Examination Review Final Report

September 2017

Preface

In Lent Term 2015, the General Board's Education Committee and the Board of Examinations agreed to establish an Examination Review Working Group to review all aspects of the examination process, except for those degrees which are only assessed by thesis and viva. At the first meeting of the Working Group I stated that the review would offer a 'once in a generation opportunity' for a 'root and branch' review of examination processes, policies and strategies.

I am very grateful for the hard work of the members of the Examination Review Working Group and particularly those who have supported its work, specifically Catherine Fage and Holly Tilbrook. It is clear that a great deal has already been achieved; certain specific recommendations have already been implemented and the implementation of others is being developed. Crucially, discussion about the purpose and nature of examining within the University has occurred and I trust that this will continue. But it is also clear that there are significant issues still to be resolved, and new issues have emerged, which will require continued work and development.

The Working Group has brought together a wide range of academic and administrative expertise and perspectives, consulted widely both across the collegiate University and across the wider Higher Education sector. Qualitative and quantitative data have been gathered and educational research consulted. The Working Group acknowledges that within the non-centralised Cambridge structures, the need is often for issues to be raised centrally, and best practice to be identified, in order to stimulate the discovery of appropriate local solutions, and not for one-size-fits-all solutions to be created and imposed.

The Working Group has been willing to consider radical and fundamental changes to examination at the University. Many of these considerations have been rejected as either being incompatible with the University's educational mission or standing little chance of being accepted by the University, such as the introduction of re-sits for all subjects. Our aim throughout has been pragmatic. That said, we are making certain proposals, which we consider will significantly change the nature of the examination process to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate. These include proposals concerning: governance; alternative examination arrangements and adjustments due to mitigating circumstances; exam-related operational processes; typed examinations; feedback; guidance and information; monitoring of student examination attainment by protected characteristic; cumulative classification; examination facilities; and student welfare.

One important implication will, we hope, be the recognition throughout the University that the traditional examination approach is not a strait-jacket and innovation should be encouraged. Where the traditional three hour written examination continues to be appropriate then Faculties and Departments are free to continue with that mode of examination, but all Faculties and Departments are encouraged to be creative and innovative by considering other modes and methods of examination, which are suitable to the particular discipline that is being examined. The Centre for Teaching and Learning will develop a particular work stream to support and encourage such innovation in examinations.

I commend this report to the University.

Professor Graham Virgo, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, September 2017

Background and Context

The initial idea for a review came from a recommendation in the 2014-15 annual report of the Secretary of the Board of Examinations.[1] The Secretary of the Board of Examinations expressed concerns about the ability to continue to deliver examinations to undergraduate and taught Masters students against an increase in written examinations, a growth in the number of students receiving alternative examination arrangements, an expanding complexity to operational matters and escalating costs for both the University and the Colleges. The Bursars and Senior Tutors echoed these concerns.

In November 2014, the General Board Education Committee agreed that an '*examination review would deliver a five-year plan that, having considered the trends and concerns and challenged present arrangements, sets the direction on examination policy and operations*'.[2]

An Examination Review Working Group was established in Lent Term 2015. Chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, the membership included members of the General Board Education Committee and Board of Examinations, a Proctor, a Senior Tutor, two Chairs of Examiners and a student representative. As the work progressed, the membership was supplemented with representatives of the Legal Services Office and the Disability Resource Centre, and the Deputy Academic Secretary. The Secretary of the Board of Examinations provided secretarial support, alongside the Deputy Head of Educational and Student Policy.

The inaugural meeting of the Working Group took place in February 2015 and thereafter the Group met termly until its final meeting in March 2017. Throughout this period, the Group considered matters pertaining to all three stages of the examination process:

    (i)   pre-examination;
    (ii)   examination, and
    (iii)   post-examination.

The Group engaged with key stakeholders through a variety of means including a Notice published in *The Reporter*, consultations via relevant Committees and Directors of Teaching events. The Board of Examinations and the General Board Education Committee (GBEC) received regular progress reports, as did the General Board, primarily through the GBEC Minutes. Inevitably, some matters within the Group's remit were pre-empted and progressed elsewhere, e.g. improved script distribution. The full terms of reference is available in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 offers a timeline of the discussions.

