UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Department of Computer Science and Technology

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

Monday 27 January 2025 at 14:00 via Zoom
https://cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/84304279817?pwd=EzjYM9ai4PhOIUbUdhqidX0uaEN2FP.1

UNCONFIRMED Minutes

Members

Prof Robert Harle (*Chair; Director, undergraduate teaching*) (RKH) ✓
Aidan Bishop (*Undergraduate Teaching Administration*) (AB) X
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) x
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 (*Deputy Director, IA undergraduate teaching*) (AVSM) ✓
Caroline Stewart (*Departmental Secretary)* (CS) ✓
Becky Straw (*Undergraduate Teaching Administration Manager)* (BS) ✓

1	**Apologies for Absence**

Joy Rook.

2	**Notification of AoB**

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

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

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

4.1   Part II Projects (6.1 in previous minutes):
MK and BS will meet to discuss incorporating some of Jamies proposals such as originality statement **(Action: MK & BS)**.
MK believed the project guidance on the website should be updated as it is currently out of date, referring to computing systems which no longer exist. Suggested a template to give students more structure. MK will draft this while discussing with different people from Wednesday and bring it back to TMC **(Action: MK)**.
RKH thanked MK and found this to be comprehensive. There were no objections, so this will move forward, RKH asked for the draft to be cleaned up , the sections on process to be extracted and changes made to the website **(Action: MK)**.
RKH will raise this during the Wednesday meeting **(Action: RKH)**.

MK explained that very little had happened, MK had collated all responses from the meeting and mailing list. Not too much dissent, a few additional ideas. MK had placed this in a google document.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ypjg7mLOd6m_k9Jc8VCyMbx7CAMDBm2H_-J-kIfxE1Q/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.gf2omcekp4zv
MK proposed updating guidance on the website and other uncontroversial things first, such as removing the role of checker. All UTOs would be eligible automatically and TMC would approve additional people based on criteria we can set. RKH explained that regardless of a person's qualifications, if they are inexperienced they should be paired with an experienced UTO for the first year.

AVSM and RKH agreed that there should be a workshop to train markers and UTOs, short but intense and everyone fully able at the end. PB did not believe training more UTOs would scale due to the small number of people. AVSM suggested paying or providing some other incentives. CS believed SRAs were paid but RKH clarified that they were paid for exams but not dissertations.

AVSM suggested pushing this cost onto the colleges, SBH had attempted this and the college refused. RKH wondered if framing this as supervision would help, SBH did not believe so. RKH asked MK to add this to the document to review. **(Action: MK)**.

Frank had raised the issue of a supervisor making a project a conflict of interest, however, MK had looked at examiner's reports over the past few years and they all believed the introduction of UTO markers was a success. MK had also spoken with Alan Blackwell regarding ACS projecting marking, according to his stats there was no evidence of systemic bias.

PB explained that she marked for other faculties and there are UTOs there. PB found that she marked her students lower and asked if bias was checked in both directions. MK believed it had been checked.

AVSM suggested moving towards Pass, Fail and Distinction grades and suggested that we could improve the students' experience by spending less time marking and having more contact time with students. RKH did not believe a low precision mark was appropriate for such a large part of the year, but was happy to discuss. AVSM felt marking took up too much time which could be better spent on contact time with students.

SBH believed marking was so complicated because more people were involved in marking now, before assignments were double marked by the examiners, which was difficult for the examiners but consistent.

RKH wished to discuss this more next time and to think about it in the meantime. **(Action: BS & RKH)**.

4.2   Cover lecturers: RKH and BS will discuss and put together a draft for next year (item 6.4 in agenda) **(Action: RKH & BS)**.

RKH explained that there had been difficulty with getting cover lecturers of sufficient quality. BS and RKH had drafted a proposal, requiring TMC to approve teaching cover.

AVSM liked the proposal but was unsure of TMC being in the sabbatical approval path, stressful and could lead to sabbaticals being rejected. RKH explained that TMC was already in the approval path and this policy would help.

AVSM volunteered to trial this for his sabbatical next year. RKH asked if there were any objections to this policy. There was not. We will trial this policy.

AVSM questioned the previous year's lecture recordings being used for cover. RKH explained that was not the case, recordings would be used to assess the lecture quality of the person covering.

MK was unsure if this information would enable us to make a decision. RKH explained that we may not need to outright reject someone, but could have someone shadow an inexperienced lecturer and quickly adjust if there were issues. With Data Science we were unaware of the problems until we received feedback near the end when we could no longer do anything to correct.

5   **Other matters arising**

None.

