

**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 7 March 2023.

MINUTES

There were present: Dr Robert Abayasekara, Dr David Bainbridge, Dr Cecilia Brassett, Dr Holly Canuto (Chair), Mr Kieran Cullen, Dr Robbie Duschinsky, Dr Steve Edgley, Dr Sarah Fawcett, Dr Mary Fortune, Dr Gillian Fraser, Dr Sandra Fulton, Prof Dino Giussani, Dr Pooja Harijan, Dr Adrian Kelly, Dr Hugh Matthews, Dr Daniel Nietlispach, Ms Lily Pattison, Dr Gareth Pearce, Dr Milka Sarris, Dr Paul Schofield, Mr Joshua Sebastine, Dr Anne Swift, Dr Erica Watson, Dr Chad Pillinger (secretary).

In attendance: Dr Claire Michel.

23.1. Apologies

Dr Nick Brown, Dr Mairi Kilkenny, Dr Kate Plaisted-Grant, Mr Daniel Silverthorne (CUVS rep), Dr Paul Wilkinson, Prof Alun Williams.

23.2. Membership of the Committee

Mr Chang Liu is replaced by Mr Joshua Sebastine as Faculty Board medical student representative.

Ms Lily Pattison replaces Mr Daniel Hughes as Faculty Board CGC student representative.

The Chair of the Faculty Board of Biology is now Dr Sandra Fulton, replacing Dr David Summers.

23.3. Declarations of interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

23.4. Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2022 were circulated and approved.

23.5. Matters Arising

23.5.1. Practical set allocation (22.39)

The Chair reported that a small working group had been set up to address questions over set allocation. The working group was due to meet in April.

23.5.2. Supervision organisation (22.42)

Discussions are ongoing with the Chair of the DoPS Committee on organisation of supervisions.

23.5.3. Moodle site access (22.42)

The Chair will report at the next meeting on talks with the Deputy Head of School about availability of lecture recordings on Moodle sites for past students.

23.6. Examinations 2023

Dr Dee Scadden reported.

Preparations for the Lent and Easter term examinations using Inspira were going smoothly. Three 'bootcamps' had been held with students in the previous week; multipole sessions mitigated the inevitable clashes with some students' lectures. However, attendance was not very good – 200 students out of potentially 2000 over three days, but some active encouragement increased attendance on the last day. The students that did attend found the bootcamps to be very useful. Directors of Studies could try and get students to engage, but it was quite difficult as many students didn't bother to read emails. Most students could only be reached via Moodle or at lectures. In-person meetings between students and DoS would be useful to determine individual requirements and to ensure students were aware of what they needed to do to take their examinations. The most useful thing that DoS could do would be to urge their students to go to the Moodle site to get all the most up to date information on Inspira. Dr Scadden would circulate a slide with Inspira information to Course Organisers for them to use in lectures.

The Inspira portal had recently been updated and students needed to make sure they had the latest version on their devices. Information about this had been circulated so it was hoped all students would have checked and taken appropriate action.

A bootcamp for college tutorial staff was being held on 10 March and 13 March. It was hoped that engagement would be high as students taking papers in college were forming an increasing proportion of the cohort. The Undergraduate Tutors group had been asked to encourage attendance.

There was a potential complication with the new multifactorial authentication that had been rolled out across the University. The Student Registry and UIS were aware of this. Currently the plan was for students to attend the examination venue 30 minutes before the paper started so they could complete authentication in good time. There may be some issues with the strength of the wifi signal in some locations, and some students may forget to bring their authentication devices. There was the possibility that the requirement for authentication would be dropped and the Committee supported this and asked for pressure to be applied for this to be implemented. If authentication were required then a set of concise, very simple instructions should be made available to students – this was a Raven/UIS issue, not an Inspira issue.

23.7. National Student Survey

Papers with comments from the National Student Survey (NSS) by final year medics was circulated as **MVSTI.23.01** and final year vets as **MVSTI.23.02**. The Committee was asked if any action was required in response to this feedback.

There were some limitations with the NSS as it was carried out with 6th year medics and vets, so it was difficult to attribute comments to the pre-clinical course unless this was explicitly stated.