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[1] http://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us/board-examinations
[2] Minute 503.6.1: Review of Examinations (Wednesday 12 November 2014)

In October 2016, the Group convened a working party specifically to consider alternative examination arrangements. As background, the University requires Colleges to apply for alternative examination arrangements for their students sitting examinations in the Easter Term, by the publicised deadline of the Division of the Lent Term. The deadline applies to allow those with long-term disability or health concerns to apply to sit in other locations or to seek adjustments (or both) and then time to practise with the adjustment. However, the University was witnessing an increase in the number of applications after the deadline, the consequence of which was additional burden and costs on Colleges and the University.

This group met four times between October 2016 and March 2017. Chaired by the Secretary of the Senior Tutors' Committee, the membership included a College Bursar, College Nurses, College Tutorial Staff, Head of the Disability Resource Centre, Head of the University Counselling Service, student representatives, and the Secretary of the Board of Examinations. The working party was informed by data, a student survey, and best practice in other institutions. The terms of reference is available in Appendix 3.

This report summarises the key findings of the Review Group and the working party, implemented outcomes, key proposals, work in progress and the limitations and lessons learned.

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Examinations: the current context

The Group noted the following key information about examinations.

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Nº University examinations scheduled	1,564	2,256	2,334
Nº candidatures	66,319	66,244	66,553
Nº candidates awarded alternative examination arrangements	1,237	1,281	1,367

Examinations take place every month from September to July.
The majority of examinations (80%) occur in May and June.
Examinations occur in 35 different venues, the designs of which are for activities other than examinations; four of these are external to the University.
30% of examinations deviate from the standard 3-hour length for a written examination.
Since 2011, there has been a year-on-year increase in the number of candidates granted alternative examination arrangements.
In 2015-16 there was a 15% increase in examination adjustments for reasons of mental health/depression and a 36% increase in examination adjustments for reasons of anxiety.
In 2015-16, 56% of the applications received for alternative examination arrangements for the Easter Term examinations came after the publicised deadline of the Division of Lent Term.
The University employs 3.5 full-time staff dedicated to examinations, and successful delivery of examinations relies on the engagement of casual staff, staff employed in Faculties, Departments, Student Registry, and Reprographics, and staff employed in Colleges (including Tutors, tutorial staff, Nurses and Porters).
The cost of examinations (from paper production to payment of Examiners) comes out of the Student Operations (Academic Division) budget.

Key Findings of the Examination Review

Governance

1. The Board of Examinations does not consider all examination matters and so does not have a holistic approach to examination and assessment within the University; furthermore policy setting is divorced from operational oversight. Consequently, it is recommended that the Board of Examinations be dissolved and that a new Examinations and Assessment Committee be established. This new Committee would assume responsibility for quality assurance of examinations, maintenance of standards, and ensuring the integrity of the examination process, alongside taking forward the work of the Examination Review.

2. Currently, examination access arrangements and mitigating circumstances are considered separately but would benefit from closer integration of approach. Therefore, it is recommended that a new Examination Access and Mitigation Committee be established. This new Committee would bring together the pre-examination examination adjustments procedures and the procedures of the Applications Committee, which considers cases post-examination, and so would replace and subsume the work of the Applications Committee.

Modes of assessment

3. The Review Group invited the views of Faculty Boards and Departments on the type of examination and assessment used. Some of the questions repeated those that formed part of the wider University consultation. The general view from these consultations is that the University is not over-examining. However, replies indicated that perhaps too much weight is being placed on end of year examinations and there is too little flexibility, or encouragement, to use assessments other than a three-hour written examination.

4. Most Faculties and Departments are in favour of using a mix of assessment methods, but agree that the three-hour written examination should remain a feature of the Tripos.

5. There should be neither a mandatory minimum nor a maximum amount of other assessment in a Tripos.

6. Research supports testing in a formative way and indicates that low stake tests (e.g. mock examinations) help with learning, especially where those tests are timed and focussed[3] [4].

