BoS 14 July 2026

Tuesday, 14th July 2026 2:15pm

Teams | Faculty of Science Board of Studies

Attendees

Attended

Zoe Burke (ZB)
Andy Burrows [AD(E)]
Thomas Cottrell (TC)
Duncan Craig (Chair)
Susan Crennell (SC)
Sergey Dolgov (SD)
James Doughty (JD)
Marguerite Hallett (Secretary)
Amanda Harper
Matthew Jones (MJ)
Christina Keating (CK)
Zack Lyons (ZL)
Amanda Mackenzie (AM)
Penn Mackintosh (PM)
Charareh Pourzand
Philip Rogers (PR)
Tim Rogers (TR)
Gan Shermer (GS)
Carolin Villforth (CV)
Michael Wilson

Did Not Attend

Florin Bisset

Sumukh Chaluvaraju

Charlotte Dodson

Momna Hejmadi

Eamonn O'Neill

Dmitry Skryabin

David Tsang

Ventsislav Valev

Arya Wood

Partial Attendance

Fei Qin

Rhod Woodhouse

1.0 Welcome and Quorum (7927)

The Chair welcomed members, noted apologies for absence, and confirmed that the meeting was quorate.
The Chair noted that this would be MW's final meeting as Faculty of Engineering and Design (Department of Mechanical Engineering) representative, following three years of service on the Board. The Chair thanked MW for their valuable contribution and commitment during this time. MW will be succeeded by Nick McCullen from the Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering.
The Chair also noted that this would be FQ's final meeting as the School of Management (SoM) representative, having served on the Board for the past nine years. The Chair thanked FQ for their longstanding contribution. FQ will be succeeded by Julie Lewis from the SoM.
Finally, the Chair noted that this would also be the final meeting for the student representatives, PM, AW and SC, and thanked them for their contributions to the Board throughout the academic year.

2.0 Declarations of Interest (7928)

The Board noted that RW has a conflict of interest with the continuing results, so will only attend the Open Business part of the meeting.

3.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (7929)

The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 July 2026 (Paper 199).

4.0 Matters Arising (7930)

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

5.0 Chair's Business (7931)

The Chair acknowledged the significant effort that had gone into the assessment process over the academic year. He recognised the considerable commitment shown by students in preparing for their assessments, as well as the substantial work undertaken by academic and professional services staff in marking, moderating and coordinating the assessment process.

6.0 Board of Studies Appeal Hearing Panel Members (7932)

The Board approved the Board of Studies Appeal Hearing panel members, in line with Regulation 17 (Paper 200).

7.0 Semester 2 Scaling Report and Errors in Examination Papers (7933)

The Board considered the Semester 2 2025-26 Scaling Report and the Report on Errors in Examination Papers, noting that the Faculty has been working towards a steady reduction in both. The Chair reminded the Board that, in accordance with QA35, scaling should be used only in exceptional circumstances rather than routinely, and emphasised the importance of minimising errors in examination papers through appropriate quality assurance processes.
The Chair noted that there had been 12 instances of scaling in Semester 2 (compared to 10 in Semester 2 last year); 0 in Chemistry (1 last year), 1 in Computer Science (2 last year), 4 in Life Sciences (3 last year), 6 in Mathematical Sciences (2 last year) and 1 in Physics (2 last year). In addition, there were 104 units with atypical means that were not scaled, compared with 85 last year.
PM noted that a number of the scaled units were marked 'N' under 'Scaling note exists for year'. The Secretary advised that this was likely because the report had been generated before the scaling notes had been added to SAMIS.
Action: Secretary to check that a scaling note had been added to SAMIS for all scaled units.
Secretary's note: This action was completed immediately following the meeting.
The Board noted that 16 examination papers had contained reported errors during the semester, a higher number than in the corresponding period of the previous three years, and that further errors were likely to be identified during the supplementary examination period.
The Chair acknowledged that, while the Faculty's objective remained to reduce both the use of scaling and the incidence of examination paper errors, some year-on-year variation was to be expected. He emphasised the importance of robust quality assurance processes to minimise the need for scaling, including learning from instances where scaling had been applied and ensuring that appropriate mitigations were implemented in subsequent years. He also highlighted the Faculty's Policy on Examination Paper Scrutiny and invited members to consider whether any amendments could strengthen existing arrangements to help minimise examination paper errors. Although most errors were relatively minor, he noted that they could nevertheless cause distress to students and undermine the Faculty's academic credibility.
TR suggested that the Faculty explore investing in a suitably powerful local computing resource to run a Large Language Model (LLM) on Faculty premises. This could provide an additional confidential screening process for examination papers, particularly to identify typographical errors in equations. TR emphasised that such a tool would complement, rather than replace, existing scrutiny processes by providing an additional automated check. The Chair agreed that this approach was worth exploring but cautioned that simply adding further layers of checking might not necessarily improve scrutiny, as there was a risk that individuals could become overly reliant on other checks and therefore review papers less thoroughly.
CV supported exploring the use of LLMs or similar automated tools to assist with examination

