UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Minutes

Date       Wednesday 4 November 2020
Time       2.00-4.00pm
To         Dr Sandra Fulton (Chair, Director of Education for NST and PBS), Dr Kate Plaisted-Grant (Faculty Board of Biology rep, Psychology Director of Teaching), Prof Marta Mirazon Lahr and Dr Guy Jacobs (Faculty Board of HSPS reps), Dr Nik Cunniffe (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 Anna Alexandrova (HPS rep).
Student representatives: Ms Kitty Beck (IA), Ms Molly Ghinn (IB), Ms Jennifer Grint (II)
By invitation: Ms Fiona Craig (Departmental Administrator), Ms Josephine Simmonds (Secretary, Deputy Departmental Administrator), Mr Richard Sellens (Teaching Administrator)

At Zoom

PBS Tripos Management Committee Meeting – Michaelmas Term 2020

* Starred agenda items will only be discussed if there are matters to raise otherwise it will be assumed members will either refer to documents attached where appropriate or there is no update to provide. Members can ask for items to be unstarred at the start of the meeting.

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

1. Apologies
   Ms Fiona Craig (Departmental Administrator), Dr Kate Plaisted-Grant (Faculty Board of Biology rep, Psychology Director of Teaching), Prof Claire Hughes (PBS Subject Convenor), Prof Richard Holton (Philosophy rep), Dr Anna Alexandrova (HPS rep)

2. Change of membership and welcome to new members
   a) Dr Nik Cunniffe (NST, Plant Sciences) has returned from sabbatical and takes over from Dr David Summers (NST, Genetics) for 2020-21.
   b) Prof Marta Mirazon Lahr and Dr Guy Williams will be sharing the role of HSPS rep for 2020-21, taking over from Dr Enrico Crema and Dr Emma Pomeroy.
   c) Kitty Beck, Molly Ghinn and Jennifer Grint were thanked for taking the time to volunteer as reps and attend these meetings on behalf of their cohorts.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2020 (1) were approved.

3. Matters arising from the previous minutes
a) Update on proposal for new PBST structure (2a) (KPG) *Item 2a could not be provided.* Feedback from student consultations on the proposal was circulated as item 2b.

LDW spoke to this item in KPG’s absence. KPG had recorded a presentation on the proposed new structure, and this had been made available to students along with the opportunity to participate in a Q&A. Meetings were also held with student reps, at which point item 2b was drafted. Overall, the response was positive, especially regarding the tailoring of the new courses specifically to PBS students, the enhanced flow of the proposed structure and the idea of more optional papers in Psychology.

The current structure has two core PBS papers and two optional papers at both Part IA and Part IB. The proposal seeks to implement three core PBS papers plus one optional paper at Part IA. This addresses both an expansion of research methods and more Psychology in the first year, removing one optional paper. There had been mixed opinions about losing an optional paper because students see the options as a large part of the appeal of PBS. However, the main consensus was that having one less optional paper in the first year would not have influenced their decision to apply, as this is still a very diverse Psychology programme compared to elsewhere. The proposed new papers had been well received, with hands-on skills in research methods in the Subjective Question to Scientific Enquiry paper, and a Social Psychology and Individual Differences paper in the first year. It had been very useful to engage with the students, and the Department was happy with the feedback.

The Committee was not prepared to approve this item without seeing a dedicated paper, provided in enough time before the meeting to be scrutinised. It was agreed to organise an emergency meeting within the next 10 days, so that approval could be provided before the Biological Sciences Committee.

**ACTION: JS to approach KPG about the paper, provide the Committee with access to the video presentation, and arrange an emergency meeting for this item only.**

4. Annual review of Committee Terms of Reference (3)
These had been changed in 2019-20 but no further changes are required this year.

5. Examinations

a) PBS Part II External Examiner Report 2019-20 (4)
PBS Part I was not formally examined. AMF noted the positive report and asks the Department to take into account the External’s comments. AMF noted her thanks to Prof Mark Brosnan for his for three years of service, and to the Examiners for managing well in a difficult year.

b) Examiners and Course Organisers for 2020-21
Members approved internal and external examiners for nomination to the Faculty Board. (5)

c) Conduct for Examinations in 2020-21 (6a-c)
The emails circulated to PBS students were provided. The text was written in collaboration with the School. AMF noted that more specific details will be available
later in the year. EW stated that DOSs have also received the information but have not yet had the opportunity to discuss it in a meeting. MG noted that students were very grateful to receive this information this early in the academic year, and that the open-book nature was positively received. There were concerns about internet connection in Colleges not being good enough, and that the 10-minute grace period will not be long enough. EW stated that issues with College WIFI should be communicated to DOSs. AMF noted that the final arrangements about where the exams will take place in Cambridge is still to be confirmed. NC asked whether students had concerns about Turnitin, and it was noted that there was some concern among students that they might have a high Turnitin score even when citing correctly. It was confirmed that after scripts are run through Turnitin, high scores are scrutinised by an academic, and that this is a robust procedure that is undertaken with great care. LDW noted that he had provided detail about plagiarism and good practice in student inductions. It was agreed that students would find it useful to see a Turnitin report, and that this should be provided in Lent Term.

