Imperial College London

Examination Timetabling User Group
21 Oct 2020 (2pm-3.30pm)

Microsoft Teams

Present:

Adcock, Raj (RA)	Teaching Operations Manager, Materials
Badshah, Dilshad (DB)	Teaching Support Officer, Chemical Engineering
Cerase, Damian S (DC)	Teaching Quality Officer, Computing
Curniffe, Marlon (MC)	Senior Student Office Administrator, Materials
Dray, Thomas (TD)	Postgraduate Education Administrator, Earth Sciences & Engineering
Eves, Gavin J (GE)	MSc in Sustainable Energy Futures Coordinator
Farrar, Kate (KF)	Education Support Officer, Electrical & Electronic Engineering
Giorgi, Linda (LGi)	Examinations Officer, Life Sciences
Green, Louise C (LG)	Undergraduate Office Manager, Civil and Environmental Engineering
Haines, Helen C (HH)	Education Office Manager, Mathematics
Harbert, Nicole (NH)	Teaching Operations Manager, Bioengineering
Kaiserman, Antoine (AK**)**	Timetabling Officer, Mathematics
Laskey, Peter (PL)	Examination Timetabling Manager, CTSO
Macdonald Robert (RM)	Programme Officer (Assessment), Faculty of Medicine
Mullin, Melanie (MM)	Centre Manager, CLCC
O'Connor, Louise E (LOC)	Timetabling Manager, Business School
O'Neill, Jackie (JO)	Undergraduate Office Manager, Aeronautics
Phillips, Iain C C (IP)	Senior Lecturer, Computing
Power, Philip W (PP)	Head of Education & Student Experience Strategy, Faculty of Engineering
Rahim, Momo (MR)	Senior UG & PG Administrator, Design Engineering
Sandhu, Raj (RS)	Admissions & Exams Administrator, Chemistry
Singh, Tershia (TS)	Student Office Administrator, Materials
Smith, Rebecca A (RS)	Undergraduate Education Manager, Earth Science & Engineering
Smith Helena (HS)	Director of Central Timetabling, Registry
Stewart, Derryck L (DS)	Education Manager, Physics
Stoakes, Emma (ES)	Exams & Assessment Manager, Business School
Tite, Jo (JoT)	Postgraduate Education Coordinator, School of Public Health
Urubusi, Victor (VU)	Examination and Information Officer, Physics
Varleigh, Anique C (AV)	Head of Exams & Assessment, Business School
Vera-Valderrama, Conchi (CVV)	CfAE Administrator, Education Office

Apologies:

Harris, Chris D (CH)	Head of Programme Management, Faculty of Medicine Centre
Howard, Josie Ann (JH)	Senior Undergraduate Administrator, Mechanical Engineering
Middleton, Rebecca J (RM)	Faculty Education Manager, Faculty of Natural Sciences
Ni Dhonnabhain, Fionnuala (FN)	General & PG Office Manager, Civil & Environmental Engineering
Owens, Joanna (JO)	MSc Administrator, Earth Sciences and Engineering
Pocsova, Dominika (DP)	Senior Undergraduate Administrator, Mechanical Engineering
Russell, Veronica L (VR)	Director, Education Quality, Business School
Symmonds, Samantha (SS)	Postgraduate Education Manager, Earth Sciences and Engineering
Trick, Jemma (JeT)	Education Coordinator, National Heart & Lung Institute

