



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Department of Computer
Science and Technology

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

Monday 14 October at 14:00 via Zoom

<https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/85777032835?pwd=QNJkihQxPuGuh60sANj3CeRxyKbZ29.1>

UNCONFIRMED Minutes

Members

Prof Robert Harle (*Chair; Director, undergraduate teaching*) (RKH) ✓
Prof Paula Buttery (*Deputy HoD*) (PB) ✓
Dean Dodds (*Undergraduate Teaching Administration*) (DD) ✓
Lise Gough (*Postgraduate Education Manager*) (LG) X
Dr Tobias Grosser (*Deputy Director, IB undergraduate teaching*) (TG) ✓
Dr Carl Henrik Ek (*Advisor*) (CHE) ✓
Dr Sean Holden (*Chair of Examiners*) (SBH) ✓
Dr Martin Kleppmann (*Deputy Director, Part II undergraduate teaching*) (MK) ✓
Dr Roman Kolcun (*Advisor*) (RK) ✓
Prof Anil Madhavapeddy (*Advisor*) (AVSM) ✓
Caroline Stewart (*Departmental Secretary*) (CS) ✓
Becky Straw (*Undergraduate Teaching Administration Manager*) (BS) ✓
Jamie Vicary (JV) ✓

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Notification of AoB

JV wished to discuss examiners report recommendations.

3 Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 8 July 2024

Approved.

4 Action from the meeting of 8 July 2024

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

- 4.1 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). Update:** Tim Griffin to cover Computation Theory.

Only one of the two exam questions is currently covered. Tim Griffin is covering. There had been discussions about dropping the course, which would have been possible but the general consensus was the course was valuable and should be kept.

- 4.2 RKH asked BS to compare how many people took supervisions and how many people took the exam questions. **(Action: BS).**

Update:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1o8BvbJYE2cvlYtO2g_8PWPjgUSpUzbz9R2bGn3rq4Hs4/edit?gid=0#gid=0

Concerned about courses where few people take the exam questions. Did not have IB data so looked at part II. The number of people taking the exams is less than those taking supervisions, possible to do with the other supervision system. RKH was not worried.

SBH was on sabbatical and did not believe the numbers from last year would be representative.

Happy that we do not need to worry about this.

- 4.3 UTO markers 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)**
Discussed as part of JV's recommendations. New policy had been soft introduced. MK believed the guidance should be updated. CHE wished this to be completed rapidly, had already seen projects without UTOs or PhD students taking on that role.

CS wished for this to go to faculty board. RKH believed it should for next year

AVSM was concerned about the enormous workload for UTO markers. RKH believed AVSM was being extremely generous with his time and thank him for this, although thought he had agreed to too much. AVSM believed it was a popular area and not enough faculty were stepping up, RKH agreed and the process involved him knocking on doors to get people involved, which he would do if people overcommitted and there should be some guidance on how much a UTO markers should accept.

MK had found documents which referred to UTO supervisors and UTO markers, causing confusion. RKH and BS will review the website to check for these errors and make the website consistent. **(Action: RKH & BS).**

- 4.4 JV spoke of affiliate lecturers who did not understand, needs to be UTOs only. RKH asked BS to flag this for next year. **(Action: RKH & BS).**

Spoken about elsewhere.

5 **Other matters arising**

None

6 **General Teaching Matters**

- 6.1 John Fawcett to lecture Algorithms

RKH explained the background of trying to find cover. Thankful that John Fawcett was able to cover, unhappy that on one in the UTO group was willing to cover.

AVSM will try to find someone for next year. **(Action: AVSM).**

- 6.2 Security and Software Engineering to run same as last year

RKH explained how this course was covered by multiple people due to the death of Ross Anderson, this was successful and received positive feedback. The course will receive a revamp in the future. RKH believed he had enough volunteers to manage the exam questions.

- 6.3 Concepts in PL removed

Following discussion, this course is not providing much and the contents are taught elsewhere, everyone was convinced that this course could not run this year.

AVSM suggested running a non-examinable highlights of this course covering the good bits, such as the history. RKH suggested putting this in OOP and asked AVSM to speak offline about this **(Action: RKH & AVSM).**

Removing this course resulted in some changes to the exams, paper four only had seven questions out of five, resulting in too few options for students, meanwhile paper six had too many questions, so distributed these more evenly.

- 6.4 Teaching support approvals (paper)

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1sx0B32aN2gRQICG2pPk-ZFQByXp4CNIRyu7LGlg0KLk/e/dit?usp=sharing>

RKH asked if everyone was happy to approve.

CS noted that departments had budgets in place now, as this is new and our first with budgets, there would be some lenience.

AVSM noted some absences Cloud Computing and Jon Ludlam covering Ocaml ticks, RKH asked for this to be added.

CHE explained that he may have misunderstood, he did not wish for money, just wished to gently train a postdoc. RKH asked CS if this was okay to do so without paying someone, CS elaborated that it was nice if someone volunteered to help without charging but we need to be careful that someone senior is not forcing someone junior to work unpaid. This will be discussed offline with CHE, RKH and CS. **(Action: CHE, RKH & CS).**

RKH asked BS to resend the email, with stronger wording as AVSM had not seen this. **(Action: BS).**

6.5 Use of project checkers 2025

AVSM explained that the amount of administration involved has gone up. Believed this could be consolidated with DoSes doing more and UTOs doing less.