**ACTION:** RS and LDW to arrange sending a Turnitin report to students in Lent Term, along with a link to University plagiarism guidance.

d) **Approval of Form and Conduct of Examinations notices for PBS papers in 2020-21 (7)** The Committee received Form and Conduct notices for PBS 1, PBS 2, PBS 3, PBS 6, PBS 7 and PBS 8. To note: PBS 4, PBS 9 and PBS 10 are borrowed from NST. PBS 5 Research Project is unchanged from 2019-20.

PBS 1 will be reinstating an integrative question (Section B), which was a result of the re-organised PBS 1 paper. The PBS 2 paper would have short answer questions of a paragraph in length rather than sentences. There would now be no MatLab question in the exam, and instead students would need to provide one piece of coursework on the analysis of a dataset. Failed reports would deduct 1.5% from the overall mark, and this decision was taken because it was expected that all students would pass this report. NC asked whether the proportion of marks assigned to computational work this year was similar to that of last year, and whether this low percentage was indicative of the importance of this topic within the paper. It was noted that the MatLab question had been worth more than 1.5% but that it was not a substantial change. PBS 3, PBS 6, PBS 7 and PBS 8 reinstated a third question (last year reduced to two because of COVID pressures). The Committee were happy to approve these.

6. **PBS 5 Projects (8)** Psychology students are unable to undertake human-testing projects in 2020-21, due to COVID-related restrictions. This is endorsed by the British Psychological Society. Members received a project breakdown by academic.

7. **Comments from student members**

   a) **Part IA (KB)** – Students were happy with the clear and reassuring communication from the Department, as the idea of exams in the current situation had been an issue of concern. Once relevant legislation has been carried out, students would be grateful to know where the exams will happen. AMF noted that the exam timetable (with information on timings and locations) is normally provided in April and that this is expected to be the case this year.
b) **Part IB (MG)** – IB students echoed the thanks for departmental communication. MG had circulated a questionnaire to students, and most feedback was related to PBS4. Lectures that involved both live and pre-recorded elements, such as watching pre-recordings followed by a live Q&A, typically needed more time. Some students were unable to get through the pre-recorded content quickly enough. AMF noted that Q&As had been implemented to replicate the experience of asking clarifying questions after the lecture in a lecture hall. There was some uncertainty about how PBS4 is going to be assessed – this year, the written practical paper no longer exists. This information is in the paper guide, and will be reiterated when the Form and Conducts are released. MG will pass this on to students, and EW will confirm with the DOs.

c) **Part II (JG)** – Students thanked the Department for the communication about exams. There was positive feedback about the diverse range of paper options at Part II, especially on areas of Psychology. Pre-recorded lectures take longer to go through than the allotted time before a Q&A because students often like to re-watch elements to ensure sufficient understanding. Some lecturers have responded by making lectures available slightly earlier than the lecture timeslot but at the moment this is dependent on the lecturer's time and availability. There was a concern that 2020-21 exams would be very similar to pre-COVID exams. Students had noted that the timeframe of 3hrs was the same but that the exams were now open-book, and students expected that they might write a different type of answer in an open-book scenario. It was noted that the timeframe had been implemented to prevent students spending many hours on the exams, which is what had happened in Part II in 2019-20. The open-book nature is intended to remove stress, and students should not be spending time in the exams doing extra reading.

**ACTION:** LDW to liaise with other Senior Examiners and communicate the rationale of open book exams to the students.

The student reps were thanked for their input. A mid-term feedback survey was being prepared, and some of the reps would be meeting Dr Deborah Talmi about this. The reps were asked to encourage all students to fill in the survey, including those who are content with how things were going. Results would be discussed at the Staff-Student meeting next week.