Some academics did try to explain the importance of filling out the NSS to their students, but with CUSU still discouraging students from filling out the survey it would be difficult to increase responses.

23.8. Course Management Committee reports

A summary of Course Management Committee/student feedback meetings was circulated as **MVSTI.23.03** and noted.

23.9. Curriculum review

23.9.1. MVMCR progress update

Dr Michel updated the Committee.

The working group on course structure was looking at both NST and MVST and a proposal was being finalized for NST Part IB. Following this a proposal would be put together for MedST/VetST.

The working group on intended learning outcomes (ILOs) would restart soon.

Standard setting would be discussed later in the meeting. A new training date for single best answer question setting was due on 24 March. Implementation of standards setting would be done over a number of years as several steps had to be taken.

The working group on diversifying assessment was looking at alternative modes of assessment and the overall assessment framework.

The working group on preparation for assessment and remediation had already submitted a proposal on preparation that had been approved. Guidance for preparing material for assessment was being worked on.

The awarding gaps group had proposed a new induction session.

The teaching staff support group was looking at role descriptions for Course Organisers and role design for Examiners.

The colleges group was looking at sharing resources with colleges and training courses for supervisors.

The student support group was looking at existing resources, identifying gaps and the role of study skills/academic skills coordinator.

The online assessment group was being wound down as other groups are working on this.

In addition to the working groups an away day was planned for 21 September to be held at Girton. Members were asked to reserve the date in their diary and to encourage their departments' Course Organisers to attend. Delivery of proposals that had already received approval from this Committee and the Faculty Board would also be worked on.

23.9.2. MVMCR policy implementation update

Paper **MVSTI.23.04** was circulated with information on a survey of subjects and how they had been able to implement the policies relating to providing information to students on the format of their examinations.

Most departments had responded to the survey and were in the process of implementing the new policy. Departments were keen to stress that a 'no' response for certain parts of the survey did not necessarily indicate that no efforts had been made – in some cases partial steps had been taken. This was particularly the case for providing examples of student essay answers – some departments were instead offering what they considered equivalent information. More flexible survey questions/answer options might allow this to be reflected in the surveys.

Some answers did indicate that there was no intention of implementing the new policies. One difficulty departments had encountered was obtaining student consent to publish their essays. Students were also reluctant to allow their supervision essays to be published. Suggestions included briefing supervisors to offer advice to students on publication of their essays, or offering feedback to students who were prepared for their essays to be published.

The meaning and relevance of equivalent material was discussed. Students would prefer actual examples produced by students, and this was clear from the consultation by the working group. A central waiver that students could sign might be useful but was not currently available.

It was queried whether there was a misapprehension over essay marking. For a first class essay 15 different examples could be provided but would this be helpful? Teaching of essay writing and feedback was done in supervisions in small groups and not at the Faculty level. Some of the Committee thought that using such examples was unhelpful and potentially misleading.

External Examiners were provided with example essays to give them a feel of the type of answers provided and their quality. It may be useful to provide the External Examiner's feedback on these to be made available to students. Examiners should have a good idea of what a good/bad/excellent essay is, but it was hard to access this.

Some universities asked students to tick a box if they did not agree to sharing their anonymized essays. This led to a large database of essays. Students had found these to be very useful, much more so than guidance. With respect to college supervisions the student representatives made the point that quality of these could be variable.

It was noted that the target for full implementation of this policy was October 2023. Departments should continue to work towards this and the MVMCR would continue to monitor progress.

Miss Pattison left the meeting.

If students were reluctant to have their essays published perhaps they could instead be circulated to colleges for use during supervisions instead of being available to students at all times. This might mitigate any variability in supervisions across colleges. Just providing an essay would not necessarily help students – some context needed to be provided, but essays would be a good resource for supervisors.

Prof Sarris joined the meeting.

Students might need to see a model of how an essay should look and how the arguments within it are developed, perhaps not whether an essay is considered first class or any other class. Variation in college teaching had already been noted but there was also variation in student background – some students knew the Cambridge system and others did not, and there were also differences in access to relevant informal networks.

