



Date Wednesday 3 November 2021

Time 2.00-4.00pm

In attendance Dr Sandra Fulton (Chair, Director of Education for NST and PBS), Dr Kate Plaisted-Grant (Faculty Board of Biology rep, Psychology Director of Teaching, PBS Chair of Exams), Dr Guy Jacobs (Faculty Board of HSPS reps), Dr Nik Cunliffe (NST Management Committee rep), Dr Lee de-Wit (PBS Director), Prof Claire Hughes (PBS Subject Convenor), Dr Emma Weisblatt (Chair of PBS DOS Committee).

Co-opted members: Dr Marta Halina (HPS rep)

Student representatives: Ms Kitty Beck (IB), Ms Caitlyn Amey (II)

By invitation: Mr Richard Sellens (Teaching Coordinator)

At Online

PBS Tripos Management Committee Meeting – Michaelmas Term 2021

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Prof Simone Schnall (co-opted as Deputy Chair of PBS Examinations), Prof Richard Holton (Philosophy rep), Ms Katy Radcliffe (Faculty Board of Biology student rep), Ms Ruth Parsons (IA student rep), and (for late arrival) Ms Josephine Simmonds (Deputy Departmental Administrator).

2. Change of membership and welcome to new members

- a) Ms Ruth Parsons, Ms Kitty Beck and Ms Caitlyn Amey were welcomed as this year's student representatives.
- b) Dr Nik Cunliffe is stepping down as NST representative, and will be replaced for the next meeting.
- c) Mr Richard Sellens has taken over as Secretary.
- d) Prof Simone Schnall remains a member of the committee as Deputy Chair of PBS Examinations.
- e) Prof Marta Mirazon Lahr is on sabbatical for this academic year.

3. Approval of minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2021 (PBSMC21.1)

The minutes were received and approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters arising from the previous minutes (unreserved)

a) Item 3a. Update on proposal for new PBST structure

KPG reported that the item had now progressed through the School committees and would be progressing to the higher level committees next term. Feedback on the proposal had been provided by the Secretary to the Senior Tutors' Committee, and this would be incorporated into a simplified document, suitable for those unfamiliar with the subject or course, before the January Academic Standards and Education Committee (ASEC), which would be an opportunity to receive further feedback. It was agreed that this document would not need to be reviewed by the Committee.

The final run of committees would begin in February 2022.

BPS approval of the changes would also be required; KPG was in the process of writing to the BPS.

SF asked if the proposal going to BPS and to other committees would be seen by the PBS MC, stating it would be unusual for a MC not to see documents about developing a course. KPG assured the committee there would be no new information in these documents from what the committee had already seen and so this was unnecessary. SF noted the committee would wish to know what was being sent and to assist in any way. KPG was grateful but felt help would not be needed

b) Item 6. National Student Survey

SF had received a copy of the results, which had not been received in time for circulation to the Committee, on which she verbally reported. It was agreed that the Teaching Committee should respond to the comments, with a paper then submitted to the Committee.

Action – RS to continue with request for NSS data from the Faculty Board, for circulation to the Teaching Committee.

c) *Item 7. Borrowing SocAnth paper in IB

The Committee noted that SAN 2 would be available for PBS IB students to borrow from 2022-23.

d) Item 7. IB Neurobiology preparation

EW reported that DoSes were encouraged to review PBS 2 materials to help support students without a science background. She confirmed that Dr David Parker (PDN) had offered to run a cellular aspects introductory session for students at the start of the next academic year; the proposal was well received by the Committee.

Action – EW and RS to arrange the introductory session with David Parker.

5. Annual review of Committee Terms of Reference (PBSMC21.3)

No changes were recommended.

6. Examinations

a) PBS Part I External Examiner Report 2020-21 (PBSMC21.4)

The Part II External Examiner, and PBS Chair of Examiners reports were not yet available for circulation.

LDW noted that the external examiner discussed plagiarism training, and confirmed that he would provide a tutorial for all students.

For this year's examinations, KPG raised concern about the currently unknown elements, namely the School's new data retention policy and the length of examinations. Over 40 Part II students had submitted a request for their examinations to be six hours in length. This was considered by the Teaching Committee and discussed at the DoS Committee, with both concluding that three or five hours would be preferable. A decision from the School was pending as to whether five hour examinations could be offered.

Clarification was requested for if and how the examination length would affect those students with extra time allowances. Queries about the data retention policy were also raised. SF noted a policy had been agreed at Faculty Board and asked if this data retention policy had not been received. KPG said it was unclear how to apply it. SF agreed to raise this and the data retention policy with the School of Biological Sciences.

Action – SF to request clarification on examination lengths and the data retention policy from the School of Biological Sciences.

b) Examiners and Course Organisers for 2021-22 (PBSMC21.5)

KPG confirmed that she would continue to act as the PBS 8 course organiser and examiner until the role could be taken up by someone else. The Committee approved the list of internal and external examiners.

Action – RS to submit the examiners details to the Faculty Board.

c) Approval of Form and Conduct of Examinations notices for PBS papers in 2021-22

The Form and Conduct notices were not circulated. It was verbally noted that there would not be any major changes. The chair requested the notices to be provided and agreed to ask for approval by circulation.

Action – RS to circulate the notices for approval once available.

7. *PBS 5 Projects (PBSMC21.7)

The Committee received the paper.

8. Comments from student members

a) Part IA

In RP's absence, RS reported that some students had asked if and when lectures would be held in person. The Committee reinforced that the University's position was to review this for Lent Term at the end of Michaelmas Term.

b) Part IB

KB reported a positive reaction to the PBS 3 course and being able to attend in-person practical classes. Some students were finding PBS 4 to have a heavy workload due to having a Saturday lecture plus practical classes. The Committee agreed that the NST workload was generally high, especially in comparison to the PBS workload, and reassured that the timetable was frontloaded so the workload would ease by mid-Lent Term. KB agreed to relay this back to the students.

c) Part II

CA reported that overall the students were happy with being able to attend in-person lectures, and having more control over the topics they studied.

At this time, NC, KB and CA left the meeting.