

**Date** Wednesday 2 October 2019

**Time** 2.00pm

**To** Sandra Fulton (Chair), Kate Plaisted-Grant (Psychology rep), David Summers (NST rep), Simone Schnall (Chair of Exams), Jeanne Estabel (Departmental Administrator), Lee de-Wit (Director of PBS), Daniele Campello (Library), Heather Sanderson (Philosophy rep), Richard Holton (Philosophy rep), Robert Foley (HSPS rep), Marta Mirazon Lahr (HSPS rep), Claire Hughes (Subject Convenor), Anna Alexandrova (HPS rep), Emma Weisblatt (PBS DOS rep), Paul Matthews, Edmund Lam (student representatives)

**In attendance:** Ms J Simmonds (Psychology Teaching Administrator)

**At** Nick Mackintosh Seminar Room, Main Psychology Building

## **PBS Tripos Management Committee Meeting – Michaelmas Term 2019**

### **UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Anna Alexandrova, Kate Plaisted-Grant, Heather Sanderson, Richard Holton, Edmund Lam, Daniele Campello.

#### **2. Change of membership and welcome to new members**

- a) Dr Nik Cunliffe (NST, Plant Sciences) is on sabbatical in 2019-20 and has been replaced by Dr David Summers (NST, Genetics) for one year.
- b) Dr Robert Attenborough (HSPS) has retired and will be replaced by Prof Robert Foley and Prof Marta Mirazon Lahr, who will be sharing the role.
- c) Dr Will Skylark has stepped down as Director of PBS and has been replaced by Dr Lee de-Wit.
- d) Dr Jason Rentfrow has completed his stint as PBS Chair of Exams and has been replaced by Dr Simone Schnall.

#### **3. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2019 (1)**

The minutes were approved.

#### **4. Matters arising from the previous minutes**

##### **a) PBS Classing Criteria**

This committee's response to the Faculty Board's request regarding the proposal to change the PBS Classing Criteria was considered by the Faculty Board at their June meeting. It was decided that as of 2020-21, the current NST Part II Classing Criteria (ranking by the arithmetic mean) will be applied to Part II PBS. The

Classing Criteria for PBS Part I (ranking by grade profile) will not change. Fiona Russell has confirmed that no further action need be taken, save making this information known to students in handbooks and on relevant webpages. They will also be informed at the induction sessions.

**b) Statistics on PBS 4 Cognitive and Experimental Psychology**

In response to student comments about this issue, KPG met with PBS 2 Course Organiser Jeff Dalley, PBS 4 Course Organiser Tristan Bekinschtein and Part II Statistics Co-ordinator Sander van der Linden and LDW to discuss the ongoing Statistics overhaul.

LDW stated that the statistics element of PBS 4 course has been consolidated from 2018-19 and the clarity of the learning objectives has been improved. The course has been made more ambitious and more conceptual, and qualitative research will now be assessed as a written practical report. Students have last year's exam paper as a guide. The course will be monitored in 2019-20.

It was confirmed that MatLab is still taught in PBS 2 but following student feedback these sessions had been made into practicals rather than lectures. PM asked whether a computer-based exam might be appropriate. It was agreed that this might be a possibility in future if PBS was adapted to have more Psychology content. BioAnth switched stats package to R from SPSS, and other Psychology departments also use R.

**c) PBS social events**

Following good feedback from students, additional pizza socials have been organised for the first week of Michaelmas Term 2019 (one for PBS Part I, and one for PBS Part II and NST Part II Psychology).

**d) Project Allocation**

Following feedback from students, projects were allocated in mid-August, which the projects team felt was a more reasonable timeframe than mid-July (which was proposed in the previous meeting). This is one month earlier than 2018-19.

**5. Annual review of Committee Terms of Reference (2)**

**a) Proposal to amend the Terms of Reference**

The Committee approved the new Terms of Reference, which included formally appointing the following roles to the Committee, rather than co-opting:

- i) the Director of Undergraduate Teaching for the Department of Psychology
- ii) the Director of the Psychological and Behavioural Sciences Tripos
- iii) the Subject Convenor for the Psychological and Behavioural Sciences Tripos

The new Terms of Reference will be sent to the next Faculty Board meeting.

**b) Period of Appointment of Co-opted Members**

The Committee agreed it that co-opted members should serve from October to September rather than January to December.

