

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 Cunliffe (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 Cunliffe (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 DOSs.
- 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

13. Dates of meetings for 2020-21

Lent	Wednesday 5 February 2020	2.00pm	Zoom
Easter	Wednesday 6 May 2020	2.00pm	Zoom