

**FACULTY BOARD OF BIOLOGY  
MEDICAL SCIENCES TRIPOS AND VETERINARY SCIENCES TRIPOS PART I  
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

There was a meeting of the MVST Part I Committee at 2.00pm on Tuesday 10  
March 2020 in Meeting room E, 17 Mill Lane.

**MINUTES**

Present:

Dr R Abayasekara  
Dr D Bainbridge  
Dr H Canuto (Chair)  
Dr S Edgley  
Dr A Kelly  
Dr L MacVinish  
Dr H Matthews  
Miss R Narayanan  
Dr P Schofield  
Dr D Summers  
Dr T Tiffert  
Prof A Williams  
Dr R Williams  
Dr C Pillinger (Secretary)

In attendance: Prof James Wood (HoD Veterinary Medicine)

**20.1. Apologies**

Dr C Brassett, Miss S Cox (CUVS rep), Dr R Duschinsky, Dr G Fraser, Dr S Fulton, Prof D Giussani, Dr G Pearce, Miss S Simpson (3<sup>rd</sup> year CUVS rep), Dr A Swift, Dr D Wood.

**20.2. Declarations of interest**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

**20.3. Membership**

Mr Christopher Mak replaces Mr James Zhang as Faculty student representative for MedST/VetST.

**20.4. Minutes**

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2019 were circulated and approved following one minor change to item 19.35.2 in the paragraph on the Histology review sessions. This paragraph now read:

“Histology had four online self-assessment review exercises, which require students to complete and submit a report, and two slide-based review sessions that students must attend. The Committee agreed that these six activities should count for the diligent attendance requirements.”

**20.5. Matters arising**

**20.5.1. Diligent attendance (19.35.2)**

It was noted that reporting of students who had been late attending their practical classes could be reported on the standard web form. The

Directors of Studies were happy with the new system and found the warning emails when a student was at 90% attendance particularly useful. There were reports of some students forgetting to sign in, but the frequency of these claims was reducing and in any case a student was only allowed three of these claims – further such claims would be treated as absence.

**20.5.2. Card readers for Monitoring practical attendance (19.36)**

The MIMS Course Organisers confirmed that these had not yet been installed due to technical issues. Unfortunately, there were no representatives from the Department of Biochemistry to talk to this.

The Department of PDN had made some investigations and felt that the issues were relatively trivial and were now considering adopting this. It was acknowledged that this system was open to abuse, but no more so than other systems, and it would be easier for staff to log student attendance. Students would still be subject to severe disciplinary measures if they false-certificated.

The Committee were happy for PDN to adopt this system.

***ACTION: PDN to report at next meeting.***

**20.5.3. Anatomy lecture theatre (19.42.2)**

The Chair had met with Course Organisers and agreed that FAB and HNA would continue to be delivered in the Anatomy Lecture Theatre. Feedback from students gathered by Course Organisers was positive.

**20.6. Course Management Committee minutes**

It was noted that Course Management Committee minutes had been received for the following meetings:

<b>Course</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Summary of activity</b>
HNA	Student feedback meeting 15 Jan 2020	Proposed changes to the viewing of prosections to help mitigate demonstrator availability. Clarified various issues on teaching and examination.
FAB	Student feedback meeting 15 Jan 2020	Generally positive feedback about lectures and practicals. Means of improving the practical class experience were discussed.
MoDA	Departmental Teaching Committee meeting 6 December 2019	Reported on a peer review process where colleagues would sit in on lecturer's teaching and offer feedback on content and presentation. Discussed a student request for lecture capture – currently not offered as Pharmacology are not part of the pilot. The reasons for no drugs list was also explained. Some discussion on improving student participation in feedback provision.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Summary of activity</b>
MIMS	Consultative Committee meeting 6 December 2019	Gathered feedback on Michaelmas lectures which was mostly good, some suggestions for minor improvements were made. Students felt that practical classes were useful but that a lecture before the practical would be advantageous. Feedback requests via email were preferred. Discussed the Moodle site and how access to this could be improved and students' awareness of content increased.
MIMS	Management Committee meeting 6 December 2019	Discussed the possibility of making previous years' MCQ papers available. Suggestions to improve feedback response rates. Agreed to update the Nutrition handout. Supervisor status on Moodle site was to be changed from observer to student to allow access to student material.
HR	Student Course representatives meeting 30 April 2019	Discussed methods of increasing feedback response rates. Feedback was generally positive, with the combination of clinical relevance and basic science particularly noted. It was agreed to include a preamble on the VLE to clarify purpose of the pregnancy loss lecture. It was requested that some lectures have a more even spread of material. VLE PowerPoints were agreed as being an adequate replacement for handouts in most circumstances. Representatives were supportive of an idea to merge the section I and II papers. It was agreed to include more sample MCQ questions.

### **20.7. AVMA visit report**

Professor James Wood attended the meeting to discuss a report of the AVMA visit carried out in December 2019. The report was circulated as **MVSTI.20.01**.