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[3] John Dunlosky, Katherine A. Rawson, Elizabeth J. Marsh, Mitchell J. Nathan, and Daniel T. Willingham (2013), 'Improving Students' Learning With Effective Learning Techniques: Promising Directions From Cognitive and Educational Psychology', Psychological Science in the Public Interest, Association for Psychological Science

[4] Henry L. Roediger, III (2013), 'Applying Cognitive Psychology to Education: Translational Educational Science', Psychological Science in the Public Interest, Association for Psychological Science

7. In the responses received to a University-wide consultation about moving to typed examinations, 60% of respondents were supportive of the proposal, particularly for essay-based examinations, but raised the practicalities of security, logistics and finance.

Marking and feedback

8. There is concern that our marking criteria are too complicated.

9. Students should be better informed about feedback (i.e. what they will receive, how they will receive it and when, as well as the nature and function of the feedback).

10. General feedback from examiners about exam performance is important to those that sat the examination, to those sitting future examinations and to those setting the examinations.

11. Whilst in principle it would be beneficial for students to receive feedback to each answer they have provided, it is not feasible for examiners in all disciplines to provide written feedback on student's individual performance in unseen examinations.

12. It is reasonable to expect examiners to provide cohort reports, which offer a commentary on the answers and on the performance of the cohort, and a breakdown of the marks (except for where only one person sat a paper) for example stating how many answered each question and the range of marks awarded to each question, and typical strengths/weaknesses of answers.

13. Only where appropriate for the subject should examiners provide published model answers.

14. There is inconsistent practice in making available external examiners' reports to students, which is a QAA requirement, enacted through University policy that is monitored through the Learning and Teaching Reviews.

15. There is a lack of consistency between Faculties and Departments in monitoring examination attainment of different students by protected characteristic, e.g. gender, BAME.

Degree classification

16. There is concern about the classification structure of the Tripos examination system, in particular a lack of understanding of the system amongst students, academics, employers.

17. A clear desire exists to challenge current practice that, whilst examinations occur at the end of each Part of the Tripos and results are classed, there is typically no cumulative class at the end.

Mitigating circumstances

18. Research carried out by the Disability Resource Centre showed that the perception that candidates with a Specific Learning Disability (SpLD) granted 25% extra time, or 25% extra time and the use of

a word processor, receive an advantage is incorrect. The research indicates that, at least for essay-based examinations, these candidates do not produce longer answers or achieve higher marks than their non-SpLD peers.[5]

19. A system of classifying or granting allowances due to mitigating circumstances should be retained rather than introduce resits.

Transparency

20. Whilst responsibility for examining students falls to many and the support to students is spread amongst the collegiate University, there is no single summary of the University of Cambridge's examinations. Consequently, there was a desire to provide a transparent, comprehensive, and singular guide to examinations for all staff who have a role in examinations as well as for students who wish to understand the end-to end process.

21. Students report that the student-facing web pages on examinations are lacking relevant information and so are deemed ineffective.

22. There is a lack of transparency on the entire costs for running University examinations.

Infrastructure

23. The Board of Examinations shares concerns expressed in Faculties and Departments and in the UIS about the lack of security in the transfer of some data relating to exams, including examination paper distribution.

24. The ability to deliver the operational aspects of examinations is severely constrained by lack of sufficient, good quality space for examinations; lack of appropriate and sufficient levels of staff (both University employed staff and casual staff engaged solely to support examinations); and lack of investment in IT (e.g. in 2016 part of the operation still relied on fax machines).

25. The University estate offers short and long-term challenges to the examination process, heightened by the closure of the Exam Halls and Exam Office, the prospective closure of the Mill Lane Lecture Block and the requirement to decant the Titan Suite. Any movement to typed examinations would put other challenges on the estate.

26. The closure of Faculties and Departments on Bank Holidays that fall in Term time, limits business-critical examination activity for both the Examination Office and students.

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[5] Duncan, Helen; Purcell, Catherine (2017) 'Equity or Advantage? The effect of receiving access arrangements in university exams on Humanities students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)', Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, Volume 19, Number 2, May 2017, pp. 6-26(21), Open University.

Key Findings of the Alternative Examination Arrangements Working Party

27. The Student Registry and Disability Resource Centre produced data on patterns, by year, of students who disclose mitigating circumstances and then receive alternative examination adjustments (and whether they received examination allowances (EA)). The data revealed:

- 32% of students who disclosed a mental health condition applied for exam arrangements.

