Curriculum Review

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Why now?

- Last major UG curriculum changes: 2003-4
  - 2015 TPR recommended more frequent review
  - Some incremental changes since then (mainly UG3) but no overall review
- Massive growth in student numbers (UG, MSc)
  - Some delivery systems becoming unsustainable
- Growth in staff, new areas of strength
  - Bottom-up course proposals, no overall view
- Mismatch between expectations/preparation of (some) MSc students and our offerings
Dealing with mismatch in MSc

• Changes to admissions process: underway
  – More School involvement (Ajitha, Boris, Kousha)
  – Clarifications to criteria, considering more updates
  – Closer scrutiny of admissions vs outcomes
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• Survey of student expectations: just finished
  – Some difficult/long-term issues
  – Some easy wins
  – Caveat: 39% response rate (131 students)
Survey: high-level points

- Respondents appreciate our research focus
  - 98% said learning about "cutting-edge ideas and recent research" is important/very important goal.
  - Many praised these aspects of our courses/lecturers
  - Caveat: non-respondents may be different...
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• Most common (curriculum) difficulties:
  – too much work/too little time
  – problems with expected level of mathematics
  – exam clusters/want feedback in December
Immediate actions

• Landing page with guidance about maths prep
  – send over the summer
  – pointers to tutorials (ML, NLP available; others?)
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  - most MSc students will have 2-3 marks by Jan., including IJP and foundational courses for most popular areas.
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    including IJP and foundational courses for most
    popular areas.

• Consider short-term improvements to project
  allocation/supervision model.
MSc projects

• Do not require research! They do require
  – A chance to show “proficiency in research and/or analytical skills relevant to advanced work” (Uni)
  – “a significant project of research, investigation or development” (SCQF)
  – A chance to “deal with complex issues”, “demonstrate self-direction and originality”, “critical self-evaluation” (BCS)

• Do not require every student do a unique project; variations on a theme are fine.

• So, please think flexibly.
  – NB: IRP is now IPP (Informatics Project Proposal)
MSc projects: variations on a theme

• Won’t work for everyone, but may for some. Examples:
  – Build a machine translation system for language pair X-Y
  – Design a game to teach a specified security concept
  – Build an app for a specified task, add three of your own features
  – Pick a University web site and redesign it
  – Given a dataset/task, explore one method to solve it and compare to other students' choices.

• Could allow you to make fewer distinct proposals and/or hold some group meetings.
Longer term: UG and MSc

• Will convene curriculum review committee
  – Paul Anderson, Bjoern Franke, Nigel Goddard, Boris Grot, Don Sannella, Rik Sarkar
  – Volunteer from IPAB?

• Lots on the plate:
  – Review of pre-honours courses and UG degree structure (incl project supervision model)
  – Review of MSc structure (incl projects)

• Stay tuned for updates...