

**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 3 December 2024.

MINUTES

There were present: Dr Holly Canuto (Chair), Dr David Bainbridge, Dr Cecilia Brassett, Dr Colin Crump, Prof Jane Dobson, Dr Steve Edgley, Dr Sarah Fawcett, Dr Mary Fortune, Dr Sandra Fulton, Dr Hugh Matthews, Ms Chloe Ou, Dr Milka Sarris, Dr Dee Scadden, Prof Paul Schofield, Dr Suzanne Turner, Dr Rik van Veen, Dr Erica Watson, Dr Chad Pillinger (secretary).

In attendance: Prof Mark Holmes, Dr Claire Michel and Dr Tim Weil.

24.36. Apologies

Dr Robert Abayasekara, Dr Robbie Duschinsky, Prof Dino Giussani, Prof Anna Hollis, Dr Daniel Nietlispach, Dr Paul Wilkinson.

24.37. Membership of the Committee

Several new members representing the Cambridge University Veterinary Society (CUVS) were welcomed to the Committee:

Miss Mia Perrott (5th year)
Miss Dasha Scanlan-Oumow (4th year)
Miss Anna Smyth (3rd year)
Miss Beth Campbell (2nd year)
Miss Clemence Roche (1st year)

24.38. Declarations of interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

24.39. Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) accreditation

Prof Mark Holmes attended the meeting to brief the Committee on the state of the RCVS accreditation, and the fact that the Veterinary Medicine course had been moved to conditional accreditation following the visit of the RCVS last year. Prof Holmes also discussed the recently published General Board Review of Veterinary Medicine.

The Committee expressed a wish to help address any issues relating to the pre-clinical course and were keen to see a lists of priorities so that a programme of work could be drawn up.

The Chair urged the Vet School to provide greater communication with members of this Committee so that assistance, support and guidance could be provided in a timely manner. In fact, some members of the Committee stated that they had not received any notification of the RCVS accreditation situation – it was agreed with Prof Holmes that something would be circulated soon.

The Committee expressed that they would be happy to assist the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in any way with the RCVS accreditation. The Committee was assured that communications would be improved and that all relevant people would now be contacted in a timely manner.

There were no firm dates for the return visit in 2025, other than it was slated for some time in September. Some thought would need to be given about when in September would be best for the visit to take place from a pre-clinical perspective.

The Committee thanked Prof Holmes for briefing them' Prof Holmes in turn would welcome any Committee members contacting him directly

24.40. Terms of reference

Terms of reference for the Committee were circulated as **MVSTI.24.12** with suggested amendments to put to the Faculty Board. These were accepted by the Committee once the reference to liaison with the Chair of the Directors of Pre-Clinical Studies (DoPS) had been explicitly stated.

ACTION: secretary to forward to the Faculty Board for consideration.

24.41. Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2024 were circulated and approved.

24.42. Matters Arising

There were none.

24.43. Senior Examiner reports

Summaries of Senior Examiner reports for the 2023-24 academic year were circulated as **MVSTI.24.13**. It was noted that some reports were still outstanding and it was hoped these would be sent soon.

24.44. Education Monitoring Review

Feedback for the Education Monitoring Reviews for MedST and VetST were circulated as **MVSTI.24.14** and **MVSTI.24.15**. The Committee noted that these were already being addressed via the curriculum review.

24.45. Programme specifications 2025-26

The programme specifications for MedST and VetST, incorporating amendments brought to the secretary's attention were circulated as **MVSTI.24.16** (MedST) and **MVSTI.24.16a** (VetST). It was noted that if any further amendments were required the secretary should be contacted by close of play on Friday 6 December.

24.46. Proposal to amend the teaching and assessment of MoDA

Papers **MVSTI.24.18** and **MVSTI.24.18a** were circulated with details of a proposal for changes to the teaching and assessment of MoDA from October 2025. Dr Matthew Harper attended for this part of the meeting.

The Committee noted that these proposals had arisen from a 'deep dive' carried out as part of the curriculum review via the Course Management Committee and the Medical and Veterinary Medicine Curriculum Review (MVMCR).

With respect to the newly constructed timetable the philosophy was to teach core concepts to remove duplication and identify areas that were no longer needed. Core content would be taught in Michaelmas and Lent. Currently, many students did not engage with neuropharmacological content. Movement of this material to Michaelmas would help but discussions would be held with PDN to ensure that timings were done for the best possible integration with similar material taught by PDN.

With respect to assessment there were only small-scale changes being considered at the moment. The section II paper would change to four 30-minute questions. There was also a move away from the requirement to draw graphs. Requiring candidates to answer more, shorter, questions would spread the jeopardy for candidates. Supervisors had also agreed that this would make supervisions better. Entirely separate essay papers were proposed for medics and vets – this would allow better integration of material. It was clarified that medics and vets would be expected to sit examination papers concurrently as the majority of questions would be shared.

The MoDA Course Management Committee were committed to having intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for all teaching sessions.

No changes to regulations were required to accommodate these changes, but a revised examination format would need to be submitted to the secretary so it could be made available to students and colleges for the 2025-26 examinations.

The Committee approved these changes.

ACTION: secretary to check with the Student Registry on possible implications of having separate papers for medics and vets being delivered concurrently for the two cohorts.

ACTION: MoDA Course Organisers to send secretary revised examination format document.

24.47. Proposal to amend the assessment of VAP

Prof Bainbridge proposed amending the assessment of VAP, circulated as **MVSTI.24.17**. This proposed having separate assessments for the 2nd Vet MB and Tripos.