RKH explained that under the old system, supervisors were steering people in the wrong direction and causing issues when submitted to examiners. Checkers were introduced so the department could determine if projects were appropriate and to steer them in the right direction. Also forcing students to give presentations as they don't often exercise those skills.

Now that we have a functioning UTO marking system, are checkers still required? RKH asked if checkers should be removed next year?

SBH objected, believed a sanity check at the beginning of the process was important. RKH asked if the checker was only required at the start. AVSM agreed, essential at the beginning but less so at the end. CHE agreed, giving feedback three or four times didn't make sense when outside his area of expertise. The times CHE has been able to help is when the UTO has not been engaged, if that is sorted additional project checking may no longer be required.

RKH suggested one checker per project, a separate person to give feedback at the start and remove the rest.

SBH also did not wish to lose checkers after Christmas as this helps to make people stick to the timetable and if they are falling behind, work to correct it. RKH suggested a more formal check with the UTO to see if the person was on track to complete. SBH was concerned about unengaged UTOs but CHE noted that the checker could also be unengaged.

MK will draft a policy based on these comments, for approval at the next meeting. **(Action: MK).**

TG was concerned that if people are not engaged, adding additional checks would not help, using checkers may cover UTOs unable to do their job, TG wished to escalate and solve this matter rather than increasing the workload.

6.6 Self Certification Policy update to exclude tests

RKH explained the current situation, students have two seven day extensions they can use themselves. Does not apply to exams.

RKH explained that some modules have tests but not exams, RKH suggested tightening up the guidance so tests also cannot be extended. RKH asked if there were any objections.

RK spoke about a test in his course, submitting a review and reading during a class discussion, if allowed to submit later they would benefit from having seen other people discussing. RKH explained we already could exclude certain courses and assignments from the self-certified extensions, but need to make a list of these so students are aware.

RKH wished to compile a list of work which should not be extended. BS will send an email.
(Action: BS).

7 Tripos Review

7.1 Summary of feedback from Tripos Review day

Will discuss at the next TMC.

Due to a small mistake, we have to use NST maths, any changes are two years away.

CHE thanked RKH for his work on this.

8 Any Other Business

JV showed a list of recommended changes, almost finished but wished to get feedback from co-examiners.

JV displayed the totals, no part II students had been unclassified, one was briefly unclassified due to an error. We had unclassified a record number of IB students before, although this was not inappropriate.

Guided on unclassing by a document which does not mention unclassing, concerned about this lack of guidance.

Noted that IB students on average perform 15% better at part II, guidance may need to be written acknowledging the IB workload.

Wished to change the deadline, two and a half months rather than three and a streamlined system for supporting lecturers. Concerns about lecturers on sabbatical during part of the year. One lecturer was expected to mark while on maternity leave.

Many scripts arrived late from Exam operations. Very disappointed in them, uncontactable and their hotline was closed during this process.

We currently have a dual system where some scripts are marked online and others physically, these online scripts should just print them and have one system.

The google sheets used to manage exam data had lax permissions and one person could have mistakenly edited them and caused an error.

A broad range of medians were returned. Not very comparable. Conversations were had with module convenors, some were agreeable to scaling, others were not. Assessment styles were extremely diverse.

Recommended a higher target median. Need to ensure comparable time commitments, greater uniformity and equal difficulty.

One module had the convenor handpick the cohort, choosing those they knew would perform well.

JV pointed out how much exams and dissertations are scrutinised but modules are not.

JV then moved on to Part II Projects.

Only UTOs should be able to take the UTO marker role, rather than affiliated lecturers which happened. UTOs should be made aware as they do not seem to currently understand this.

Opposing views among faculty if a part two project can be pure theory or not. Needs to be discussed further.

Hard to discover if part two projects have ethical approval, needs to be on the proforma. The declaration of originality should be anonymous but had important information and identifying information, time needed to be spent removing this, the workflow needs to be adjusted.

We are now in charge of our own misconduct policy expect for the most serious cases. Findings upheld in four cases, JV complimented BS' work. Students had to write apologies and these were written by AI, revised the guidance on this so the apology must be Apologies were written by AI, needs to be written by hand under invigilated conditions in college.

JV believed a lot of plagiarism happening and going unnoticed and checks not being done. Students have become accustomed to plagiarism, need to get a grip on this in the world of AI tools.

Misconduct guidance does not actually match the definition of misconduct. Wished for students to tick a checkbox explaining they understand misconduct,

The coursework penalties should be simplified, a long time was spent discussing this. Suggested removing ten points.

RKH commented this was the most detailed examiners report he had seen and thanked JV.

SBH spoke about plagiarism, takes days of work and can no longer sanction students other than asking for an apology. JV spoke about how the guidelines have teeth, lenient for first mistake but not after. SBH believed sanctions could not be imposed by us, would need to be handed over to the university, JV disagreed and stated the new guidelines no longer required this.

CS asked JV to ensure that the report was able to be shared widely. JV agreed. AVSM wished this to be shared widely as it will take years to complete these recommendations so the more hands working on it the better.

PB spoke about the honesty code and potentially expanding that.

AVSM asked if there was a IA equivalent, JV stated reports were normally combined but had not happened this year, Nick Lane was writing the IA version..

Date of next meeting: 25 November 2024 2pm