

BoS 16 September 2026

Wednesday, 16th September 2026 2:15pm

Teams | Faculty of Science Board of Studies

Attendees

Attended

Andy Burrows [AD(E)]
Duncan Craig (Chair)
Susan Crennell (SC)
Sergey Dolgov (SD)
James Doughty (JD)
Marguerite Hallett (Secretary)
Amanda Harper
Matthew Jones (MJ)
Christina Keating (CK)
Julie Lewis (JL)
Zack Lyons (ZL)
Amanda Mackenzie (AM)
Nick McCullen
Charareh Pourzand
Tim Rogers (TR)
Philip Rogers (PR)
Gan Shermer (GS)
Ventsislav Valev (VV)
Carolyn Villforth (CV)
Rhod Woodhouse

Did Not Attend

Florin Bisset
Zoe Burke
Thomas Cottrell
Charlotte Dodson
Eamonn O'Neill
Dmitry Skryabin
David Tsang

1.0 Welcome and Quorum (7941)

The Chair welcomed members, noted apologies for absence, and confirmed that the meeting was quorate. The Chair welcomed in particular new members Nick McCullen, as new Faculty of Engineering and Design representative, and Julie Lewis, as new School of Management representative.

2.0 Declarations of Interest (7942)

There were no declarations of any potential conflicts of interest.

3.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (7943)

The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 July 2026 (Paper 1).

4.0 Matters Arising (7944)

The Board noted the following matters arising from the previous minutes:

M7933 Semester 2 Scaling Report and Errors in Examination Papers:

1. The Department of Computer Science has been awarded Faculty TDF funding to develop and pilot, in 2026/27, a Large Language Model (LLM) to identify grammatical and typographic errors in examination papers, e.g. inconsistent numbering and incorrect equations. The examination papers will be processed locally so they do not leave the institution. The Board agreed that examination papers checked using AI should subsequently be checked by human checkers in accordance with departments' normal checking procedures. ZL reported that the funding included an evaluation of the reliability of the AI in detecting errors, including identifying any instances of AI hallucination and assessing whether the additional AI check might lead to complacency in the subsequent human checking process.

The Chair suggested that staff who repeatedly make errors in examination papers should either be moved away from that responsibility or provided with appropriate support, encouragement and motivation, using whatever measures may be effective, to prevent such errors from recurring.

2. The AD(E) has reviewed, for the Board's approval, the Faculty's Policy on Examination Paper Scrutiny (Paper 2).

The AD(E) reported that the Policy has been revised in response to a suggestion made at the previous Board meeting that it should include a post-print quality check. The Board noted that the Policy specified that responsibility for the post-print quality check rests with the Unit Convenor. It was agreed that the Faculty's Unit Convenor job description should be updated to reflect this.

Secretary's note: This was actioned immediately following the meeting.

The AD(E) reported that the Faculty's Unit Convenor job description had been shared with the CLT who are in the process of creating an institution-wide Unit Convenor job description. The Board noted that, where the Unit Convenor is unavailable, responsibility for carrying out the post-print quality check may need to be delegated to the Director of Studies (DoS).

The Board agreed that a post-print quality check was important, given that printing errors had occurred in the past. It was noted that, on one occasion, changes made to a PDF were not reflected in the printed examination paper, with the original base layer of the PDF being printed instead. On another occasion, an error in the Print Service's print settings resulted in an examination paper being printed incorrectly. However, the Board noted that conducting a post-print quality check before the full batch of examination papers is printed will be time constrained,

particularly in Semester 2, and will require coordination between the Print Service, Programme Administrator and Unit Convenor.

The Board also agreed that, once the post-print quality check had been completed by the Unit Convenor, their responsibilities in relation to the examination paper would end. Responsibility for the subsequent running of the examination, including ensuring that any specific requirements, such as the provision of graph paper, had been actioned by the Exams Office, would not rest with the Unit Convenor.

It was suggested that a naming convention be introduced for electronic copies of examination papers to clearly identify the most up-to-date version and distinguish between papers intended for students in DAP venues.

It was suggested that the Print Unit should be responsible for checking that the examination paper printed is identical to the version submitted to them. However, the Board noted that the Print Service is particularly busy during the examination paper printing period.

The Board noted that the Policy strongly encourages Unit Convenors to set supplementary examination papers at the same time as the main examination paper, to allow sufficient time for setting, checking and conducting the post-print quality check before staff take summer leave.