ETUG Chair	**Helena Smith**
Minutes	**Peter Laskey**

#	Item Description	Action
1	**Welcome and Matters Arising**	
	1. HS acknowledged a big part of ETUG's usual focus is space but now switched to online assessments, exam software, ICT, policy etc and encouraged members to call on CTSO resource or inform us if struggling with exams.	
	2. Previous meeting's minutes were agreed.	
	3. HS went through Action Tracker' items from 2019-20 meetings. Some ongoing actions remain 'on hold' due to the move from on-campus to remote assessments, including revisiting the Exam TT policy publication timelines.	
2	**Summer 2020 (Remote Assessments)**	
	ICU Student Feedback	
	4. PL presented a handful of questions and responses, acknowledging positive student responses around: exam comms, opportunities to trial TRAs and to TRAs overall from students. Although TRAs were not deemed any less stressful than on-campus exams.	
	5. Student comments included difficulties with uploading assessments, remote exam environment, technology, fellow student conduct and inflexible time slots (time zones).	
	6. Future suggestions included more opportunities to trial TRAs and receiving exam announcements via email. ICU plan to re-survey students on TRAs following Dec/Jan exam period.	
	7. HS asked if ICU plan to do anything further with feedback other than sharing. PL unaware but will follow-up and provide further survey questions. Members to send any ICU survey question suggestions to PL, ahead of Dec/Jan exam period.	PL
	8. PL to circulate ICU Summer TRAs feedback following dept request.	PL
	Policy	
	Conducting Online Assessments 2020-21	
	9. PL reminded members of Summer TRAs staff feedback areas around policy and work underway with Quality Assurance to produce policy document addressing concerns.	
	10. PL advised this was one of three documents being produced by College to assist with upcoming TRA's. Pedagogy guidance was being finalised at ESOG (Education) level and Technical guidance via the Ed Tech Guild.	
	11. PL outlined areas of 'Conducting Online Assessments 2020-21' policy and purpose to provide College steer for depts and shape best practice but this was an evolving document with feedback encouraged during the academic year. PL to re-survey staff following Dec/Jan TRAs and discuss policy improvements at next ETUG meeting. LGi: If approved, can policy be circulated around dept, as guidance now being sought ahead of Dec/Jan exam period. AV: Policy due to be updated as Business School raised issue with assessment format point (2.11).	PL
	12. PL advised this was resolved in discussion with QA team, policy to be updated and re-circulated. PL to inform group when latest policy available for local circulation.	PL

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13. LGi highlighted DAS AEA guidance for TRA's circulated by Registry and whether updated 2020-21 guidance was available. MR & AV received guidance in April ahead of Summer exams, having clarified applying extra time to submission time.

14. PL to follow-up with Dan Todhunter (Student Records) for latest guidance and share with ETUG group for Dec/Jan exams. To be incorporated into policy following this. — **PL**

> MR: On policy item 2.8, the submission/upload window states up to 60 mins and sought policy rationale. Design Eng had amended window to 45 mins from 30 mins following academic testing.

> PL - Sector-wide seemed to indicate up to 60 mins in place and therefore decided upon.

> LG: Feel dept discretion required as 30 mins employed in Civil Eng and leeway should be available to depts up to 60 mins. 60 mins deemed too long given dept resource monitoring submissions post-exams.

> HS: Does this lead to discrepancies for students sitting in TRA's across different depts and inconsistent exam experience.

> JO: Has any data been collated from depts on submission timings? Varying times across depts seems unfair to students, lack of consistency

> VU: Physics employed 20 to 40 mins submission/upload time. Must take into consideration of extra timers where 60 mins given, as potentially more time created for students to continue writing.

> LGi: Dept discretion used and 45 mins in place within Life Sciences to cover scanning multiple papers (mostly essay-based and large files), which can impact submission if short on time.

> AV: ESOG (Education) debated 15 to 60 mins but with different dept exam platforms existing, an agreement to operate 'up to 60 mins' flexible submission time covering all scenarios and variations was approved.

> HS : Still some disparity that students may not understand, may need to make clearer in comms why different submission times exist.

15. Maths advised to use 30 mins as planned for upcoming assessment (policy states up to 60 mins).

> RA: Exam timetabling affected if agreeing one submission time e.g. 2 exams per day (AM/PM sessions) plus extra timers etc will affect managing submissions post-exam (within dept resources) and impact should be considered.

16. PL/HS to take away submission time comments and investigate/discuss further with QA team. — **PL/HS**

2020-21

Dec/Jan – Exam Timetabling, Publishing

17. PL outlined intention to continue collating exam requirements this year (although no rooming process required) for wider College-level awareness and to assist ICT plan any support required during exam periods.

18. Exam TT policy would indicate 1st week Jan exams would require exam TT published by last week Oct. However, depts at different levels with meeting this and policy to be reviewed in future. ICU recently highlighted exam TT publishing dates remain a common student query so will continue to look at any blockers for depts.

LG: UG exam TT nearly there and easier without rooming aspect however start of term activities and this year's teaching adjustments still had impact on delivering exam TT.

MR: Academic Term 2 timetable to include Jan exam TT and be released mid-Nov (if suitable).

DS: Provisional Summer exam TT available before Xmas although elective choices still open until end of Term 2. Students advised to have back-up elective in case of exam clash, as difficulties quarantining exam clash students. Need to think about planning student choices alongside exam timetabling to aid student planning and exam timetable output.

HS: Lead time for exam TTs undermined by flexibility with elective options.