### RESERVED BUSINESS

8. **Minutes from other Committees**

a) **PBS Teaching Sub-Committee (LDW) (9)**

This is a new termly committee with all PBS Course Organisers, to focus on ongoing trouble-shooting. Dr Jane Garrison chairs a similar committee on the NST Psychology side. There was nothing particular to raise to this Committee, and the students seemed happy. AMF noted that it was a good model to ensure collaboration across the entire course and to share good practice.

b) **PBS DoS Committee (EW) (10)**

Dr Jane Garrison had been liaising with Philosophy about supervisions, which were running better than last year but DOs and students were still slightly unsure of Philosophy’s expectations. There had been discussion about how DOs as a group co-ordinate supervision provision, because finding supervisors was becoming
increasingly problematic. EW noted DOSs’ thanks to Prof John Mollon and Prof Jeff Dalley for organising distribution of colour-blind spectacles to DOSs so that students could do practical work in Colleges. On Admissions, there had been an almost 50% increase in applications, and DOSs have requested central guidance on how to deal with this.

The Teaching Committee had noted that there were not many College Teaching Officers in Psychology and that increasing these could provide more capacity for supervisions, easing the burden on DOSs. CH had approached Head of Admissions Dr Sam Lucy, who recommended that the issue should take to Standing Committee on Education. It was noted that PBS had a big increase in Part IA students this year, but that the Senior Tutors’ response to lack of supervisors could be to restrict entry instead.

Plant Sciences has a model whereby the Department arranged supervisions at Part IA. The Psychology Department provides a list of supervisors for DOSs to approach but, for this year in particular, there did not seem to be enough supervisors, particularly with Part IA paper PBS1, which is also offered to students in other Triposes. NC suggested that any appeal made to higher committees for more Psychology CTOs would have more weight if it were supported by data on student and supervisor numbers, but it was also noted that it was extremely difficult to get approval to hire CTOs in general, with strong a case being required even in wealthy Colleges. SS asked if there were specific topics or areas of Psychology where there were fewer supervisors available (such as Social Psychology). EW agreed to look at this. The Committee noted that the Department should ensure a sufficient balance of UTOs, although most supervisors were postdocs and PhD students. The sense among supervisors seems to be that there is too much time pressure on their own research for them to commit to supervising. The Committee suggested that the Department should provide support for supervisors, such as running sessions for new supervisors, and acknowledging very good supervisors (perhaps with prizes). AMF noted that Colleges electing to hire additional CTOs was unlikely, but that postdocs could be supported to obtain affiliation with a College, thereby becoming Teaching Associates. The Committee agreed that this was a good alternative.

**ACTION:** EW to convene a working group to look at Psychology supervisions.

c) **Psychology Department Teaching Committee (11)** *This paper was not available, and the item will be deferred to Lent Term instead.*

9. **Transfers into PBS Part II (12)**
The Committee considered the proposal put forward by the Teaching Committee. It was noted that in the new proposal a) there were no restrictions on the academic background of any potential transfer student and b) that no annual deadline was proposed. The Committee agreed that the Department should set some appropriate guidelines as to what academic experience would be necessary for a student to transfer in to Part II PBS. In the case of NST Part II Psychology, for example, students are expected to have taken at least one of: NST IB Experimental Psychology, NST IB Neurobiology or MVST IB Neurobiology and Human Behaviour. A similar set of requirements on previous papers and/or themes of study would also be helpful for PBS. It was noted that such requirements do not exist as standard within the University, so this could be difficult to implement. It was acknowledged that Colleges ultimately hold responsibility for allowing transfers between Triposes, but that DOSs should be given guidelines from the Department as to what constitutes an
appropriate transfer. Ideally, Colleges should set a test, and if the student fails the test, transfer can justifiably be refused. It was also important to ensure that students wanted to study Psychology for the right reasons, as is also the case in MVST and nursing degrees. This item should come back to the next meeting.

**ACTION:** JS to request that the Teaching Committee revisits the Part II transfer proposal.

10. **Subject Convenor’s Report (CH)**
CH was not present, so no report was provided.

11. **Collaboration between Psychology and other Departments (KPG)**
Collaborations were planned with Education, the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, and Psychiatry with a view to these Departments providing student projects in the near future, partly as a response to the larger IA cohort but also because there was desire for this in each of the Departments. The Teaching Committee had suggested that each of these projects should be provided with a joint Psychology supervisor, and that any Psychology UTOs with low numbers of projects in a given year could fill this role. AMF noted that it was helpful to start planning for this now.

12. **Any other business**
No other business was raised.

13. **Dates of meetings for 2020-21**

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<td>Wednesday 5 February 2020</td>
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<td>Wednesday 6 May 2020</td>
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