically speaking, spellcheck was AI, albeit a weak form. JV spoke about laptops at his college being used during exams with heavy restrictions.

RKH noted a comment about 'certain uses of Github CoPilot' and wished for the words 'tools such as' added, broadening the description.

TMC happy to approve. LG asked for this to be sent to the PG committee for approval. Once approved, should be uploaded and BS to draw students attention to it. **(Action, JV, LG & BS)**.

RKH looked at the university update. RKH did not believe the update conflicted with our policy, although was confused by the 'AI and generative tool rubric'. Unclear if this was a requirement or a suggested possibility. JV was also confused by this. RKH and others did not wish to use this. RKH decided not to use this.

DJW noted this policy was a stopgap measure, asked about the longer term plan. Will send the two competing policies to Wednesday, BS will send, JV will organise people who support each policy and have them debate. **(Action: BS & JV)**.

DJG suggested Alan for this debate. JV agreed and suggested DJW and Alan debate together, as well as CHE and Rafal. **(Action: JV, DJG, CHE)**.

- 6.2 As this will be a structured Wednesday, CS will find a good date. **(Action: CS)**.

MLRD

RKH explained there was two problems with MLRD. Two of the lecturers will be on sabbatical. There is a policy to rotate demonstrators, so demonstrators will be inexperienced. Likely to have a Post Doc giving lecturers and a UTO taking responsibility. RKH is waiting to receive a list of previous demonstrators with experience and will ask them to demonstrate again. RKH will find at least one other UTO to oversee.

Longer term, RKH believed the amount of material was too much and too many ticks. The course may need to be split into three different courses in the future.

TMS asked about the amount of time and how this would work with the aim of having uniform course sizes. RKH spoke about a number of options and increasing the amount of machine learning in the first term, possibly having one course spanning three terms. RKH did not believe this was a final answer, but needs to be reviewed.

CHE stated that many computer science degrees were focusing on machine learning and was happy to not do that. RKH believed we couldn't ignore this.

6.3 Feedback

RKH spoke about the feedback boxes. Only a limited number of respondents as many people did not attend the final lectures.

DJW asked why Discrete Maths did not have feedback boxes. RKH explained because this was in town. Would look at getting feedback in town soon.

TMS asked why his course did not receive boxes, BS explained the boxes had not arrived before his course ended.

RKH believed the people who had positive experiences would not have filled out a questionnaire. However too early to draw a conclusion. RKH read out the numbers, which skewed towards happy. May need to place boxes on days which are not the end of the course.

CS asked if lecturers had been consulted and could say no. RKH did not believe there had been any pushback and felt this benefited lecturers. Although wished to be informed if there were any objections.

7 Tripos Review

7.1 Update from the Wednesday structured meeting

Many people agreed that maths in IA would need to be fixed and will take up a sizeable part of the review.

Foundations of computer science was very polarizing. Many people disagreed with RKH's point regarding python, RKH did not want this to be used exclusively.

UTOs were not enthusiastic regarding modules in part II, which surprised RKH. Did not think this would receive pushback.

7.2 Plans for syllabus review

RKH showed the proposed approach, which was a sizeable document. RKH looked at the 'sunflower approach' showing areas they believed every computer science course should cover, followed by more specialised areas.

RKH will circulate this document to check if we are meeting the CS core according to their definition and to use this to review which areas are covered. **(Action: RKH)**.

RKH considered creating a spreadsheet of topics which needed to be covered, chasing lecturers to see which aspects they teach. The inverse would also be true, finding out what we teach which was considered nonessential.

JV believed Europe had a different perspective on computer science than America and certain areas are not considered relevant there. Did not wish to absorb this document without consideration. RKH was also sceptical, however after reading it, believed it did cover the core topics and could not find a similar European centric document. JV questioned weighting, something only worth a single line by American standards may be considered more important and worth an entire course here. TMS shared a similar scepticism and did not believe the document was up to date.

DJW did not object to the document, considered it just guidance and a starting point rather than an instruction. Had objected to the CLRS in the past. DJW expected others to work on this, to speak to people and fill in details.

CHE agreed that a document with an American vision on computer science was a worry, but as long as it is just a starting point, he was happy.

JV thought conversation starters could significantly distort the conversation. Believed there were other approaches, such as commissioning someone here to make a list of the top twenty universities in the world and looking at what they teach. Also felt the document was quite long. Did not wish for this document to dominate the conversation.

RKH noted that the top universities, either were US based with a very different system. Some universities did not make it easy to find details of what they teach or were in the middle of changing their syllabus. JV suggested publishing a document showing the what Cambridge believes should be the core syllabus and let other universities use that as a guide.

DJW believed this document would more or less summaries what is taught at US based universities, but believed it was worth investigating what is taught at European universities.

RKH understood the concerns but wished to continue anyway. RKH believed this task would involve DJW, JDY and RKH but invited others if they were willing. CHE and TMS volunteered.

DJW believed the hours spent teaching suggested by the document were quite lopsided. RKH agreed that this suggested a modular American approach to teaching.

RKH would arrange a meeting of the five people involved. **(Action: RKH).**

8

Any Other Business

JV had looked at ticks which were similar to the work of other students. JV did not understand how the policy was communicated to students. JV noted that a student had uploaded all of her ticks to GitHub and did not understand that this was a problem.

DJW stated that two years ago, Tim instructed lecturers to include wording regarding plagiarism in the tick instructions.

RKH remembered work being uploaded to GitHub before. We strongly encouraged students not to upload until after the examination, but did not believe we had the authority to enforce this.

JV noted that the misconduct rules prohibited students from aiding other students and believed uploading to GitHub violated that. RKH believed that the person who uploaded was not in violation as they were not attempting to help, however the student who used this work was.

JV wished for uploads to have a checkbox, clarifying that the work was their own. Or a declaration they would need to complete at some point. RKH remembered a physical declaration which people had to sign, lost when transitioning to digital hand in, LG agreed.

DJW stated Moodle did not have this functionality, but UIS should be able to add this. BS will investigate. **(Action: BS)**.

RKH believed students were informed of policies during induction. DJW believed the university had clear policies already. JV explained we are following these policies, however the central university workflow assumes we have a signed declaration, which we do not.

RKH asked if there was a particular course which had misconduct. JV stated this was C++ where students had colluded.

TMS suggested looking at David Greaves' Vivas from previous years. JV stated that David was involved and the Vivas in the past were spot checks rather than for plagiarism.

DJW spoke about communication. In the algorithms course he had shown students minimum spanning trees.

Date of next meeting: 13 May 2024 14:00.