



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

Monday 13 May at 14:00 via Zoom

<https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/87298539261?pwd=NWcyUGFxOG15RHo0UVItM0NUZENSQT09>

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

Members

Prof Robert Harle (*Chair; Director, undergraduate teaching*) (RKH) ✓
Prof Paula Buttery (*Deputy HoD*) (PB) ✓
Prof Anuj Dawar (*Advisor*) (AD) ✓
Dean Dodds (*Undergraduate Teaching Administration*) (DD) ✓
Dr Carl Henrik Ek (CHE) ✓
Lise Gough (*Postgraduate Education Manager*) (LG) ✓
Ms Helen Neal (*Undergraduate Teaching Administration*) (HN) ✓
Prof Thomas Sauerwald (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) ✓

1 **Apologies for Absence**

2 **Notification of AoB**

RKH will speak about additional courses and general teaching matters which will be interspersed them throughout the meeting.

3 **Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 26 February 2024**

4 **Action from the meeting of 26 February 2024**

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

No comments.

4.1 Moodle checkbox to confirm submission are their own work. **(Action: BS)**

Update: This checkbox exists for regular Moodle submission and we will be using that from now on.

RKH asked if this applied to all things, BS explained it was only for assignments which were uploaded. DJW had not seen this when he changed his role to student. BS explained that this option was not used this year. BS will circulate instructions. **(Action: BS)**.

5 Other matters arising

None

6 General Teaching Matters

RKH believes we need to discuss Computation Theory. AD is taking a sabbatical and we may have overloaded a new lecturer, Jon Sterling. Covering Computation Theory may be too much as it is not simply teaching but reimagining the course which RKH believed was too much. TMS noted that Jon Sterling is going to become an examiner.

RKH proposes that someone else is found to cover this. AD will suggest people offline, RKH will speak to others in the department. **(Action: AD & RKH)**.

Another option would be to use recordings of AD, AD was asked and did not object in principle. AD spoke about taking over from Andy Pitts and reusing his material, so the delivery may not be particularly polished.

6.1 Algorithms

RKH explained that no one was interested in covering Algorithms 1 and 2 during DJW's sabbatical and DJW is retiring from this. Frank Stajano was originally understood to be covering, but Frank disagreed with this. RKH did not believe this should be taught by video lecture. RKH will look at people who have a smaller teaching load who could cover. **(Action: RKH)**.

DJW shared a spreadsheet [teaching load - Google Sheets](#) regarding people who had smaller teaching loads. RKH thanked DJW for this.

TMS asked if Frank could cover for a year. RKH had spoken with Frank regarding this, Frank was willing under the condition that he had no involvement with exam questions, which RKH believed was inappropriate. Considering Frank's teaching load, RKH did understand Frank's reluctance despite the problems this caused.

JV spoke about Oxford where lectureship positions were created for postdocs to teach two courses. CS was unsure of this. RKH was unhappy that we could not find UTOs to do this and felt it would be paying others to cover the workload people should be doing.

RKH planned to contact people with lower teaching loads, based on DJW's spreadsheet. No objections to RKH's plan. **(Action: RKH)**.

6.2 Software and Security Engineering

RKH explained that the course had been covered, apart from a marker for the second exam question, still attempting to find someone.

RKH was unclear regarding what should be done for this course next year. Some content is required, Ross Anderson was keen on security engineering, which is not required, could cut it down and make this a smaller course. Will need to find some way to cover it next year. Then rethink it in the tripos review the following year.

6.3 Economics, Law and Ethics

Economics, Law and Ethics

RKH explained that Ross Anderson was originally going to cover this during Alice Hutchings' sabbatical. Have found externals to cover but no one to cover the questions as most people in the department did not like covering essay based questions.

6.4 MLRD

PB explained that Simone Teufel and Andreas Vlachos are both on sabbatical. Asked Fermin Moscoso del Prado Martin if he would cover, who is new to the department and the course is complex. The course involves fourteen ticks, three exam questions, administration and finding tickers. PB would not allow Fermin to do it alone.

RKH and PB had spoken about streamlining the course. Two possible solutions.

Option two was cutting exam questions. RKH did not believe exam questions could be cut, so that must stay. Had effectively already cut one exam question and did believe we could drop further. RKH believed option one was the only option, to find a way to reduce the administrative burden. PB believed ticking should be moved to supervisions and reducing the number of ticks, perhaps to three for the three parts of the course. Making some ticks optional and into supervision material.

DJW asked if the supervision material would still count as a tick. PB explained it would simply be supervision material. Supervisors had complained about the supervision material in the past and that they would rather talk about the ticks. DJW believed this was a perfect solution, RKH agreed.

PB will speak with Fermin. **(Action: PB).**

RKH may pay people to do the exam marking.

