

Annual Meeting for Directors of Teaching & Senior Tutors

Monday 13 January 2025, 10am-1pm
Student Services Centre

About the annual meeting

Each year, CCTL convenes directors of teaching, senior tutors and colleagues supporting educational enhancement at Cambridge to share ideas, expertise and good practice, and to hear about and inform some of the collegiate University's larger conversations about undergraduate education. This year, we will focus on the Cambridge-wide [Teaching Review](#) and what this might mean for undergraduate education at Cambridge.

The objectives of the Review were to understand undergraduate Tripos student workload and to consider sustainability of the supervision system. A Task & Finish Group, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education with representatives from Schools, Colleges, the Cambridge Students' Union and Education Services, has been meeting since December 2023 to drive the outcomes of the Review and to provide oversight of key activities. One output of the Review is a set of Problem & Aim Statements, which are intended to make visible the work that has been identified by the Task & Finish Group and suggested future directions. Tripos teams have been invited to consider the extent to which these may be visible in their course (including any other issues that might be relevant to their own local context). Next steps will involve formulating recommendations, which will be completed in Lent Term 2025.

You can find here [a summary of work undertaken to date and resources relating to the Review](#).

In preparation for the annual meeting

The programme for the morning includes a workshop which will explore experiences, challenges and suggestions relating to the connections between College and Departmental teaching. If you would like to start to reflect on matters particularly relevant or salient in your context and your experience, please briefly review the appended information, 'Collaboration between Colleges and Departments'.

Please note: during the workshop we will use a web-based collaborative whiteboard programme, Miro. If possible, please bring your laptop or device for this workshop and ensure that it is fully charged in advance.

If you are not familiar with Miro, you may find it helpful to take a couple of minutes before the meeting to read the [guidance on using Miro](#).

Programme

10.00	Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr Meg Tait, Head of the Centre for Teaching & Learning
10.10	Panel: Plans and priorities for the coming year <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prof. Bhaskar Vira, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education• Katie Clark, Access, Education & Participation Officer (UG), Cambridge SU• Dr Andrew Spencer, Chair, Senior Tutors' Education Committee Questions & discussion
10.50	Panel: Teaching Review and implications for educational practices across the School of the Physical Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prof. Jessica Gwynne, Deputy Director of Education, School of the Physical Sciences and Director of Undergraduate Teaching, Department of Materials Science & Metallurgy• Associate Prof. Michael Tehranchi, Director of Undergraduate Education, Faculty of Mathematics Yusuf Hamied Department of Chemistry: A snapshot of gender awarding gap work to date and 2024-25 initiation of curriculum review project in Chemistry, including its relation to the University Teaching Review <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prof. Sally Boss, Teaching Professor of Chemistry• Prof. Deborah Longbottom, Director of Education, School of the Physical Sciences and Teaching Professor of Chemistry / Head of Graduate Education• Dr Nick Bampos, Deputy Head of Department Questions & discussion
11.35	Refreshments, conversations
12.00	Table-based workshop: Collaboration <p>Within the context of the Teaching Review, collaboration between Faculties / Departments and Colleges has been consistently emphasised as central to undergraduate education at Cambridge. This workshop will explore experiences of what works effectively and where challenges arise, and potentially how to address these. The outputs of this workshop will be shared with the Teaching Review Task & Finish Group and will help to inform their recommendations.</p>
12.55	Concluding remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr Meg Tait
13.00	Close

Appendix: addressing challenges to on-course equity in experiences & outcomes

Cambridge is proud of its teaching at both large (Faculty / Department) and small (College) scales. This appendix brings together:

- A selection of insights derived from the Teaching Review to date
- Direction of studies (DoS) and DoS committees: revised guidance
- Rationale for and purpose of supervision: draft text

Teaching Review insights

Throughout the work of the Teaching Review, the importance of increasing collaboration has been a consistent emphasis. Earlier in the year, the Task & Finish Group published a set of 'problem and aim statements'. These set out what have been identified as key underlying factors affecting student workload and the sustainability of the supervision system.

