



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Department of Computer
Science and Technology

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

Monday 8 July at 14:00 via Zoom

<https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/81361234248?pwd=Bs0L9i9h6G4XoM4dbKpuwv05QQzud0.1>

AGENDA

Members

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

1 Apologies for Absence

Caroline Stewart
Damon Wischik
Anuj Dawar
Helen Neal

RKH apologised for the clash with graduation and rescheduling.

2 Notification of AoB

None

3 Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 13 May 2024

Approved

4 Action from the meeting of 13 May 2024

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

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

RKH had not found anyone to cover computation theory. AD had not sent a list of potential people, RKH believed he was also struggling to find people interested. RKH will chase. **(Action: RKH)**.

- 4.2 RKH will look at people who have a smaller teaching load who could cover Algorithms 1 & 2. **(Action: RKH)**.

RKH had approached people to cover this and did not receive a favourable response, may need to take a forced action. Currently this course is not covered for next year. RKH may be able to cover one but not both.

- 4.3 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. PB will speak with Fermin about MLRD. **(Action: PB)**.

RKH was unsure if this had been followed up and this action was pending for PB.

- 4.4 Computing Education: DJW asked about the calibration considering the low number of students, suggested getting input from Alan Blackwell. RKH will speak to Alan. **(Action: RKH)**.

Interested in the calibration. Thirteen people wished to do this, limit was ten. Concern as this is a new module and very different from others, sending our students out into schools to teach. Unsure how to calibrate this. RKH had contacted Alan Blackwell, but no suggestions yet, RKH will continue speaking with Alan.

- 4.5 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)**.

BS explained that we did not have time to split feedback between the middle and end, but had put the feedback boxes out during the penultimate and final lecturers. RKH thought this worked well and noticed quite a large difference in the numbers, believed this was worthwhile.

- 4.6 Bank holiday lecturing: 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. DJW felt this was eating into student's revision time. RKH believed this was giving them a consolidated day. RKH and DJW will discuss offline. **(Action: DJW and RKH)**.

RKH is discussing this with Alastair, who is quite amenable. Only one bank holiday is an issue, seeing if this can be worked into the teaching schedule. Believes this crosses over into the tripos review.

5 Other matters arising

6 General Teaching Matters

6.1 Feedback update (Paper)

RKH thought our current method was working and returning useful feedback. Cybersecurity was the first time we had followed up due to mixed feedback.

RKH had read through the responses and did not see any actions to take. Some people loved the lecture notes while others thought they were too verbose.

The biggest complaint was about the time when students have a large workload. Suggested checking if Frank would be willing to change terms. **(Action: BS)**.

RKH will ask Frank to read the feedback and consider it. **(Action: RKH)**.

JY noticed some students had given feedback on the difficulty of the Cybersecurity exam. RKH did not wish to obsess over this as the questionnaire was circulated late after the exams, picking up some additional feedback which we normally wouldn't receive. BS provided the medians, 13 and 14. RKH did not think we could support the idea this paper was marked harshly.

RKH explained that for years students had complained about the lecture notes being too brief or simply repeating slides, then students complain about Frank's detailed notes and we can't win.

Will discuss the feedback boxes with students at SSCOF. **(Action: BS)**.

6.2 Exams

JV explained the challenges this year. The biggest problem was part II modules, enormously diverse in their assessments and method of assessment. JV spoke about Alan Blackwell's research based module Computer Interaction. RKH was unaware of this, students are expected to research and many are published by the end. There is also an elective entry process. This modules median was over forty, well above others. Hard to compare to other modules and maintain fairness.

Last year there was only one module mark which had to be reassessed. This year, two thirds of module convenors were asked to reassess. Some module convenors were comfortable with this, others were not.

JV spoke about MSP, another module with very high marks, all over forty. JV struggled to judge and compare this fairly, discussed with fellow examiners to find a fair path forward. In some cases JV had to make a decision himself.

Considering how diverse our modules are, diverse teaching and assessment modalities, JV felt this was currently unfair. RKH spoke about the shared modules and how this complicated things.

LG spoke about cross taught modules, part III and Mphil did not have any issues, but part II to Mphil had issues with the research based extra twenty percent. This year there were problems going the other way around, scaling to a median of sixty-nine rather than seventy-nine.

JV shared the original mark distributions, which were extraordinarily diverse. Alan's course above the median, Peter's course every single mark above the median. CAT theory is assessed like a normal exam, while others are assessed like ticks, using volume of work to bring the marks down which is unfair.

JV showed the data after adjustment.

MVP had a low deviation, but the course convenor believed the students did well and this was correct.

JV felt modules should be regularised. Examiners don't look at module assessment material at all, exam papers are poured over in detail but this isn't done for modules. JV wishes this to be changed. Suggests the part II examiners look at modules also, and do not look at IB. RKH reminded JV that the part III examiner would also need to be involved.

