

Date Wednesday 12 May 2021

Time 2pm-4pm

To Dr Sandra Fulton (Chair, Director of Education for NST and PBS), Dr Kate Plaisted-Grant (Faculty Board of Biology rep, Deputy Head of Department for Teaching), Prof Marta Mirazon Lahr and Dr Guy Jacobs (Faculty Board of HSPS reps), Dr Nik Cuncliffe (NST Management Committee rep), Dr Lee de-Wit (PBS Director), Prof Claire Hughes (PBS Subject Convenor), Dr Simone Schnall (PBS Chair of Exams), Dr Emma Weisblatt (Chair of PBS DOS Committee).

Co-opted members: Prof Richard Holton (Philosophy rep), Dr Marta Halina (HPS rep).

Student representatives: Ms Kitty Beck (IA), Ms Molly Ghinn (IB), Ms Jennifer Grint (II), Ms Katy Radcliffe (IA+IB, Faculty Board of Biology)

By invitation: Ms Fiona Craig (Departmental Administrator), Ms Josephine Simmonds (Secretary, Deputy Departmental Administrator), Mr Richard Sellens (Teaching Administrator)

At Nick Mackintosh Seminar Room, Main Psychology Building

Department of Psychology PBS Management Committee Meeting – Easter Term 2021

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

1. Apologies

Fiona Craig, Marta Mirazon Lahr, Richard Holton, Jennifer Grint. Nik Cuncliffe would have to leave at 2.30pm.

2. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10 February 2021 (1)

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising from the previous minutes

a) New PBS Tripos structure

This has now been approved by all relevant Committees in the School: the Biological Sciences Committee, and latterly, the NST Management Committee, which had taken place the previous day. The University-level committees would now consider the item for the final round of approvals. For the Academic Standards and Education Committee, draft regulations and more detailed proposals on assessment strategies and curriculum were required. KPG and LDW will work on this over the summer with Course Organisers. If this had been highlighted earlier this could have been done alongside the existing preparation. It was noted that the course is already very successful with regards to diversity and widening participation, so it is unfortunate to be held back to 2024-25. The Mental Health paper planned for IB was likely to be very popular. KPG noted the potential for the Department to be involved in a Clinical Psychology doctorate in future.

KR and EW thanked KPG for her work in designing the new Tripos, which was widely regarded as a very exciting development and offered to help in any necessary further student or DOS consultations.

In 2020 there had been roughly 10 applicants per place on PBS (768 applicants in total), which was much more popular than medicine. KPG had reviewed admissions statistics during preparations for the Learning and Teaching Review in 2018, and had been pleased to see how well PBS was achieving its diversity and equality aims. CH was thanked for her essential role in managing the outreach strategy.

It was agreed that this Committee should be updated with progress on curriculum development for the new Tripos, although curriculum design would remain within the Department. The draft regulations will come to this committee. SF noted that the Committee could also monitor resource implications if any arose. KPG stated that the new structure will ultimately bring efficiencies, learning from the experience that resource requirements had not been sufficiently reinforced when the original PBS Tripos was created. The Department had agreed with Head of School Prof Anna Philpott that no further resources would be required.

4. Response to expected student return date of 17 May

Most teaching has now finished. KPG noted that the Department's Silver Team had agreed to open some areas of the building for small research group meetings, but there would be no face-to-face teaching. CH noted that the Main Building was also undergoing significant refurbishment, to include: new testing suites, gender-neutral toilets/showers, renovation of some teaching rooms, turning the Nick Mackintosh Seminar Room into a more flexible teaching and social space, and creation of an outdoor seating area. These improvements will hopefully be worth the wait.

KPG explained that due to 24hr online exams, the exam period had been stretched. The consequence was that it was very difficult to have examiners' meetings in time for students to graduate during General Admission. However, the examiners had worked out a plan to facilitate this and will be submitting the grade rosters and class lists on Monday 28 June. Option papers have also agreed to send marks earlier. The DOS Committee was grateful on behalf of students. KB noted that final-year students were very grateful for the Department continually putting students first.