Professor Wood thanked the Committee for assisting with the visit and making all the necessary preparations.

Some of the outcomes of the visit were unexpected when considering the previous scoping visit in June 2019. For example, the requirement for centralised admissions seemed to have been satisfied, with the AVMA inspectors making no comments following additional explanation by the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.

A formal report by the AVMA was expected later in March, and Professor Wood felt that the signs were hopeful. One of the recommendations of the report was that the Veterinary Medicine course should occupy the same status as other professional courses, for example the medical course offered by the School of Clinical Medicine. However, it was noted that there were other professional courses that were offered by

departments and so some further arguments would need to be developed here.

The AVMA was concerned about the presentation of financial data – they wished to have clarified costs of the course in the clinical years, as well as seeing costs of the pre-clinical years. Discussions were being held with the School Finance Manager. The main concern of the AVMA when looking at finances was the stability of funding – this was more of an issue for US universities than UK universities.

Some comments had been made about the condition and management of the facilities. Although these were relatively trivial, they would still need addressing. The condition of lecture theatres was not commented upon, but it was possible that subsequent AVMA groups composed of different personnel might comment, given that they were apt to pick up on very detailed low-level issues e.g. dates on bottles.

The formal report later in March would give an indication of whether the Veterinary Medicine course was suitable for consideration in a full accreditation visit, or more work was necessary. Once the full report was available its implications would be discussed with various bodies included this Committee. It was noted that it would take at least two years to have an accreditation visit from the date this was requested, due to the AVMA's other commitments in accrediting and re-accrediting other institutions. Re-accreditation was required once every seven years (which would include a review of the curriculum), and an annual report was expected which the Department of Veterinary Medicine would take responsibility for.

Related to this item – a visit by the RCVS was scheduled for the day after this meeting. This was to assess some issues previously raised at other visitations for report to the RCVS's Primary Qualifications sub-Committee. Updated documentation had already been sent to the RCVS and the Department of Veterinary Medicine was confident that this should satisfy the RCVS. The RCVS would contact the University of Cambridge in due course following the visit.

The Chair thanked Professor Wood for updating the Committee.

## **20.8. Curriculum Review**

The Chair proposed setting up a new working group to discuss the pre-clinical course curriculum. The group would discuss course content and make suggestions for changes where appropriate.

Interactions with School level teaching reviews would need to be considered although these were currently mainly concerned with the Natural Sciences Tripos – Dr Tim Weil was leading this. Therefore, a separate entity to consider MedST/VetST teaching could coexist. The Departmental Learning and Teaching Reviews (LTRs) tended to be somewhat long-term and addressed the need to satisfy regulatory requirements. A working group could have open and honest discussions and would not be constrained by the departmental boundaries of LTRs.

The Committee agreed to the establishment of a Curriculum Review working group.

## **20.9. CUMEN**

The agenda of the meeting was circulated as **MVSTI.20.02**. Of particular note was a contribution by Dr Liz Hook on assisting students who were struggling with the course to get them back on track. The Committee would be interested in Dr Hook attending a Committee meeting, perhaps in Michaelmas 2020. The School of Clinical Medicine devoted a lot of effort by a cadre of academics who were prepared to give up their time to support students. Pre-clinical medical students could be referred to these by their colleges. Veterinary students also had access to support via college referrals and it was noted that organisations such as the AVMA regarded this as a good thing.

The biggest issue was identifying struggling students early – often the first sign of a problem was after the examination results were published.

## **20.10. Proposal for determination of class boundaries**

A paper by Dr Bainbridge was circulated (**MVSTI.20.03**) with a proposal to change the classing system for preclinical medics and vets at Parts IA and IB.

Dr Bainbridge pointed out that the graphs in the circulated documents were an average of three years' data. There was some feeling at a meeting of MedST/VetST IA Senior Examiners that classes awarded for IA and IB in previous years did not reflect the quality of the cohort, particularly for the proportion of firsts and lower seconds in comparison with the classing system used for NST at Parts IA and IB. It was also felt that some employers do use results at IA and IB in considering candidates.

Some issues with the proposal had been raised at the MVST Examinations working group. The NST was a diverse subject where students could take a number of different options, whereas medics and vets took the same combinations of courses. The need for defined class distributions in NST was to accommodate the variety of subjects which often had divergent class distributions when looking at raw marks.

It was queried whether having defined overall class distributions for MedST/VetST would result in less divergence between medics and vets. Vets had to partake in EMS over the Easter vacation and therefore had less time for revision.

The Committee agreed that this was an issue worth exploring further but that clarity was needed on what was being addressed and how. There also needed to be consistency and a variety of expertise involved. It was agreed that the MVST Examinations working group should develop the proposal and come back to this Committee with an agreed plan.