- 58% of students who disclosed a disability applied for exam arrangements.

- When viewed by College, 25% of all EA applications came from students of five Colleges.

- When viewed by College, 30% of all late EA applications come from students of five Colleges (some overlap with above).

28. When viewed by number of students enrolled, 50% of all EA applications come from students enrolled on one of five Triposes and 50% of late EA applications were from students enrolled on the same five Triposes.

Faculty/Department	Total no students per subject	Total number of alternative examination applications made by students	% of alternative examination arrangements applications by Faculty/Dept	Total number of late applications for alternative examination arrangements	% of late alternative examination arrangements applications by Faculty/Dept
Architecture and History of Art	203	31	2%	14	3%
Biology	193	22	2%	3	1%
Classics	272	25	2%	8	2%
Computer Lab	287	20	2%	3	1%
Divinity	165	38	3%	13	3%
Earth Sciences and Geography	297	36	3%	9	2%
Economics	459	43	3%	17	4%
Education	106	23	2%	8	2%
Engineering	1277	79	6%	31	7%
English	650	98	8%	38	8%
History	587	76	6%	20	4%
HSPS	620	143	11%	50	11%
Land Economy	161	26	2%	9	2%
Law	619	95	7%	43	9%
Maths	799	54	4%	18	4%
Clinical Medicine	1360	61	5%	34	7%
MML	733	53	4%	27	6%
Management Studies	41	12	1%	5	1%
Music	181	26	2%	7	2%
NST	2195	226	18%	70	15%
AMES	154	11	1%	3	1%
Physics and Chemistry	Not available	19	1%	10	2%
Philosophy	129	24	2%	7	2%
Clinical Veterinary Medicine	380	37	3%	12	3%
Totals		1278	100%	459	100%

29. The working party assumed that alternative examination arrangements would come from students in either their first year (due to unfamiliarity with the Cambridge examination process) or final year

students. However, a review of the data indicated that half of the applications received were from students who were not in their first or final years.

30. Students with the same condition or health concern might receive different adjustments because the specialist evidence offered differing recommendations.

31. Those presenting the specialist evidence are often unfamiliar with the Cambridge examination process.

32. A survey, sent to students who had put in late EA applications in 2015-16, to find out what services they accessed and/or what they were aware of, with a view to determine if earlier intervention was possible, revealed:

    ▪ That the examination room environment was an influencing factor.

    ▪ That one-to-one invigilation was not a requirement for sitting in College.

    ▪ Lack of familiarity with the exam venues was an influencing factor.

    ▪ They were not aware of deadlines.

    ▪ Students do not fully understand the full range of services available.

    ▪ Preparation is critical, even before they come to Cambridge.

33. The Senior Tutors' Committee has produced a digest of good practice in study skills support already provided by Colleges.

34. The Disability Resource Centre reports positive turnout to workshops specifically targeted at students with SpLD with a specific focus on developing strategies to address the impact of SpLD on learning. There is good demand for study skills workshops that are advertised as anxiety-specific. Workshops held in Colleges have had a mixed response.

35. There is benefit in normalising anxiety issues by presenting anxiety as an academic issue rather than a medical one.

36. The University Counselling Service provides a flowchart for referrals relating to mental health issues that might be edited and adopted for wider use.

37. The review considered the appropriate amount of detail that students should receive about available options and considered that "reasonable adjustments" might include the use of venues that are not in the student's own College. The prospect of using an unfamiliar venue (potentially requiring additional – but reasonable – travel) may discourage applications from students who are capable of using the main venues (e.g. those experiencing normal examination anxieties).

38. The group considered that identifying alternative space to accommodate 'late fallers' should be borne in mind when developing space strategy for examinations.

39. Consistency is required in the support offered to students who present themselves as anxious and/or with mental health concerns, which might come from specialist advice.

40. Changes to the college environment during the examination period (e.g. reduced opening hours for facilities) can add to anxiety.

41. The group considered the benefits of issuing reminders of due dates and requirements of medical evidence via the Senior Tutors' Committee email lists and the CUSU web pages.