JV suggested one possibility would be to avoid marks for modules, but everyone receives a ranking. Arguments about fairness but we already do this for the markbooks.

RKH wished to review this and was convinced that modules should not be included in part II. JV suggested they should at least be standardised, for example a twenty-four hour take home exam.

JV spoke about the differing number of exam attempts, some exam questions received so few answers that he wondered if the question should still be on the exam. The Further Graphics only received fourteen and five attempts. RKH noticed that he had received many answers this year, spoke with students about this and was told they picked his question as it had a reputation for being easy to answer. RKH asked BS to compare how many people took supervisions and how many people took the exam questions. **(Action: BS)**.

Students should tick a misconduct declaration when submitting.

The department misconduct page is not very clear, not in alignment with university guidance, and gives a poor and inaccurate definition of misconduct.

Part II project website is fragmented and unclear, causing students to make mistakes as they cannot find relevant information.

UTO makers need to have more contact with projects. One UTO stated that a project was unambitious and led by an inexperienced supervisor, even though the UTO should be responsible. RKH and JV will discuss offline. **(Action: JV & RKH)**. Calling them UTO markers gives the wrong impression, this needs to be clarified to UTOS. LG agreed, there were a number of inexperienced SRAs and projects ran into trouble. JV spoke of affiliate lecturers who did not understand, needs to be UTOS only. RKH asked BS to flag this for next year. **(Action: BS)**.

JV did not understand how Amanda ended up with marking during maternity leave.

Some projects have good research but low LOC, some colleagues believe these projects can't obtain high marks. Unclear if pure research are allowed, this needs to be clarified.

JV found BGNs caused problems, some students using old BGNs and trouble caused by this. Suggested students could be given a single BGN but RKH pointed out that this is handled centrally.

The 32.5 median is there for historical reasons, coming from exams, no reason for this to be maintained, 37 out of 50 makes more sense.

Ethics approval needs to be in the proforma.

A lot of late submissions, need to clarify to students what will happen.

All course work and ticks should be through Moodle and the submission page should close after the deadline.

Issues with the exams office closing well before the classing meeting and delays sending scripts to us, which made marking difficult.

JV will deliver this report by the end of August.

7 Tripos Review

RKH believed most of this was covered during the away day.

7.1 & 7.2 Overall update & Feedback from away day

RKH received a positive response for combining the first year into three streams rather than four, only one person was aggressively against, RKH would discuss more with this person. JY agreed the response was generally positive.

The Tripos review day will be in September.

RKH had hoped some people would volunteer for the stream review, but no one had volunteered so far. RKH would knock on doors. **(Action: RKH)**.

LG asked if the tripos review involved part III being moved back into the fold. RKH agreed it would, should be standalone as a masters but we should aim to get more people onto it and the modules should be moved from part II to part III. LG noted that delivering the same module to Parts II and III was difficult due to differing methods of assessment and supervisor capacity.

LG asked how RKH would structure Part III. RKH would discuss in more detail. **(Action: RKH)**. RKH briefly gave his thoughts, did not wish to change the value of the dissertation, but also wished to retain the dissertation in part II as some had suggested only having a dissertation in part III.

RKH believed LG had touched on a funding issue, if more part IIs were taken onto part III, for example taking all of the 2.1s into part III, we'd struggle with teaching and supervisory capacity. LG suggested an industry facing extended essay, with supervision from industry. RKH thought this would be out of line with other universities, as other universities have things closer to our projects with code writing.

RKH wished to consider the postgraduate supervision problem in the review. LG informed him that last year had approximately one-hundred, which would extend to one-hundred and forty. RKH thought this was a good reason to expand the faculty as we couldn't cope. Every UTO would need three projects on the go. LG suggested part II could be an extended essay. RKH thought this could work, requiring less supervision, allowing for more exams in part II.

RKH spoke about part II only modules, spoke about DSP which had been shifted back and forth. BS provided a list of part II only modules, ADS, Computer Systems Modelling, Deep Neural Networks, Extended Reality and Cloud Computing. RKH thought some of these could be extended topics and some would be an easy conversion. BS will email this list to RKH. **(Action: BS)**.

RKH believed some of part II would need to be compulsory.

8 Any Other Business

RKH explained that Hatice had changed the title of her module from Affective Computing to Affective Artificial Intelligence. Approved at PEC but did not come through TMC. Hatice was adamant that there were only small changes, the title reflects how the course had evolved. RKH was relieved that this was not a big change.

BS explained that students wishing to apply would have seen the old version. BS will contact them to let them know of this change and give them the option to change. **(Action: BS)**.

RKH felt this was a reasonable change and asked if there were any objections. There were none.

Date of next meeting: TBC