## 6. Examinations

### a) Examiner Reports 2018-19

Members received:

#### i) Chair of PBS Examiner's Report 2018-19 (3a)

PM stated that PBS students are currently only allowed to see one mark for NST IB papers, whereas NST students can see their mark per individual paper. It was agreed that it would be preferable for PBS students to receive this additional information on CamSIS. **ACTION: JS will ask the Exams Office if PBS students will be allowed to see marks for individual NST papers.**

SF noted the high number of firsts in PBS compared to the University average. It was acknowledged that there will be slightly fewer firsts under the new classing scheme.

#### ii) PBS Tripos Part I and Part II External Examiner Reports for 2018-19 for examinations held in 201-18 (3b, 3c)

*Please note: Head of Department's responses were not yet available.*

The External Examiner for PBS Part I had mentioned that the upper range of marks could be used more on PBS 3, and that in PBS 2 some students did very well on the Matlab questions but others were unsure.

The External Examiner for PBS Part II had recommended that markers use fixed points in each class: e.g. 62 / 65 / 68. This was found to be a sensible idea, which many markers are likely to adhere to anyway. It was noted that the Faculty of Biology marking guidance is descriptive and does not prescribe specific numbers. Examiners might consider use of the 1-12 scale as used in several NST Part II courses

### b) Approval of Form and Conduct of Examinations notices for PBS papers

The Committee received Form and Conduct notices for PBS 1, PBS 6 and PBS 7 (4a-c), all of which had been approved by the Psychology Department Teaching Committee. It was noted that the change for PBS 1 was part of a wider review of the curriculum but that integration across topics will still be rewarded in the exam. The Committee approved the notices with the proviso that for PBS 6 and PBS 7 Course Organisers should make it clear how many questions there would be per 8-lecture topic. The notices will be sent to the next Faculty Board meeting.

### c) Internal and External Examiners for 2019-20

Members approved internal and external examiners for nomination to the Faculty Board (5), noting that a new External Examiner is still required for PBS Part I.

### d) Course Organisers for 2019-20

Members received a list of Course Organisers (5). EW will add this to the PBS DOS Moodle page.

## 7. Projects (6)

Dr Sander van der Linden has been Project Co-ordinator since Lent Term 2019, and Dr Greg Davis will return to the role in Lent Term 2020. Members received a project breakdown by academic. The Committee noted that some UTOs have lots of students and that this is a recurring problem, largely due to the Department's requirement to provide projects for three Part II courses (PBS, NST Part II Psychology, and PNB). The Committee recommended that in future the Department should enforce each UTO having a maximum of six students, and asked the Teaching Committee to consider this. **ACTION: JS will refer the issue of Psychology projects to Biological Sciences Committee.**

#### **8. BioAnth Papers at Part II**

BioAnth have restructured their Part II papers so that each runs for only one term. In 2019-20, PBS students will be able to take any two of these papers (advised one in Michaelmas and one in Lent), which will equal one PBS paper, and the marks will be averaged and provided as one final mark as per the PBS regulation requirement. In 2020-21, it is hoped that PBS students may have the option to take any four BioAnth papers, equalling two PBS papers, with all four marks to be averaged and reported twice as two final marks. This would eliminate potential confusion about which paper should be paired with which other paper. There would be a mechanism for students to find out their marks for each individual paper from BioAnth. Most of these papers will be a 2-hour/2-question exam. DOSs should advise students on sensible pairings. The BioAnth website is now accessible for PBS students.

#### **9. Comments from student members**

- a) Part IA – no students present
- b) Part IB – no students present
- c) Part II – PM thanked the Project Co-ordinator for allocating projects earlier for 2019-20, and noted that the social event in Lent Term had been popular. While the newly formatted PBS 6 and PBS 7 papers seemed sensible, it had led to a delay with the paper guides being created. There was some desire for centralised sessions on 'How to read a scientific paper'. It was noted that ideally this would happen in first or second year, but until this can be brought in DOSs should share best practice on critical thinking.

### **RESERVED BUSINESS**

#### **10. Dates of meetings for 2019-20**

Lent	Wednesday 5 February 2020	2.00pm	Nick Mackintosh Seminar Room, Second Floor, MB
Easter	Wednesday 6 May 2020	2.00pm	Nick Mackintosh Seminar Room, Second Floor, MB