42. DRC guidelines were compared against similar ones from other universities; there were no significant differences.

Implemented Outcomes

43. In 2016-17, the University ran a computer-based examinations pilot project for Preliminary Examinations in the Faculty of History and the Faculty of Classics.[6] The Digital Teaching & Learning Sub-committee received a full report at the end of July 2017 and agreed to expand the pilot

44. The General Board Education Committee in February 2016[7] approved, with immediate effect, a new policy on reporting students missing from the examination in an examination hall.

45. In February 2016, the General Board of the Faculties approved the recommendation 'that Faculties and Departments should release all suitable space across the University estate for examinations'.[8]

46. For the main examination period in 2017, the University Counselling Service offered ideas to Colleges on normalising examination preparation and promotion of stress reduction initiatives.

47. From Easter Term 2017, the wording in the Student Support Document will, where appropriate, state 'separate room: low density/distraction exam venue' rather than '1:1 invigilation', which should reduce numbers sitting alone and thus reduce the costs on Colleges.

48. A transparent, comprehensive, and singular guide of the University of Cambridge's Tripos examinations, authored by academic staff, will be available to Faculties, Departments, Colleges, and student representatives in advance of the academic year 2017-18.

49. A Guide to Permitted Examination Access Arrangements for Written Examinations will apply from 2017-18. This guide is for those who recommend adjustments, as a means of standardising the provision as well as suggesting adjustments that are reasonable within the Cambridge context. The guide retains the requirement for applications to be considered on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the student and explicitly states that the standard provision should be viewed as possible adjustments only.

50. A more transparent report on the entire costs for running University examinations will be available for the 2016-17 academic year.

51. Some additional detail and photographs of examination venues were added to the University website[9] for the Easter Term 2017 examinations.

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[6] http://www.cctl.cam.ac.uk/projects/computer-based-examinations
[7] Minute 516.4.2 https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/gbec/2017-02-22/
[8] Minute C1. https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/general-board/2016-02-10/
[9] http://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/examinations/undergraduate-exam-information

Key proposals for consideration by Faculties and Departments

52. To review the assessment modes used, in consultation with external examiners as appropriate, which will be monitored through Learning and Teaching Reviews on their normal schedule and with a view to encouraging creative and innovative modes of assessment as appropriate to the subject being examined.

53. That each Part of a Tripos should include at least one elective option for assessment by a method other than the traditional unseen examination (e.g. dissertation, portfolio, coursework, exercises). It should be for Faculty Boards to determine the extent of assessment by methods other than written unseen examination. There should be neither a mandatory minimum nor a maximum amount of other assessment in a Tripos.

54. To provide anonymised exemplar answers for specific papers, where appropriate, and consider providing guidance on assessment practice, e.g. how to write an essay.

55. Whilst Faculties and Departments are expected to provide marking and classing criteria as part of the annual programme review process, they should be more transparent in their published information on marking criteria. Faculties and Departments are reminded of the 'Guidelines of Marking Standards and Classing Conventions'.[10]

56. To better inform students about feedback about examinations (i.e. what they will receive, how they will receive it and when, and the nature and function of the feedback).

57. To make external examiners' reports available to students.

58. To clarify the target audience and functionality of the internal examiners' reports.

59. To require internal examiners to provide cohort reports which offer a commentary on the answers and on the performance of the cohort, and a breakdown of the marks (except for where only one person sat a Paper), for example stating how many answered each question, the range of marks awarded to each question and, where appropriate, provide model answers.

60. To address ways in which, through study skills and examination preparation advice issued centrally, students can be better equipped to face the stresses of examinations.

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[10] http://www.educationalpolicy.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/marking.pdf

Key proposals for consideration by the General Board Education Committee

61. To consider recommending a mixed model of mock examinations, where appropriate, with Faculties and Departments setting the paper and Colleges running and marking the examinations, and giving feedback to individual students supported by exemplar or model answers.

62. That the mode of assessment and examination should be a specific Term of Reference in the General Board's Learning and Teaching Reviews.

63. Suggestions about assessment, particularly the objective and design of different modes, should be a topic for consideration by the Centre for Teaching and Learning with a view to the Centre contributing to wider discussions about good practice in assessment.

64. To receive and consider the outcomes of a research project to establish the effectiveness of the Mindfulness interventions being piloted by the Counselling Service in building student resilience.