6   **General Teaching Matters**

6.1   Feedback for Michaelmas
a) Feedback box
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zm7dhxKslDAuX4h9Hm0B1Unl9jrXqZoH8PEhoYpXXL4/edit?usp=sharing
b) Qualtrics
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19xA7AqkSLdPMVJjd-AgeudKByHA5IX5X

There was issue with feedback for RKH and he did not believe it was appropriate for him to investigate, RKH asked MK to look at this. RKH received a lot of negative feedback during the final lecture, however nothing had changed from previous years where this had received positive feedback, also more people gave feedback than attended the final lecture.
The procedure was followed and more detailed feedback was sought. This was provided to MK who would read and then speak with RKH, MK wished to also speak with the student rep. **(Action: MK & RKH)**. SBH read the feedback and felt the students were unhappy with the lack of lecture notes, RKH explained that the notes were written live, in previous years students had appreciated this.

AVSM asked why IA was not included. BS explained that because IA lectures were held in town, we were unable to setup feedback boxes there. RKH explained the feedback boxes allows us to see problem areas and push a Qualtrics survey on those to find out more.

SBH explained that some colleagues including himself found having a course judged by coins in a box could be seen as patronising. RKH disagreed and found this had been useful and highlighted problem areas, colleagues had also complained in the other direction about the lack of feedback. AVSM was confused as Data Science received positive feedback, when this was the problem course. SBH wished to hold a poll of colleges to see what they think about this feedback process, RKH was happy to do this. **(Action: RKH)**.

Noted that if students are unhappy and not attending, they cannot put a token in the feedback box. Low feedback could be another factor to consider.

SBH suggested an additional layer, where the lecturer has an opportunity to respond to student's feedback. RKH felt that would involve a lot of admin and work well for some lecturers but not others. CHE felt that responding to feedback could become quite reactive. CHE wished to deliver a summary of how the lecturer felt the course went, before receiving feedback, then compare the two.
AVSM was inspired by William Henderson's blogpost about the tripos and was writing a review of his own teaching. AVSM felt the spreadsheet was mixing a number of factors, non-attendance, bad lecturing and the difficulty of the courses, unsure of what could be gained unless we can adjust for those. RKH noted the number was different from feedback we had received in the past

and felt contacting students regarding problem courses was better than spamming students, however was open to evolving this process.

PB had some concerns about the feedback as promotion paperwork requires quoted feedback and smiley face numbers was not useful. RKH agreed, but noted that the same problem was faced by someone on a course where students had not responded to the survey.

6.2   Sabbatical request: Richard Mortier (Paper)

RKH was unclear if Operating System was covered, Eva was suggested but unsure if she had said yes. AVSM and CS had not heard confirmation.

RKH would feel much more comfortable if we had a firm yes for covering before approving.

RKH summarised that we would be happy to approve once cover has been confirmed. BS will contact Richard to inform him of this. **(Action: BS)**.

6.3   Sabbatical request: Thomas Sauerwald (Paper)
            *update Mateja will cover Intro to Probability

Thomas Sauerwald had approached Mateja Jamnik and Damon Wischik to cover Introduction to Probability. CS was confident that Mateja had confirmed that she would cover.

Randomised Algorithms could be dropped or be taught by video lecturers. AVSM preferred this to be dropped rather than taught by video, requiring examiners. RKH agreed.

6.4   Cover lecturing policy
            https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kixHpPyNoGxczxAY-qL0yxxtV-QZ4vt63GVhz6bvQMg/edit?tab=t.0

6.5   Mobile Health not running for Part IIs next year
            (For info: 13 students 24/25, 16 students 23/24)

RKH was confused if Mobile Health was being permanently removed for part II or just for the year. BS believed this was a permanent change.

AVSM felt this was a pity and a loss for the students. RKH noted this fell into the tripos review.

RKH asked if there would be enough modules for the following year. RKH and BS will check offline. **(Action: RKH & BS)**.

6.6   SC Extension - policy phrasing
            https://www.cst.cam.ac.uk/files/departmental_policy_on_self-certified_dissertation_and_coursework_extensions.pdf

RKH explained the university had introduced self-certified extensions. RKH looked at the policy which had some ambiguity due to CAT theory, a test which could arguably be classed as a test paper and not eligible for an extension or an assignment and eligible.

RKH noted there was a scenario where extensions could be refused, where 'teaching activity is based on assed work and this teaching closely follows the deadline' for example classes involving discussions of submitted work. SBH suggested changing the wording from 'limited extension may be' to 'limited or no extension'.

Courses which use this policy to deny extensions should clearly state it on the website. RKH asked BS to email all staff in future to inform them and remind them to put this on the course website.

7   **Tripos Review**

RKH wished to talk about moving the Python course to the start of IA, will need to discuss this with PB, had discussed during the Wednesday meeting. Currently investigating if we are allowed to do this Question if we can have the python course at the start of IA and there is support for bringing the exams for IB forward and putting the group project after the exams. Unsure if these changes would be allowed by the university.

SBH asked about easter term teaching, RKH felt this was fine as time was set aside for the group project which would no longer be needed. SBH felt positive about the idea, noted that students complained about lecturers being so close to exams, which this would solve.

RKH explained the Python course was difficult as it would involve dropping some lectures, but may be possible.

8   **Any Other Business**

Response to examinations had been sent to the faculty board and would be looked at tomorrow.

Date of next meeting: 3 March 2025 2pm