The Policy has also been updated to align with the proposed amendments to Rule 2, which are to be considered under agenda item 7. These amendments had been developed in response to recent examination paper errors and findings from the internal audit.

The revised Rule 2 now includes requirements relating to the checking of examination papers, including a post-print quality check. The Policy had therefore been amended to reflect the revised Rule 2, including the following requirements:

- Registry will provide standard templates for both examination papers and instruction sheets, which are to be used by all.
- Following internal and external moderation and prior to printing, a member of staff other than the Unit Convenor will be nominated by the Head of Department to provide final approval. The Department will record the name of the person providing final approval and the date on which approval was given. This record must be retained for 12 months from the date of the examination sitting.

The Chair reported that the University Executive Board (UEB) had also discussed examination paper errors, noting in particular concerns that such errors may have a detrimental impact on NSS results and that some incidents had received press coverage. The Board noted that the Faculty sets a larger number of examinations each year than the other Faculties / School. It was also noted that the nature of Science unit content, which often involves complex numerical and technical material, including formulae, indices and coding, may increase the risk of errors being overlooked during the examination paper checking process.

3. The AD(E) had developed, for the Board's approval, a flowchart to guide departments on the communication of errors in examination papers to students (Paper 3).

The Board agreed that the flowchart should include a requirement for departments to notify the Dean, AD(E) and FAR of any significant error within 24 hours of its identification.

Secretary's note: This was actioned immediately following the meeting.

The AD(E) reported that he and the Secretary are members of the newly formed Examination Paper Preparation Task and Finish Group, chaired by the PVC(E), which will review related QA processes for 2027/28. It was suggested that the Task and Finish Group consult colleagues who act as External Examiners at other institutions to identify good practice in examination paper checking, including, for example, tracking systems used to monitor examination papers throughout the setting and checking process. It was also suggested that a representative from Print Services join the Task and Finish Group to provide technical insights that might prove valuable.

Secretary's note: The AD(E) raised these suggestions with the PVC(E) immediately following the meeting.

5.0 Board of Studies Terms of Reference and Membership 2026/27 (7945)

The Board noted that the minor changes it had identified as necessary to its Terms of Reference last year, as detailed in tracked changes in Appendix 2, had been submitted to Governance at the time but had not been actioned. The Board also noted that reference to Academic Programmes Committee should be amended to Academic Portfolio Strategy Group (APSG) with effect from November 2026.

Secretary's note: These matters had been brought to the attention of Governance prior to the meeting.

6.0 Chair's Business (7946)

- National Student Survey (NSS) and the University's UK league position:

The Chair noted that this year's NSS results were mixed, with strong performance in some areas but disappointing results in others. The Chair acknowledged that Curriculum Transformation had contributed to some student dissatisfaction, and such issues should not recur.

The Chair cautioned that maintaining the University's position among the UK's top 10 universities should not be taken for granted, particularly as other institutions were also improving their NSS performance. The AD(E) is developing guidance to support departments in improving NSS scores going forward.

The Chair thanked departments for enabling the early release of examination results and noted the positive feedback received from students, although this had not resulted in as much improvement in NSS scores as had been anticipated. The Chair noted, however, that some relatively straightforward aspects of the student experience remained inconsistent, such as ensuring that marking criteria are clearly communicated to students. The Chair emphasised the importance of addressing such preventable issues and avoiding unnecessary sources of student dissatisfaction. HoDs and DoTs were asked to work closely with the AD(E) to ensure that measures to prevent student dissatisfaction were reviewed and strengthened in advance of the coming academic year.

The AD(E) noted that quality of feedback was an area in which the University and Faculty performed disproportionately less strongly in the NSS, particularly in relation to the extent to which feedback helped students to learn. Providing timely, high-quality feedback that enables students to improve their performance in subsequent assessment should therefore be a key priority. The AD(E) also identified communication with students as an area where relatively straightforward improvements could be made. It was noted that some departments had achieved significant improvements in their student voice scores in recent years through effective communication and by ensuring that feedback loops were closed. The AD(E) further noted the disproportionate negative impact that incorrect or poor communication by individual staff can have on the student experience. HoDs were therefore asked to reinforce the importance of professionalism and ensure that staff consistently meet their responsibilities, particularly in relation to communication with students and the implementation of agreed processes.