5. Student Feedback Lent Term 2021 (2)

UTO responses to student feedback from Lent Term 2021 were circulated. SF noted the positive feedback and positive responses where there were suggestions for change. KB stated that IA students were impressed with the Department, were enjoying what they had been learning, and were thankful for the Department's support. KR noted that because of the wide-ranging cohort of students on PBS papers, Psychology was regularly compared with other departments and was often considered very good in comparison. KPG thanked LDW for his essential role in overseeing much of this work. The Department has a good relationship with its students, which enables everyone to work together. A benefit of the Department being in control of its own Tripos was that we know our students more than other larger Triposes might. It was also noted that there are some smaller Triposes that do not engage as much. LDW noted the support of administrative staff in enabling good

communication with students. It was suggested that PBS might think about how to share best practice in this regard.

6. National Student Survey (3)

Members received a breakdown of responses by department. At the close of the survey, 21 PBS students had responded (36%), 8 students short of the 50% threshold required for publication of the results. **Post-meeting note: NSS data will still be received, but cannot be used in publicity.** KPG wondered if there was still uncertainty about the NSS. KR noted that the SU had suggested a boycott of the NSS again this year, on the grounds that it is used nationally to pit universities against each other. It was noted that administrative resource is put into advertising and managing the NSS at Cambridge, and in order for this to be worthwhile, students must trust it and academics must find it useful. It was noted the NSS feeds into league tables. It was suggested that the university should be asked to review whether participation in the NSS was necessary.

ACTION: SF to take the Committee's points on the NSS to the Faculty Board for consideration, with a view to passing up through further committees.

7. List of optional papers for PBS Tripos in 2021-22 (4)

There was little change from the previous year. In 2020-21, Criminology at IB was very popular and seems to have soaked up interest from the SOC3 paper, which was capped for the first time. A few emails had been received from students who would have liked to have seen a Social Anthropology paper in the second year. This is true every year. While there used to be a SocAnth paper at IB in PBS, SocAnth stopped running that paper and declined to permit borrowing of a replacement paper. This has been revisited several times since. It was noted that the SAN1 paper is the second most popular at PBS IA, with 32 students, the most popular paper being from BioAnth.

ACTION: KR and RS to ask students who took SAN1 whether they would have taken a SAN paper at IB if one had been available.

ACTION: LDW to approach the Director of Teaching in SocAnth to revisit paper borrowing at IB.

KB noted the extreme enthusiasm among IA students in choosing their IB papers – many were struggling to decide because of the wealth of interesting papers on offer. Criminology and HPS are likely to be popular. HPS was considered quite different from papers at IA. The IA students were grateful for the diverse, large range of papers. KR noted that the optional paper booklet suggested that some preliminary work might be needed for the Neurobiology paper for those without a science background. It was asked whether the Department could make some of this work available to help students decide if they want to take the paper to ensure equivalent provision across colleges.

ACTION: EW and LDW to raise Neurobiology prep with DOS Committee, to aim for consistency and sharing of existing materials and good practice.

It was agreed to delay the deadline for receipt of paper choices until Friday 23 July (one week after receipt of grades).

8. Comments from student members

- a) Part IA – KB noted that while some students had struggled with PBS2 practicals, all the Q&As and extra sessions were really helpful, especially with coding.
- b) Part IB – MG noted that IB students had been grateful for the revision sessions for PBS4, and lots of students were hoping to join. There was some anxiety among IBs about the possibility of next year being their first set of traditional exams. KPG and LDW were aware of the issue and will work on this, coming up with something to help build confidence, and will probably seek student input. At the moment, it is too far ahead to say for certain what will happen next year. EW noted that all DOSs, Tutors, and Senior Tutors were thinking about this. SS, as Chair of Exams, considered that the Department had done well in the last two academic years to find novel solutions for examinations in difficult circumstances, and was ultimately pleased with the changes, most of which would have been unimaginable two years ago.

KR echoed the sentiments of KB and MG.

- c) Part II – JG was not present.

The Committee thanked the student reps for their input and engagement during their time on the PBSMC, and wished them a successful exams season and enjoyable summer break.