Centralising the permissions process might be needed if the timeline were to be realized. Some Senior Examiners reports did provide overall feedback for each essay question saying what was done well and what was done poorly.

It was noted that although the Faculty Board had approved the proposal. Perhaps including only first class essays rather than the full range might encourage students to agree to their publication.

The MVCMR would consider this feedback further and report back to the Committee in due course.

Dr Pearce left the meeting.

23.9.3. Standards setting policy proposal

Paper **MVSTI.23.05** was circulated for information and discussion on proposals for standards setting. Shortly before the meeting Dr David Bainbridge had circulated a paper with some comments on the proposal.

The proposal was to move to a more criterion-referenced standard setting process in contrast to the current norm-referenced methods used (Hofstee). Dr Bainbridge had been invited to join the working group to work further on the proposal. There were some issues outstanding before the proposal could be taken further forward.

Any questions from the Committee could be directed to the MVMCR coordinator, Dr Claire Michel.

There were some concerns about how the new system would operate – it would be useful to see examples of good operation. Most departments were happy with the current system and they would need to be shown how the new system was an improvement for their particular examinations. It would also be most useful for departments to know how much work might be required to implement any new system.

The pilot that was intended for BoD did not go ahead, as it became apparent early on that further work was needed on the questions being set. It was queried if a separate policy on question setting was required.

Dr Swift left the meeting.

At the end of the review process there should be a staff handbook with calendars that would say what Course Organisers and Examiners needed to do through the academic year. The teaching support working group were looking into this.

On the subject of 'improving questions' clarity was requested as to if this meant questions should be altered to make them suitable for a specific type of standard setting. If so then access to the national curriculum dataset would surely be needed. Improvements could also ensure that some groups of students were not disadvantaged by the wording of the questions, e.g students with specific learning difficulties. Specific examples for individual subjects would be useful.

23.9.4. Awarding gaps policy proposal

Paper **MVSTI.23.06** on proposals on awarding gaps and inclusive teaching was circulated for information and discussion.

Awarding gaps had been identified affecting black students and disabled students. The course content would be reviewed using students who were now on the clinical course. Inclusive teaching had been considered and this could include invitation of guest speakers, fostering a sense of belonging and having advisors for black students. The Department of Pathology would start implementing these proposals as a pilot. The proposed induction of two days might be difficult to implement as this may clash with college activities and other processes at the start of term for new students. A task and finishing group would be looking at this.

It was queried if there was more detailed data on awarding gaps. This had not been seen but it was possible that there were not enough student numbers to make a dataset that could allow analysis.

The Committee supported the proposal with the above notes on limitations to the proposals for the length of induction days.

23.10. University Open Days

The University would run its 2023 Open Days on Thursday 6 July and Friday 7 July. A stand for the medical course would be present in the Student Services Centre. The University has asked for in-person sample lectures to be provided by departments.

Departments were requested to provide sample lectures and help with the information stand. Student helpers would also be recruited.

23.11. Student Topics

Concerns had been raised about organisation of supervisions, this was being taken forward with DoPs and other channels.

Other concerns related to individual subjects and were referred to the relevant course management committees.

23.12. Items for report

23.12.1. Form and conduct notices

A change to the format of the FAB section I (MCQ) and the HNA combined section I and II papers had been approved via Chair's action. The change was to reduce the number of options for multiple choice questions from five to four.

Homeostasis papers will have four options in all of their MCQ questions.

These changes were noted.

23.12.2. Changes to courses – new approval process

It was noted that the Education Quality and Policy Office (EQPO) recently introduced a new process for approving changes to courses. These can be viewed at the following website:

<https://www.educationalpolicy.admin.cam.ac.uk/new-modified-courses/taught-course-modifications>

If any subjects were considering changes the Chair or the secretary should be contacted in the first instance.

23.13. Any Other Business

An item considered as reserved business was discussed and minuted separately.

23.14. Dates of Meetings for 2022-23, 2023-24

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

Tuesday 4 July 2023

Dates for 2023-24 were scheduled for 2pm on the following dates:

Tuesday 28 November 2023

Tuesday 12 March 2024