JL noted that students' understanding of what constitutes feedback could also be an important factor in NSS responses. She reported that research undertaken at Imperial had found that, although students were receiving good-quality feedback, they did not always recognise it as such, often associating feedback solely with written comments provided following a summative assessment. In practice, valuable feedback was also being provided through interactions with tutors and lecturers in the classroom, which helped students to improve their performance. JL suggested that clearer communication with students about what constitutes feedback, when they receive it and how they can use it could help students to recognise the range of feedback available to them. JL noted that there may also be opportunities to communicate more effectively with students about the positive practices and initiatives already taking place across

the Faculty, ensuring that students are aware of the support and opportunities available to them. The AD(E) agreed that there was an opportunity to improve students' understanding of feedback from the outset of their studies. He suggested that this should be addressed as part of induction, particularly for first-year students who may arrive with expectations shaped by their experience of A-level study, where feedback is often provided in more structured and specific ways. The AD(E) noted that feedback and learning at degree level should support students to develop greater independence and make continued progress, rather than replicate approaches used at school or college. It was therefore suggested that students should be explicitly introduced to the different forms and purposes of feedback at university and supported in understanding how to use feedback to inform their future learning and assessment.

The Chair noted the value of addressing student expectations at Faculty level rather than waiting for central guidance. He suggested that proactive management of expectations from the outset could be more effective than responding retrospectively to areas of poor performance. This could include targeted activity as part of induction and specific guidance for final-year students to ensure that expectations around feedback, assessment and the student experience are clearly understood.

The Board supported the proposal to enhance communication on feedback with students, including through induction. It was suggested that responsibility for coordinating and managing student communications within departments should be assigned to a designated member of staff, e.g. Student Support Officers, rather than adding this responsibility to the existing workload of DoSs. This would allow for more consistent and effective communication, including through departmental communication channels and targeted contributions to induction sessions.

Secretary's note: Immediately following the meeting, the AD(E) suggested to the Student Experience Manager, who line manages the Student Support Officers (SSOs), that the SSOs take responsibility for coordinating and managing communications with students regarding feedback, in liaison with the AD(E) and departments.

GS suggested that enhanced communication on feedback should be developed centrally rather than separately by each department. GS highlighted there are already useful resources available from other institutions, including a set of student and staff co-created videos from King's College on understanding feedback and supporting students to respond constructively when they do not understand it. Such resources could help students understand the different forms and purposes of feedback at university and provide practical guidance on how to seek clarification from academic staff. GS suggested that existing resources should be reviewed and, where appropriate, adapted for use at Bath, rather than developing materials from scratch.

- HoDs' Exams Assurance Checklist:

The Chair reminded HoDs to email the BoS secretary their signed Exams Assurance Checklist, for the Supplementary Examination Period. The Board noted that the PVC(E) had emailed HoDs on 6 August a checklist for HoDs to review and sign-off at BECs. HoDs were asked to use the checklist to trial the post-print check for the Supplementary Examination Period in August 2026 and to embed the full checklist within local processes for the 2026/27 examination cycle. Signed checklists are to be submitted to BoS for consideration on a discussion by exception basis, before being formally approved by the Dean. Approved checklists must then be sent to the PVC(E) on 27 November 2026, 5 March 2027 and 9 July 2027.

- Exam Error Report for the Supplementary period (Paper 4A):

The Chair suggested that an analysis be undertaken of the types and severity of errors occurring. The AD(E) noted that the total number of units for which examination errors had been reported during Semester 2 and supplementary assessment periods was higher for the corresponding period in each of the previous three years.

The Board noted that, of the five errors occurring during the supplementary assessment period, only two related to typographical errors in the examination paper itself. The remaining three related to examination arrangements: one examination contained incorrect instructions regarding which questions students were required to answer; in one incident, students were issued the Semester 1 examination paper instead of the supplementary examination paper; and one incident involved a failure to adhere to the assessment pattern published on the online unit catalogue.

The Chair encouraged members to review the Report and identify which errors could

reasonably have been prevented. The Chair also asked HoDs to ensure that staff follow the University's quality assurance guidance, including the Faculty's Policy on Examination Paper Scrutiny, Rule 2, and the flowchart for communicating examination paper errors to students. TR reported that a post-print check is normal practice in the Department of Mathematical Sciences, whereby the Admin team checks the post-print versions against the signed-off checking copies. TR also reported that during the recent Supplementary Examination Period students had been issued with a Semester 1 examination paper instead of the supplementary examination paper, as the Admin team had inadvertently sent the wrong paper for printing, and it appears had not invited the Unit Convenor to check. The Board noted that this should not occur again, as the Faculty's Policy on Examination Paper Scrutiny now requires responsibility for the post-print quality check to rest with the Unit Convenor, or the Director of Studies if the Unit Convenor is unavailable. The HoDs' Exams Assurance Checklist also specifies that this responsibility rests with the Unit Convenor or DoS.

