

**FACULTY BOARD OF BIOLOGY
MEDICAL SCIENCES TRIPOS AND VETERINARY SCIENCES TRIPOS
PART I MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

There was an online meeting of the MVST Part I Committee at 2.00pm on
Tuesday 5 July 2022.

MINUTES

There were present: Mr Nihal Basha, Dr Cecilia Brassett, Dr Holly Canuto (Chair), Dr Steve Edgley, Dr Gillian Fraser, Prof Dino Giussani, Miss Athena Ham, Dr Adrian Kelly, Dr Mairi Kilkenny, Mr Chang Liu, Dr Hugh Matthews, Dr Paul Miller, Dr Gareth Pearce, Dr David Summers, Dr Rob White.

In attendance: Dr Mark Gurnell, Dr Liz Hook, Dr Claire Michel, Dr Penny Watson.

22.17. Apologies

Dr Robert Abayasekara, Dr Robbie Duschinsky, Pooja Harijan, Dr Kate Plaisted-Grant, Dr Paul Wilkinson, Prof Alun Williams, Mr Daniel Silverthorne (CUVS rep).

22.18. Membership of the Committee

Mr Chang Liu replaces Mr Boyan Wang's term as Faculty student representative.

22.19. Declarations of interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

22.20. Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2022 were circulated and approved.

22.21. Matters Arising

22.21.1. Requests for online teaching (22.9)

These had been forwarded and considered by ASEC at their June meeting; they have devolved decisions to Faculty Boards and therefore these were approved.

22.22. Standards setting

Dr Mark Gurnell from the School of Clinical Medicine delivered a talk on standards setting which was hoped would be of interest to those responsible for setting 2nd MB/Vet MB pass marks. Various methods of standards setting were covered in the talk including Angoff, Ebel, Cohen, Hofstee and Limen. Angoff and Ebel were regarded as being more robust by some, although they were also more labour intensive. The Hofstee method (currently recommended for pre-clinical examinations) was not so labour intensive but there were questions on how robust a system it was. The Cohen and Limen methods were somewhere in between Angoff/Ebel and Hofstee.

For small cohorts the Hofstee and Cohen methods were difficult to use as they were too susceptible to outliers. There were some subjective

aspects – the confidence of Examiners in setting marks and standard. Training was critical to temper overly-hawkish Examiners.

As Part of the Med/VetST Curriculum Review (MVMCR) there was a standards setting group that would be looking further into this. Committee members with further questions could contact Claire Michel.

ACTION: members to contact Claire Michel with further questions/comments.

22.23. Easter Examinations

Dr Dee Scadden was not able to attend the meeting to brief the Committee on use of Inspira during the Easter examination period. However several post-examination meetings had been held with Examiners. The tone at these meetings was positive, and it was planned to use the system for examinations in 2022-23.

The Committee thanked Dr Scadden, Dr Fraser and Dr Kilkenny for all their work in setting up the Inspira system.

22.24. Curriculum review

Dr Claire Michel updated the Committee on progress of the review and presented two proposals on exam preparation (**MVSTI.22.08**) and college information (**MVSTI.22.09**). Dr Liz Hook and Dr Penny Watson also attended for this item.

The away day in April 2022 was cancelled but has been rescheduled for Friday 16 September.

Minutes of the MVMCR Steering Committee were circulated as **MVSTI.22.09a**.

The nine original recommendations were now being considered by 10 working groups.

The Structure group was preparing a detailed proposal for MedST, VetST and NST courses. It was looking at lecture blocks and considering routes through the MedST, VetST and NST courses.

The Intended Outcomes group were drafting some intended learning outcomes for the first two years of the course. These would be circulated for consultation.

The Standards setting group were reviewing the level of questions for the 2nd MB/Vet MB. It was hoped to be able to embed these in some IB subjects by 2023, with a schedule of training over the next academic year.

The Diversity in Assessment group were considering an overall format that could be agreed across MedST and VetST subjects.

The Preparation for Assessment and Remediation were looking to share best practice across subjects and make more information available for all involved including students, Examiners and supervisors.

The Awarding gaps group had produced a briefing paper that was presented later at the meeting.

The Student Training group was looking at existing resources and identifying gaps that needed addressing.

The Teaching Staff Support group were identifying good practice and highlighting training needs, communications and support.

The College group had attended all meetings of the Directors of Studies for Preclinical Sciences (DoPS) and were considering an online platform with resources for colleges. There was a plan for online training for supervisors, and a request had gone out for volunteers to assist with production of online videos.

The Online Assessment group would meet after the Easter examinations.

It was hoped to begin implementing some of the changes to the course in 2022-23.

The Committee thanked all involved in the review and in particular Dr Michel.

22.24.1. Policy papers a) College communication

Dr Penny Watson presented this part of the item.

There were varying levels of experience among supervisors. Ideally all DoS and supervisors should be enrolled on a single site with all relevant information. This was currently available on the Faculty website but was not easily accessible.

There should be a specific section for each subject for supervisors to view. It would also be useful to hold an event for all supervisors, old and new for networking. Training received as part of supervision should be recognised as part of teacher training. A training video could be produced using 'exemplar' supervisors.

Although the University already ran a training course for supervisors it was not intended for this to be replaced by the proposed activities. The new training offered would be more course-specific without overlapping too much with the University-wide training course. It was intended that the Faculty of Biology would organise this.

It was noted that the new NST Part IB subject in Mathematical and Computational Biology organised their own supervisor training, and this perhaps could be used as a model for other subjects.

Supervisor training should be encouraged although some subjects already offered training that was poorly attended. Colleges were considering how to motivate their supervisor to attend training, including resource.

The Committee were supportive of the proposal but implementation would need resource to be identified.