DS: Had positive student feedback on earlier Summer exam TT release (provisional) but students still preferred quarantine option if keeping elective choices open and finding exam clashes. College encourages students to take modules outside home depts but this requires more planning across depts to all provide provisional exam TTs.

JO: Provisional exam TTs difficult to produce amongst traditional activities and additional complexity for SEQ depts who co-ordinate space together.

19. PL reiterated CTSO support was available for depts towards exam timetabling or Celcat exam events, including adding students/groups to exam events to publish exam TTs via Celcat.   **Depts**

Celcat

Event Categories

20. PL outlined the 'Remote Assessment' event category being used last Summer and other online exam/assessment options available. These include 'Online Assessment', 'Assessment – Online', 'Examination – Online'. Depts were asked what their preferred event category was for this year's TRA's.

21. Majority indicated 'Remote Assessment' should remain as the preferred/familiar choice but 'Assessment – Online', 'Examination – Online' are also useful for different scenarios (e.g. marks/credit available). It was felt 'Online Assessment' was no longer required.

22. PL to discuss removing 'Online Assessment' event category with Simon Nesbitt after checking College use.   **PL**

3	**AOB**	

Policy/Guidance Release

23. JO commented that policy/guidance docs should be finalised before start of term to help operational preparations due soon.

24. HS agreed with feedback and although some leeway given this year, operational implications need to be considered when making policy changes.

Exam Timings (Horizons)

25. MM asked how depts are managing time zone issues when scheduling exam start times, as Horizons struggled with their traditional 4-6pm timeslot for exams in April, particularly students in China. Difficult managing this for students across various depts. Horizons looking to use traditional March exam dates but timing TBC.

LGi: 10am or 11am start time planned again, long day taking into account extra timers, monitoring inboxes. Difficult to choose best time but canvassed students and asked students with worst scenarios to submit mit circs.

MR: Brought forward to 1pm from 2pm and 90 min PM exam durations only. Had also canvassed student reps regarding start times/time zones.

26. MM Horizons March exam slot decision has impact/implications on other dept teaching, (so many subjects involved). MM will take start time advice to colleagues and discuss further. PL offered support if further investigation required with depts on suitable exam slot.

Student Exam Communications

27. MR asked whether the ICT phone number will remain in place for any student issues. Also, difficulty ascertaining whether a student query relates to all students and elegantly making an exam announcement to all students (rather than asking to monitor emails). Would be great to have College push notification system in future.

LGi: Dedicated exams inbox in place with 3 staff covering a lot of work, very busy. Some student issues went through dept phone set-up before James Andrewes contacted relevant person (rare). One exceptional case where ICT became involved.

VU: Did any other dept hand out a phone number for students to contact? Physics manned email inboxes but difficult to cover any phoneline too. Student feedback highlighted alternative dept contact if no internet connection (e.g. power outage).

JO: Teams meeting ran for each exam, min 5 people (academic, professional staff) involved and dedicated email inbox for queries. Kept in-house to deal with ICT issues as students could become frustrated looking elsewhere.

RA: Also managed inbox and ran live Teams chat to co-ordinate which staff dealt with various queries. Very labour intensive without invigilators. Is online proctoring being discussed at College-level to support this?

LG: No academic staff monitoring exams, difficult to achieve this. Dedicated email inbox used, most queries mild and students looking for reassurance. Academic staff there to answer academic queries only, very intense period for professional staff dealing with all queries.

HS: Interesting to see no. of/type of student queries but may be effort to collate. Sounds very labour intensive for specialist group of people (in lieu of invigilators) to manage exams. Understanding dept queries may assist with investigating online proctoring further.

28. HS commented a standardisation of exam platform delivery would improve experiences in future and release staff resource, should TRAs remain.

29. PL/HS to follow up with ICT on range of support available for Dec/Jan exams and collate dept exam support in place during Summer and types of queries where possible. | PL/HS

30. LG highlighted the stress, pressure involved for professional services staff running exams and not sure how far this was communicated across College at high-level.

31. PL advised this was picked up in Summer survey which appeared at ESOG (Education) but potentially lost amongst student-related headlines. PL to communicate any staff feedback to ESOG (Education) further following Dec/Jan exams. | PL

4	**Summary of actions from the meeting**	
	See ETUG Action Tracker	
5	**Future ETUG meetings**	

- Next planned 2020/21 ETUG meetings are:

    - Late Jan/early Feb (Discuss: Dec/Jan TRA feedback, March & Summer 2021 exam periods)

    - July 2021