Part II Modules (paper)

i) list of current modules

RKH believed the modules balanced well.

There were no concerns regarding the list of current modules.

ii) assessment weight changes - NLP and FL

RKH believed this needed to happen due to the number of extensions requested.

No objections. RKH wished to respond saying we agreed with the weight changes and to thank them for this work.

iii) Hatice - New module 'Affective Computing' (Paper)

Hatice Guines has a new module Affective Computing currently taught as L44. A limit of fifteen students. RKH did not believe the material was inappropriate for Part II, assessed on a mini project worth 70%

DJW spoke about two modules being removed Advanced Graphics and Multicore Semantics and Affective Computing being added. Was curious about how this left us in a good place regarding numbers. RKH explained that MT always overextended.

There were no objections to putting this into the tripos.

iv) Sue Sentance - New module 'Computing Education' (Paper)

Sue Sentance wished to teach a module on computing education and would involve going to schools. RKH was concerned about schools saying no, Sue believed there was enough backup and did not believe schools would say no. A small number of students, only three or four.

JV thought it sounded fantastic, asked about DBS checks for working with children. RKH had been told that because student would not be left alone with the children, a DBS check would not be required. JV and RKH both wished to double check this. DJW noted that the form stated DBS checks would be conducted in MT.

CS was concerned about the low number of students. DJW asked about the calibration,

suggested getting input from Alan Blackwell. RKH will speak to Alan. **(Action: RKH)**.

TMS thought it was a wonderful idea but wondered if it was computer science and asked if it could be an internship rather than a module. RKH explained Sue wished to contribute to the Tripos.

TMS was concerned that this did not build on material taught elsewhere. RKH and PB disagreed, built on prior knowledge of Computer Science and communication. TMS suggested adding an element of communication to IB.

RKH believed everyone was positive, simply had issues with implementation. As it was low overhead, wished to try next year as a pilot.

LG spoke about a preliminary interview to weed out candidates. RKH agreed this would make sense. HN asked about the prerequisite course? Interviews would need to be completed during the summertime. RKH believed there was plenty of time between students applying and announcing to conduct interviews. PB believe the DBS check should be part of that process. JV was concerned about DBS checks for overseas students and the additional time it would take. RKH believed we could flag this for overseas students and see what happens during the pilot.

No objections.

v) Category Theory

BS explained that Marcelo Fiore wished to have an uncompressed course this year and to add a preregistration evaluation. RKH did not disagree with assessing applicants.

6.5

No objects to teaching the extended version,
Exam resits (paper)

PB had recently spoken to Alastair who had received feedback from the school. For internal argument it is okay to explain the effect on teaching UTO load, the stem subjects should point out how much harder it is for us than the arts as the exam format is different, however there needs to be arguments for fairness.

RKH noted that SSCoF was strongly in favour of resits and they had pointed out the things we say we can't do, other universities are already doing, a weak argument against.

LG asked if resits would be evident on transcripts. RKH did not believe resit was a useful term as it could be misleading, some people were unable to take the exam initially due to illness for example, so it is simply sitting rather than resitting. CS believed the document referred to this as a deferral.

RKH believed this needed to be redrafted based on feedback. CS spoke about bringing this to faculty board tomorrow.

CHE spoke about how Cambridge's exam system differed from other universities. Did not believe we could accommodate resits. RKH did not believe that argument was valid, staff saying they could not do something believed we needed to argue on the basis of fairness. PB believed workload and fairness could both be discussed.

AD believed students were using self-extensions to game the system and a system which encourages students to game it is unfair. CHE spoke about the guidance for DoSes to not provide help out of term time, did not believe all DoSes would follow this, causing a massive disparity.

TMS raised the issue of students who have to work during the summer and can't simply revise.

PB asked for some figures regarding hand in times for the part II dissertations, knew some students who were ready on Friday but used additional time to improve. BS stated there were thirty-seven extension requests.

JDY rejected the fairness argument, found it arbitrary and we do not have the resources. PB believe the counter argument would be to hire more people. CHE disagreed as it would be down to one person, would need to reduce teaching load.

JV wondered if this was fairer than the current system, which had the option to reconsider results, where examiners could look at and give student a mark the examiners believed they should have received. RKH explained the counter argument, that the student may have prepared or could have done surprisingly well. CHE felt this argument was quite weak and wondered where we draw the line, if students are morning people and night owls and the time we set exams.

RKH will revise the document tonight. **(Action: RKH).**

6.6 Feedback update (paper)

RKH explained the current feedback system, using boxes and tokens to show how happy or unhappy students were. RKH felt the results were mixed but overall decent.

RKH wished to continue with this. No objections.