65. To review the University's policy for re-sits and re-submissions within the context of student well-being and mental health.

66. To monitor more consistently examination attainment of different categories of students, e.g. gender, BAME.

67. To develop one website with links to all the study skills support available to students, which could also be available before they come to Cambridge, perhaps via a portal linking to Transkills and other information that crosses a range of subjects, as well as offering subject specific tips.

68. To work with course leaders to enable them to help students to take responsibility for managing their mental health early and assist in normalising anxiety issues by presenting anxiety as an academic issue rather than medical one.

69. To determine if the University Counselling Service flowchart for referrals relating to mental health issues might be edited for wider use.

70. To request the Committee on Student Health and Wellbeing to liaise with GPs about the management of examination stress and anxiety.

71. To ask the Equality and Diversity Standing Committee on Education to consider how best to monitor attainment in assessment by reference to different protected characteristics.

Key proposals for discussion by Colleges

73. To ensure Tutors contact students early in Michaelmas term (preferably within their first meeting) to discuss examination adjustments.

74. That Directors of Studies review the events of the main examination period and investigate how to improve resilience for the following year.

75. To consider whether the examination support provided alleviates or creates anxiety, e.g. extending Library opening hours into the night, closing the bar.

76. To take forward discussions on the possibility of sharing space to accommodate students with examination adjustments.

Key proposals for discussion by CUSU

77. CUSU should encourage students to discuss alternative examination arrangements with Tutors and, where medical evidence is needed, with Nurses/ GPs etc.

Work in Progress

78. In January 2016, the General Board's Education Committee[11] agreed that the Disability Resource Centre should be encouraged to extend the SpLD research to STEM subjects.

79. Following consultation on degree classification, in May 2017 the General Board's Education Committee agreed to establish a working party to develop detailed proposals for introduction of an overall degree classification for the Tripos.[12] The Committee further agreed that a common scheme of ranking, as set out in a consultation paper, should be introduced for 2017-18, and that rankings should be included on the University Transcript.

80. In March 2017, the General Board's Education Committee[13] endorsed new governance arrangements. These included the dissolution of the Board of Examinations and the creation of a new Examinations and Assessment Committee in its place, and the reformation of the Applications Committee. A Report putting forward detailed recommendations will follow.

81. In January 2017, the General Board's Education Committee[14] recommended that the University adopt a policy requiring cover in all Faculties and Departments on bank holidays that fall within Term.

82. Under the Chair of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education a Programme Board for Education Space is embarking on an ambitious programme to ensure the estate continuously provides, amongst other matters, examination facilities that meet current and future demands.

83. Public publication of Class lists: work is underway to consider the implications of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which will apply from 25 May 2018, and appear to require students to opt-in to such publication.

84. Following a full review of the pilot of computer-based examinations for some Preliminary examinations held in Easter term 2017, the Digital Teaching and Learning sub-Committee will be responsible for future rollout of computer-based examinations.

85. Development of GP template letters is progressing through Committees.

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[11] Minute 514.4.1 https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/gbec/2016-01-20/
[12] Minute 527.3.1 https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/gbec/2017-05-10/
[13] Minute 526.3.6, https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/gbec/2017-03-22/
[14] Minute 524.5.6 https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/gbec/2017-02-22/

Limitations and lessons learned

The Group notes the following **limitations** on its work.

86. The lack of dedicated resource stifled a thorough review and limited the outcomes delivered.

87. The lack of an adequate reporting tool from CamSIS limited the ability to extract, analyse and report data held in the system.

88. The lack of a single repository for information on the weighting of assessment, limited the discussions on assessment.

89. Irregular monitoring of examination attainment and central analysis of data means that consideration of the impact of different modes of assessment on attainment of different protected characteristics was not possible.

90. The complexity of examination board staffing made impossible the comparative consideration of examiner loads.

The **lessons learned** include the following.

91. That any strategic review requires a dedicated team.

92. That any action should be scoped in terms of cost (money and staff) so that it is clear what should be given priority and any necessary bids for money can be submitted.