[Summary of work undertaken during the Teaching Review to date, with full set of problem and aim statements](#)

'Problem and aim statements'

Pair 2: Fragmentation

Problem	Aim
Course elements (lectures, supervisions, independent study) appear fragmented, without clear links, and seem to lack organisation. Students experience increase volume through conflicting deadlines, gaps and overlaps in content, and uncoordinated scheduling. There is a lack of clarity about who is doing what and why, and how it fits together.	Course elements are designed as a whole, with clear links between them. Communication between those delivering the different elements is streamlined and clear. Staff and students understand the purpose and timing of all parts of the course.

Pair 14: Supervisions (integration)

Problem	Aim
There is insufficient understanding and planning of how supervisions are integral to and support the learning outcomes of courses (e.g. necessary preparation, scheduling, content, etc).	The educational experience is articulated well and as a whole, with clear goals and purpose, which is visible to students and to their supervisors. Supervisors, students and course leaders have a clear understanding of what to expect, what is covered where, and how learning outcomes will be met and assessed.

The importance of collaboration was also raised during our Advisory Forums (Easter & Michaelmas):

- On academic practice: Sustainable academic practice needs to be jointly created at both Faculty and College level; Triposes should identify core skills and milestones for students and College staff to design more individualised development and delivery plans. We need to encourage and enable this cross-level discussion of academic practice and skills.

- On setting boundaries on teaching times: There is a need to ensure we break out of silos and agree what's "appropriate" collaboratively. This requires endorsement from both University and Colleges. We need to create a supportive culture, working in partnership.
- On articulating curricula: Effective devolution requires an overarching shared vision [across course teams].
- On teaching roles and responsibilities: The main role of both lecturers and supervisors is to support and enable learning, but with different foci. Lecturers have a more course-centred perspective, while supervisors take a student-centred or support perspective. Operational issues (such as poor communication or lack of understanding of who is who) hinder the realisation of these roles.

Direction of Studies and DoS committees: revised guidance

Directors of Studies and DoS Committees have a central role in ensuring collaborative approaches to undergraduate education at Cambridge. A [revised DoS role description](#) was approved by the Senior Tutors' Committee in Easter Term 2023. Revisions to the [Terms of Reference for these Committees](#) were introduced at the start of the current year to help support and reinforce this role, but there is more to do. We will be using the workshop as an opportunity to explore both the drivers and challenges of collaboration and to think about how these could be addressed.

Rationale for and purpose of supervision: draft

At its meeting of 22 November 2024, the Senior Tutors' Education Committee approved draft text setting out the purpose of supervisions, to be added to a range of University and College documentation. The aim of this is to formally restate the key principles of supervisions in an agreed, succinct manner across all sources. The final text will be considered by the Senior Tutors' Committee and the General Board's Education Committee in the Lent Term for approval. It is included here for information and to inform discussions.

Supervisions

Supervisions are intensive, flexible, and individualised teaching sessions which aim to support students to thrive intellectually and realise their full academic potential. They do this through providing opportunities to engage in collaborative and autonomous learning with peers and academic staff and for personal development. Supervisions rely on mutual respect between student and supervisor.

Supervisions are valuable because they help students to learn:

- how to question their assumptions
- how to structure and present arguments
- how to clarify and explore ideas and issues they have been taught
- how to organise their learning, and
- skills to develop as a scholar

Supervision work will vary widely, as it is based on the needs of individual students. Supervisors will be specialists in the subject area and will take student needs into account when setting work. Supervisors will design work which is complementary to and has a clear relationship with the published curricula for the course. As this work will vary, it is not required that written work must be set and marked at every supervision; work may take the form of close readings or discussion-based sessions on a topic, presentations, problems or examples sheets worked individually or as a group, or field-based sessions.

Collaboration workshop: Miro links

Table number	URL	QR code
Table 1	https://tinyurl.com/5xhs9az4	
Table 2	https://tinyurl.com/46w3cc9n	
Table 3	https://tinyurl.com/4phy9e9r	
Table 4	https://tinyurl.com/242wzwy6	
Table 5	https://tinyurl.com/vv7j3a2f	

Table 6	https://tinyurl.com/y4pr2ssp	
Table 7	https://tinyurl.com/yb4pz72e	
Table 8	https://tinyurl.com/4npjfysd	
Table 9	https://tinyurl.com/htxzf2w	
Table 10	https://tinyurl.com/2xjmk43n	