paper checking, particularly for lengthy mathematical calculations where small errors, such as an incorrect sign, could lead to incorrect solutions and might be difficult for human reviewers to detect.
The Board agreed that further work would be required to determine how best to implement such an approach. The AD(E) reported that he was not aware of any institutional plans to introduce automated examination paper checking. He suggested that the matter could be explored collaboratively with the Faculty of Engineering and Design, where such tools might have broader application than in the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences or the School of Management.
GS commented that, if some form of central or automated examination paper checking were introduced, it should not result in the examination-setting deadline being brought forward. She considered that a significant cause of both examination paper errors and scaling was insufficient time for question setters to reflect carefully on the level and design of examination questions.
Action: The Chair and AD(E) agreed to explore the use of computational methods to identify typographic errors in examination papers, particularly in equations, taking into account logistical considerations, the respective roles of Faculties and central services, and the need to avoid any change to the examination-setting deadline.
PR reported, as noted in the report, that he had checked a printed examination paper which was correct and remained correct when printed locally (both at Bath and Plymouth) for students with DAPs. However, when the paper was printed by Print Services, the equations failed to print, possibly owing to differences in printer drivers. In light of this, PR proposed amending paragraph 10 of the Faculty's Policy on Examination Paper Scrutiny to require examination papers uploaded to Print Services via the Skyline portal to be submitted as PDF files rather than Word documents, and for departments to check the final printed version delivered to the Examinations Office.
Action: The AD(E) agreed to review the Faculty's Policy on Examination Paper Scrutiny accordingly and invited members to notify him of any further amendments that should be made to the policy.
PM noted that the report indicated that several minor examination paper errors had not been communicated to students. He argued that, even where no student had been disadvantaged, it was important for staff to acknowledge such errors and apologise, as this promoted transparency and maintained students' confidence in the assessment process. PR supported this view, observing that open communication about errors helped to reassure students.
The Chair acknowledged concerns that notifying students of minor errors with no material impact might encourage appeals or complaints. Nevertheless, he agreed that acknowledging mistakes openly, even where they had not affected outcomes, helped to build trust and reinforce confidence in the assessment process.
TC reported that, for very minor typographical errors, the Department of Mathematical Sciences had communicated only with the student(s) who had identified the error, rather than notifying the entire cohort, in order to avoid causing unnecessary concern. The Chair noted that the timing of communications was also important, particularly avoiding emails about examination paper errors during the examination period wherever possible. GS commented that, where an error had gone unnoticed by students (e.g. detected during marking) and had made no material difference to outcomes, issuing a message to the entire cohort could cause unnecessary concern. However, where even one student had identified the error, it was preferable to notify the whole cohort to ensure that all students received consistent information and to avoid misinformation spreading through informal channels.
TR stated that Directors of Studies should be trusted to exercise their judgement when deciding how errors in examination papers were communicated, given their knowledge of the circumstances. The Chair cautioned that inconsistent approaches across departments could be problematic, particularly for Natural Sciences students.
Action: The Chair and AD(E) agreed to develop a set of principles, for the Board's approval, to guide departments on the communication of errors in examination papers to students.
JD reported, as noted in the report, that the Department of Life Sciences had been asked by a student with colour blindness, who did not have a DAP, to make an examination paper more accessible, which required additional labelling of a figure. Although the Department prepared an

accessible version, the Examinations Office made it available only to students with DAPs. As a result, the student was unable to answer the relevant question. The Board noted that, under the new Procedure for Making Adjustments to Learning, Teaching and Assessment, such accessibility adjustments should be incorporated into examination papers for all students where appropriate, rather than being restricted to students with DAPs.

8.0 Any Other Business (7934)

PM thanked the Board for its engagement with him over the past year. The Chair thanked PM for his valuable contribution to the Board and wished him, together with the other student representatives, every success in their future careers.