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Appendix 1: Examination Review Terms of Reference

The examination review would deliver a five-year plan that, having considered the trends and concerns and challenged present arrangements, sets the direction on examination policy and operations. To inform this plan, the review of examination policy might include:

- comparison of volume (load on examiners and load on students);
- comparison of mode of assessment across years of Tripos, both between cognate subjects within the University (CamSIS data) and with competitor institutions (using KIS data);
- consideration of alternative modes of assessment and secondary examination formats (effectiveness both pedagogically and the impact on operations);
- impacts on protected characteristics;
- timing of assessment

The review of examination operations might include:

- review of Board of Examinations membership and times of meetings;
- future direction of exams;
- technical investment;
- efficient use of the estate for examinations;
- examination timetabling;
- alternative examination arrangements;
- managing corrections;
- examination preparation;
- script distribution;
- staffing;
- missing students

Appendix 2: Timeline of Discussions

Date	Discussion topics
July 2014	Board of Examinations identified need to review examinations in conjunction with the General Board Education Committee
October 2014	General Board Education Committee agreed with the Board of Examinations recommendation
November 2014	Terms of reference and membership agreed
December 2014	**General Board** received notification of the Examination Review
February 2015	**1st meeting** prioritised tasks and timescales for delivery and determined information required to help inform any policy change.
April 2015	**2nd meeting** considered the data and information provided and agreed to prioritise assessment and allowances in 2015-16.
July 2015	**3rd meeting** determined the detail of focus for 2015-16; agreed consultation; determined working group membership to assist with the work in 2015-16.
29 July 2015	**Consultation** launched in the Reporter.
September 2015	**The Board of Examinations** received the annual Secretary's Report detailing improvements in operational matters and ongoing concerns.
October 2015	**Consultation** to Faculty Boards issued.
October 2015	**4th meeting** considered allowances and noted that SpLD candidates do not receive an advantage by receiving extra time or extra time and the use of a word-processor and agreed positive action.
December 2015	**General Board** received Progress Report (Paper No.15.C.48).
January 2016	**5th meeting** considered a report on the responses received from faculties and departments to the consultation on Tripos examination and assessment methods, which included a number of recommendations regarding modes of assessment, ratio of examination and assessment methods, and feedback to students on formative and summative assessment.
April 2016	**6th meeting** focussed on feedback on summative examination and assessment, and re-sits and re-submissions of examinations and assessments.
September 2016	**The Board of Examinations** received the annual Secretary's Report detailing improvements in operational matters and ongoing concerns.
October 2016	**Consultation** on the introduction of a scheme for overall cumulative classification of the Cambridge BA (Honours) degree
October 2016	**7th meeting** considered recommendations on the principles of enhancing feedback on examinations.
March 2017	**8th meeting** considered recommendations on the future governance arrangements
June 2017	**Final report issued**

Appendix 3: Alternative examination arrangements Working Party Terms of Reference

93. The purpose of the Alternative examination arrangements Working party is:

- to review the recent rise in the number and cost of alternative examination arrangements put in place by Colleges after the division of Lent term;

- to analyse the reasons for this rise;

- to make recommendations to the Examination Review, and to Colleges via Senior Tutors, Tutorial Offices, and College Nurses;

- to develop appropriate additional guidance and support to students; and

- to seek to ensure consistency and fairness of advice and provision to all students and colleges.

- The Working Party hoped that recommendations would be adopted in the academic year 2017-18.

Contributors Examination Review

Core Membership

Professor Graham Virgo (DOW)	Chair
Dr Rachael Padman (N)	Member of General Board Education Committee
Dr David Woodman (R), Senior Proctor 2014-15 Dr Andrew Bell (CAI) / Mr Dick Taplin (DOW), Junior Proctor 2015-16 Mr David Goode (W), Deputy Proctor 2016-17	Proctor
Dr Elisabete Silva, Land Economy (R)	Member of Board of Examinations
Dr Marina Frasca-Spada, History and Philosophy of Science (CC)	Senior Tutor
Dr Nick Holmes, NatSci (T)	Chair of Examiners
Dr Gavin Alexander, English (CHR) Dr Fiona Green, English (JE) (whilst Dr Alexander on leave)	
Mr Rob Richardson (R) 2014 - 15 Ms Roberta Huldisch (EM) 2015-16	CUSU Education Officer
Co-opted members	
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