Prof Bainbridge felt that long papers were not necessary to assess competences for 2nd MB/Vet MB. It was noted that the RCVS had asked for a reduced assessment load, and this should reduce student stress. In this regard, reducing the length of papers was seen as being less important than reducing the numbers of papers.

The proposal included a requirement for candidates to draw diagrams – this was an important skill but should not have too much emphasis placed on it.

It was queried whether the proposed format of the VAP examination should be used as a model for all MedST/VetST papers. It was agreed that the VAP model could be trialed as a pilot and, if successful, adopted by other subjects.

The desire was for this to be implemented for 2025-26. The Veterinary Education Committee (VEC) had already approved the changes.

The Committee approved the changes.

ACTION: secretary to arrange for amendment to regulations and to forward on to relevant Faculty Boards.

24.48. Teaching review

The Faculty of Biology had been asked to provide its assessment of whether it considers each of the Teaching Review's 14 problem/aim statements to be a problem for the Triposes it has responsibilities for, or a current aim. A copy of the survey and a draft response the Faculty will return was circulated as **MVSTI.24.19** and the problem/aim statements circulated as **MSTI.24.19a**.

It was noted that some of the statements were entirely under the purview of the colleges and therefore would not be answered by the Faculty.

The general tone of the draft response was that there was a requirement for more joined processes across the departments that offered teaching for MedST/VetST, and the colleges. There was also a need to understand the impacts of these various processes on students. It was noted that there was no real rigorous central oversight of supervisions.

It was agreed that the draft response was fine to be sent on to Education Services. Individual/department-level responses could also be made as long as it was made clear in the response who is providing it/who it represents. If any Committee members had further comments they could contact Claire Michel before it was submitted in the new year.

24.49. Curriculum review

An update on the curriculum review was provided by Dr Claire Michel.

'Deep dives' had been completed for HOM, FAB, MoDA, VAP. Deep dives in BoD, NAB/NHB, and MIMS will be started soon. Content of the subjects had been reviewed with clinicians and compared to published curriculum, and ILOs had been written.

In HOM, new supervision guidance has been provided, an online essay writing course is being piloted, the creation of clinical 'buddies' from the School of Clinical Medicine and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine is recommended. Universal design guidance had been provided to all lecturers.

For MoDA, in addition to the activities discussed under item 24.46 revision practice classes had been added.

In VAP, reinforcement material and the assessment format had been looked at – assessment had been covered under item 24.47.

There had been a reduction in material for FAB. It had been clarified which material was considered 'core' and which was being considered as an extension. The handbook will be revised, and some clinical integration added to the course. Teaching resources had been updated to reflect a greater diversity.

The Committee was reminded that members could access presentation slides from the 2024 MVMCR Away Day at any time via the Teams channel.

It was noted that there was an additional sub-project looking at collating all supervisor details across departments.

24.50. Student topics

Issues raised at a meeting of the Student Focus group meeting on 26 November 2024 were considered.

The students had fed back that there was a lot of repeated material in the various introductory lectures for each subject. This could perhaps be consolidated to reduce student load early in the term. Induction day slides were available on Moodle – subject Course Organisers should look at these and decide if they needed amending.

ACTION: Course Organisers to review induction slides.

24.51. Course Management Committee reports

A summary of Course Management Committee/student feedback meetings was circulated as **MVSTI.24.20** and noted.

Note: there was an error in the paper originally circulated – the second entry (Student feedback meeting 14 May 2024) should have referred to HR, not MoDA as originally stated.

24.52. Items for report

24.52.1. Amendment to the FAB timetable

Changes to the FAB timetable proposed in **MVSTI.24.21** were approved via circulation.

24.52.2. Amendment to the BoD timetable

Changes to the BoD timetable proposed in **MVSTI.24.22** were approved via circulation.

24.52.3. Amendment to the HR section I and II examination papers

The following amendments to the HR section I and II examination papers were approved via circulation for the 2024-25 academic year:

During the IB Human Reproduction examiners meeting, the committee members discussed changing the HR1 and HR2 exams, which are

entirely composed of single best answer (SBA) questions, from SBA questions with five selections (i.e., options A to E) to SBA questions with four selections (i.e., options A to D). Other courses have made this change to their SBA exams in the recent past with success, and now we request to make a similar change starting with the exams in Easter term 2025. I understand that using four options instead of five does not impact student performance and also relieves the mental burden during the exam.

24.52.4. Examination formats

Formats of examinations for 2025 were listed at

<https://www.biology.cam.ac.uk/examination-formats-medst-and-vetst-2024-25>

If there are any errors, please inform the secretary.

24.53. Supervision guidance

Guidance for supporting departments was circulated as **MVSTI.24.23**. Course Organisers were asked to note the action points in the document.

ACTION: secretary to circulate document to all Course Organisers.

24.54. Access to Moodle for teaching staff

A proposal for arranging access to Moodle sites for teaching staff was circulated as **MVSTI.24.24**. This proposed the creation of two Moodle 'cohorts' for teaching staff (pre-clinical and clinical), who could then be added to all MedST/VetST Moodle sites. There would be one cohort for MedST and one for VetST. This would not apply to FAB or HNA which were affected by the Human Tissue Act.

24.55. Any Other Business

There was none.

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

The meeting dates for 2024-25 were detailed below (all at 2pm):

11 March 2025

8 July 2025