***ACTION: Refer back to the MVST Examinations working group***

## **20.11. Dates for publication of 2<sup>nd</sup> MB/Vet MB results**

The secretary had liaised with the Student Registry and it had been agreed to aim to publish all 2<sup>nd</sup> year 2<sup>nd</sup> MB/Vet MB results on 16 June, and those for 1<sup>st</sup> years on 23 June. These dates were provisional and further updates may be required. Students would be kept informed as

far as possible and informed in late April of the provisional publication dates along with Directors of Studies.

## **20.12. Student's Topics**

The Chair and secretary reported on items recently raised at a recent Med/VetST Student Focus Group meeting:

### **20.12.1. Student feedback survey**

The Faculty rep had gathered feedback from IA, IB and Part II MedST and VetST students. A report was circulated as **MVSTI.20.03**. There was a consensus that workload was high, and that overlap of course materials was a contributor to this. There was also a desire to know precisely what the learning outcomes were and how these were applicable to a medical context – some courses did this better than others. Programme specifications were available for the MedST and VetST courses, the secretary was asked to check their online accessibility. However students were more focused on what was required for passing 2<sup>nd</sup> MB/Vet MB – this was not something that could be provided for them – students were taught a subject and examinations might ask them to draw from any part of this subject – the purpose of teaching was not for students to pass the examinations but for them to become good doctors and vets.

Some issues had been raised about the MoDA case studies – attendance had been quite variable, and the Committee wondered if this was because the material was not examinable. Feedback from those students who had attended the case studies was very good. However, the variable attendance was disappointing, given that the Department of Pharmacology had made strenuous efforts to address student feedback to provide more clinical context. These case studies would be of particular benefit to struggling students if they turned up.

The curriculum review would need to consider the position of topics in over the course of the first and second year.

FAB and HR were regarded by students as good examples of how clinical elements could be integrated into pre-clinical courses.

### **20.12.2. Methods of gathering student feedback**

Students felt that it was best to obtain feedback after every lecture, but sometimes it was better to ask for this after a period of time when students had a chance to reflect on what they had learnt and place this in the context of other teaching.

### **20.12.3. Use of lecture capture**

There was great enthusiasm among students for lecture capture to be extended across the course and could allow students who had missed lecture (e.g. though illness) to catch up. Currently only the Department of Biochemistry had lecture capture capability – other departments either did not have capability or were debating how appropriate it was to their teaching. There was some concern that having lectures online would encourage some students to over-use these which could lead to increased anxiety. Alternatives might be better – for example viewing lecture slides or talking things over with supervisors or peers. Lecture capture should not be seen as the only way of catching up or following up lectures and the alternative methods should not be ignored. It was

also noted that most lecture capture was consulted immediately after the lecture or just before the examinations. Conversely findings from the Royal Veterinary College indicated that students went over the same lecture repeatedly, spending too much time on a single topic.

Some students might be tempted to miss lectures and catch up at a later time – if they did not bother to catch up in a timely fashion however they could easily fall behind and get themselves into a situation where there was too much to catch up on. Lectures were also phased with cognate practical classes, and students tended not to take notes when viewing lectures via lecture capture.

There were still outstanding concerns about the use of lecture capture, and even the Department of Biochemistry usage was as part of a pilot and attendance of lectures was being affected. Students who were not able to attend lectures in person could be accommodated by other courses on a case by case basis. For example, students with SSDs stating they could record lectures could for their personal use. In addition, individual students would respond differently to various methods of teaching – lecture capture would not suit everyone.

It was agreed that a case for attendance at lectures in person needed to be made so students could appreciate their utility, as well as the fact that lecture capture was not a magic bullet.

Prof Williams was involved in a University-wide project looking at the next generation of lecture capture systems. He was invited to report back to the next meeting.

### **20.13. Items for report**

#### **20.13.1. Changes to regulations – IB BoD (19.37)**

These had been approved by the relevant Faculty Boards and were now being considered by the Academic Standards and Enhancement Committee (ASEC).

#### **20.13.2. Preparing for Patients C and D (19.39)**

It was noted that the form and conduct notice for previously agreed changes would be published in time for the Lent 2021 examinations.

#### **20.13.3. Changes to regulations – Preparing for the Veterinary Profession (19.40)**

These had been forwarded to the Faculty Board of Veterinary Medicine for approval.

#### **20.13.4. Student workload (19.38)**

The website has been updated and could be viewed at:

<https://www.biology.cam.ac.uk/undergrads/InfoCurrentStudent/Workload-Expectations>

#### **20.13.5. ISBM update**

The Chair noted that a request had been received to rename the course to 'Foundations of Evidence Based Practice'. The Committee agreed to this.

***ACTION: secretary to seek approval from relevant Faculty Boards and forward to ASEC.***

**20.14. Any Other Business**

There was none

**20.15. Dates of Meetings for 2019-20**

The final MVST Part I Committee meeting for the 2019/20 academic year was noted as:

7 Jul 2020 – 14:00-16:00 – Meeting Room A, First Floor, 17 Mill Lane
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