7.0 Rule 2 Conduct of Examinations 2026/27 (7947)

The Board considered the proposed updates to Rule 2 for 2026/27 (Paper 5), in particular in relation to examination paper checking. The Board noted that its view was sought on 4 matters detailed in paragraph 3.4 and was asked to answer questions detailed in paragraph 4.2.

Paragraph 3.4:

1) Online exams only delivered remotely. The Board noted that there is no central capacity available to safely deliver and invigilate online examinations in PC labs. Therefore examinations covered by Rule 2 can only be a) online, remote and un-invigilated (Inspira) or b) in-person and paper-based, invigilated. If departments wish to run invigilated online examinations, these need to be arranged as in-class tests.

2) Is a member of staff nominated by the Head of Department the right approver, and is 12-month retention of the record sufficient?

The Board noted that this would require coordination between the Head of Department, Programme Administrator and Unit Convenor. The Board suggested that 2 years' retention might be more appropriate in case of appeals / OIA cases.

3) Is the proposed threshold for the definition of a significant error proportionate and complete?

The Board noted that the flowchart for communicating examination paper errors to students would include a requirement for departments to notify the Dean, AD(E) and FAR of any significant error within 24 hours of its identification. This will enable an informal investigation to take place, as is already current practice, since departments normally inform the AD(E) and FAR of such errors. The outcome of the investigation is reflected in the explanation and agreed remedial action recorded in the annual report.

4) Is confirmation to Registry, with a list of unconfirmed examinations, workable within Faculty processes and Inspira deadlines? The Board could not envisage this being problematic but agreed that it should be brought to the attention of the Taught Programmes Team.

Paragraph 4.2:

- Does the process-led structure make the Rule easier to understand and apply?

- Is the level of detail right for a Rule, or should any part sit in the operational procedures?

The Board was broadly in agreement that the process-led structure makes the Rule easier to understand and apply, and that the level of detail was appropriate. However, the Board noted that the effectiveness of the revised structure and level of detail would ultimately need to be tested through its application during 2026/27, with the resulting impact and experience reviewed and assessed.

- Is the position stated for errors identified during an examination the right minimum?

The Board agreed that a clear process should be established for situations where a significant error is identified during an examination that poses a risk to a large proportion of the examination, e.g. where all equations are incorrect, a formula sheet has not been provided, or graph paper is missing, to ensure a consistent and effective response, particularly where multiple examination venues are involved. The Chair suggested that the Unit Convenor should be available on call to respond to such situations.

8.0 Proposed changes to the approval of PGR Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) (7948)

The Board considered the proposal to transfer approval of PGR students appointed as GTA from BoS Doctoral to Faculty BoS (Paper 6). The Board noted that, in 2019, it had agreed to delegate the appointment of Student Teaching Assistants (STA) to departments, with the Board instead receiving an annual report on the use of STA throughout the year. The Board further noted that the Taught Programmes Team has been informed that QA9 forms should no longer be submitted to BoS Doctoral for approval.

9.0 Faculty Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (FRKEC) (7949)

The Board noted the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2026 (Paper 7). VV reported that the FRKEC had considered a paper proposing the re-establishment of personalised academic webpages, which had been discontinued by DDaT at short notice. There was broad support for the proposal, subject to the new format being secure and adequately supported by DDaT.

10.0 Faculty Executive Committee (7950)

The Board noted the minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2026 (Paper 8).

11.0 University Board of Studies (Doctoral) (7951)

The Board noted the minutes of the meetings held on 24 June (Paper 9A) and 22 July (Paper 9B) 2026.

12.0 Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings (7952)

The Board noted the minutes of the meetings held on:

Department of Computer Science: 20 July 2026 (Degree Apprenticeship) (Paper 9C).

Department of Life Sciences: Biology and Biochemistry: 13 May (PGT) (Paper 10A) and 15 July (PGT) (Paper 10B) 2026.

Department of Life Sciences: Pharmacy and Pharmacology: July (AP3T) (Paper 11A) and 6 July (PGT) (Paper 11B) 2026.

13.0 Any Other Business (7953)

There was none.