RKH wished to look at the courses to see what could be learned. Computation theory was quite mixed. AD noted that attendance dropped off at the end, which could explain why numbers were low in the final lecture. RKH believed trying one box at the halfway point and another at the end. **(Action: BS).**

6.7 Sabbatical request: Andrew Moore (paper)

Andrew Moore wishes to leave for a full academic year and David Greaves will cover. No objections.

DJW appreciated that David was covering as he had a lot of teaching. RKH explained that as David approached retirement, he wanted to do a lot of teaching.

6.8 Self-Certified extension (paper)

RKH was surprised at how low the numbers were. Mainly used in part II. Twenty-nine students for DNN. Had heard in the past that DNN put too much pressure onto students. RKH did not feel this was gaming the system as being completely overwhelmed.

CHE believed that for units of assessment, to get the scale of assessment we have crammed in lots of work. Spoke about students he DoSed who use extensions.

RKH asked about the administrative cost, approximately twenty minutes per extension according to HN. Engineering has received one-thousand and have employed someone full time to deal with them.

LG noted that this was the first year of Covid students, who are using extensions.

RKH asked how many people had two extensions, 89 according to BS.

DJW believed there should be more effort on the module setters to not simply overload students with work. Praised Alan Blackwell who came up with thoughtful ways to test students.

6.9 Bank Holidays

RKH asked if lecturers should not be run on bank holidays. RKH believed this was a good idea to not lecture on bank holidays but was unsure how to deal with losing one lecture.

Asked if anyone disagreed with taking bank holidays off. DJW disagreed, did not think it was worth the change. JV felt we should lecture on bank holidays and felt IT staff should come in on bank holidays to support lecturers.

CHE asked if bank holidays were a day off in contracts, felt it was unfair for people with caring responsibilities or kids in school.

AD did not think it was a big change to rearrange skipping one day. Felt it was reasonable.

LG spoke about how professional service staff would also have family and children off school and are also not paid overtime for this.

HN suggested moving the lecture to teach after the end of term, closer to exams. RKH was unsure if this was allowed under university statutes. LG informed us that they frequently did this.

RKH believed there were three options, the first simply lecturing on bank holidays without support (no votes for this). The second was giving the lecturer's the option and allowing them to decide (Two votes for this). Finally, abandoning bank holiday teaching all together (Six votes for this).

TMS suggested reducing the amount of lectures.

DJW felt this was eating into student's revision time. RKH believed this was giving them a consolidated day. DJW did not agree with that. RKH and DJW will discuss offline. **(Action: DJW and RKH).**

6.10 UTO Marker Policy

Discuss next time or offline.

6.11 New Policy for Supervision Materials

TMS explained the proposal was to have mandatory supervision material alongside model answers. RKH believed this was identical to the current policy, which we cannot enforce. TMS believed it was good to get new teachers starting next term to do this, was unaware of the existing policy.

TMS wished to announce this at Wednesday, RKH felt this would just be reannouncing an existing policy, which people already ignore or only pay lip service to.

6.12 RKH wished to see a section on how this would be enforced. **(Action: TMS).**

IB Concurrency syllabus update (Paper)

RKH wished to defer as Martin was not available to talk about. Will discuss offline (Action: All).

7 Tripos Review

7.1 Syllabus review

Had gone slower than RKH had hoped. Lots of contributions, but still significant blanks. RKH proposed a weekly meeting and to put people together in groups to discuss. Seventeen meetings. Asked anyone willing to help to contact RKH offline. **(Action: All).**

RKH believed we would need to change the structure and mark part II compulsory.

One proposal was to block off the group project into two weeks, easier for clients. TMS supported this idea.

RKH will speak with Anil Madhavapeddy to discuss not starting with Foundations of Computer Science. Starting with Python may be more advantageous.

7.2 discussion on current thinking

8 Any Other Business

8.1 SSCOF Women@CL suggestion to highlight research done by women in the department in lectures.

RKH explained that someone in SSCOF had suggested a brief moment at the start for lecturers to highlight the work done by women. No objections.

RKH spoke about who would create the slides. RKH suggested working with Women@CL to create these slides and give to lecturers. LG suggested asking some PhD students to do this. LG will send a list of names to RKH. **(Action: LG)**.

RKH will raise this issue at Wednesday. **(Action: RKH)**.

TMS wished to expand this to highlight women outside the current lecture's topic. RKH agreed, it was about visibility not relevance.

CHE suggested highlight research done by everyone in the department, not just women, but balanced. Believed students would appreciate this. RKH was unsure if this would dilute what Women@CL were asking. CHE felt that if the slides were irrelevant, some may dismiss it as the 'woke mafia imposing' while by keeping this balanced would get the message across. LG agreed, as a woman she would find it patronising.

CHE spoke about how in his lectures he would deliver a message or quote, before revealing who said it to avoid bias.

We will highlight all research in the department, not exclusively women.

Date of next meeting: 28 June 2024 14:00.