22.24.2. Policy papers b) Examination information

Information on examinations was at present difficult for students to access. There were four main areas to consider:

- Ease of access to information.
- Equity of provision.
- Equitable access to resources.
- To be mindful of the awarding gap.

There should ideally be a single portal of information including:

- Generic examination skills.
- Form and conduct notices for all subjects.
- Advice on managing stress.
- Revision skills.
- Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) and how they affected assessment and how effects could be mitigated.
- Practice platforms using examination software, currently expected to be Inspira.
- Separate examination courses.
- FAQ sections and opportunities for student questions and feedback sessions.

At a minimum for each subject there should be:

- A list of papers for that subject.
- A mock examination paper using the same format as the actual examination.
- A briefing session along the lines of 'demystifying assessment' run for students.

Further steps to be considered were remediation and awarding gaps, and interactions.

Mock examinations could be held in departments or colleges but currently colleges preferred to run these in their own way with a risk of not having consistency across colleges. It was suggested that departments set the examination up but that they were run in the colleges.

Central formative examinations could be run for MCQ papers but there was some concern about running them for essay papers. Feedback from students was that for essays there was confusion about what made a good essay, not helped by a reluctance to post example essays. Instead of example essays there could perhaps be information on what should be in answers for different classes. Inspira could allow question banks to be maintained confidentially.

Sample essays, if not done centrally, would instead be provided by colleges, with the risk of disparity. Perhaps students could be asked for permission to use their essays as example essays.

Mock examination papers could be re-used each year and updates posted as the course changed. Other Faculties at the University had detailed analyses of how each question was answered in their Examiner reports – could this be done for MedST/VetST?

For sample Tripos essays the SECHI essays only had negative examples – it would be useful if these could provide more positive models with information on how to structure an essay. Providing 'model' essays should be resisted but using student essays as examples should be permitted. These could be presented at sessions looking at essays.

The Committee supported the proposals and agreed that the working group should continue to consider this issue.

22.24.3. Awarding gaps

There was a presentation by Dr Liz Hook of some data gathered on examination performance by gender, ethnicity and disability for NST and MedST/VetST.

In medics males were found to have better examination results in most years, this situation was reversed in vets.

Black students were found to have the largest awarding gap among all ethnicities, albeit the data was limited due to small numbers of black students.

Mental health was associated with lower overall examination performance.

Other factors such as socio-economic background were not considered at this time.

More data was needed but it was difficult to obtain this and would probably take a long time. However the findings were in line with sector data and University-wide data.

Further work was to talk to groups of students anonymously and to determine the sources of awarding gaps. The kinds of things that would be looked at included:

- Curriculum learning for teaching staff.
- Assessment practices.
- Promotion of a sense of belonging among groups who had previously not performed as well as other groups. Suitably qualified advisors could be appointed for different groups.
- Nurturing social and economic capital.
- Course-specific sessions.

Dr Hook was happy to answer any questions the Committee might have, members could contact Dr Hook directly or via Dr Claire Michel.

22.25. **Cambridge Open Days**

The University open days were due to run on Thursday 7 and Friday 8 July. Medicine would have an information stand in the Student Services Centre with student representatives and Faculty staff – some academics had also kindly volunteered to attend for a portion of the event – more academic volunteers would be welcome. An online talk would be available for members of the public, given by Paul Wilkinson.

ACTION: members to contact the secretary or the Faculty Office if they can attend the open day medic stand.

22.26. Requests for online teaching in 2022-23

Dr Brassett requested that revision sessions for FAB be run as Zoom sessions from the 2022-23 academic year – the proposal was circulated as **MVSTI.22.10**.

The online sessions would allow images to be displayed to students much better than in-person sessions.

In the cause-of-death sessions it was very difficult to have 80 students plus the year five students in the same room in such a way as to ensure all students could contribute.

The Committee were happy with the proposals.

ACTION: FAB Course Organisers to liaise with the Faculty Office on implementing the proposals.

22.27. Changes to MoDA Practical classes

A proposal to amend the delivery of MoDA practical classes was circulated as **MVSTI.22.11**.

This proposal would cut some redundant practical material and students would be in groups of two instead of three, which would stop some examples of students not engaging with the teaching. The numbers of animals required would be reduced. Pre-practical quizzes would be introduced. Overall the proposals dispensed with some redundant material and condensed other material.

The Committee agreed in principle to the changes noting that there would be some changes to the timetable needed that may impact other subjects. The MoDA Course Management Committee would need to liaise with the Faculty Office.

ACTION: MoDA Course Organisers to liaise with the Faculty Office on implementing the proposals.

22.28. Student Topics

A meeting of the student focus group had been held on 28 June. It was requested that notes of the meeting be circulated to the Committee alongside the minutes of this meeting.

Issues raised were:

- The examination timetable would need to be less packed together; this year's timetable was dictated by the Student Registry based on the need to use central facilities. In future years there should be more flexibility if the use of Inspira in departmental facilities was maintained.
- The Inspira examinations had some issues albeit considerably fewer than for the Lent term examinations.
- A student survey for the curriculum review was due to close on 20 July. Students were being contacted and reminded at regular intervals to complete this.

22.29. Items for report

There were none.

22.30. Any Other Business

22.30.1. Chair of the Director of Studies for Pre-clinical Sciences (DoPS)

A new Chair need to be appointed and nominations were needed as soon as possible.

22.30.2. Future meetings of the Committee

The Chair asked the Committee whether it was wished to retain online meetings or to move back to in-person meetings. The Committee were strongly in favour of retaining online meetings at least for the next academic year.

22.31. Dates of Meetings for 2022-23

The meetings of the MVST Part I Committee in 2022-23 were scheduled for 2pm for the following dates:

Tuesday 29 November 2022

Tuesday 7 March 2023

A date TBC in July 2023