

Dear all,

I hope this message finds you well. I am sorry not to have been in touch sooner with an update on the Part III standard examination.

The Faculty recognises that it will inevitably become more difficult for you to prepare for the examination as time passes, and that this preparation will already pose a significant challenge for many of you who have taken up further study or employment. We are also aware that there are a number of you who wish to use the result of the examination to apply to PhD programmes for entry in 2021. For all these reasons it seems desirable to us to not postpone the examination beyond January 2021.

Consultations between the Faculty, the University and the Colleges concerning the possible arrangements for this examination are ongoing. The situation is complicated by a seeming resurgence of COVID-19 in many countries, but most pertinently in the UK (and on university campuses in particular). Whilst our original intention was to hold the examination in person in Cambridge, we are mindful that the current outlook means that it may be difficult for many of you to participate. For example, current rules require that many who came to the UK from abroad for this purpose would have to quarantine for two weeks prior to the start of the examinations, which would require an unreasonably long stay in the UK (potentially including the Christmas holiday period). We also have to consider that there is considerable ongoing uncertainty about what travel, even within parts of the UK, will be possible over the next few months, and that additional restrictions may be imposed at very short notice.

Taking all the above into account the Faculty has arrived at the view that the only way to guarantee the timing of and access to the examination, in the near future, whilst maintaining the required standards of rigour and integrity is to offer the examination **in early January** under **remote proctoring** (i.e. the conduct of each candidate is monitored online).

A remote proctoring arrangement was successfully used this summer for the Sixth Term Examination Paper (STEP), which candidates are required to take for admission to our undergraduate programme. The quality requirements of the STEP examination process are therefore comparable to those of the Part III exam, and we are satisfied that the outcome was an admissions process that fairly took account of the candidates' performance and ability.

If remote proctoring is to be used for the upcoming standard Part III examination, it is likely that we would want it to be used for all candidates regardless of their geographical location. Exam papers would also need to be sat simultaneously (or near-simultaneously) by all candidates irrespective of time zone, reducing the number of papers offered per day to one.

I understand that you will have many questions as to the details of the proposed arrangement, but I must ask for your patience until we are able to say more. I must also stress that **the intention expressed above regarding both format and timing of the examination remains subject to confirmation of viability and, importantly, University approval.**

To enable a more detailed assessment of feasibility, it would be extremely helpful if you could update us regarding your intention to sit this examination, in view of the outline above.

- **If you no longer wish to sit this examination**, please could you email undergraduate-office@maths.cam.ac.uk **by midnight on Thursday, 15th October 2020**. If you choose to withdraw your registration in this way, you will receive no further updates on the subject of the standard examination.
- **If you continue to be interested in sitting this examination**, please could you fill in the Google form at <https://forms.gle/yt4EtBXM3LbvQdqD8> **by midnight on Thursday, 15th October 2020**. This is particularly important if your circumstances have changed since July, or if you expect not to be able to travel to Cambridge for an examination in early January. Most questions on this form will be identical to those on the original registration form, but some will ask for more specific information. (Note that whilst we consider a remotely proctored examination as the best arrangement we have not yet concluded our discussions with the University and the questions on potential travel to Cambridge are relevant to these discussions.)

The tight deadline for responses has been set to allow us to have the most up-to-date information prior to submitting a formal proposal to the University's General Board's Education Committee by the end of next week. Do not worry if you are unable to fill in the form by the deadline—unless you formally withdraw by emailing undergraduate-office@maths.cam.ac.uk, you will remain on the list of students registered for the examination, and will be contacted with all further details.

We hope to be able to send a further update at the end of the month to confirm what may and what will not be possible.

With my best wishes to you all,
Julia

Dr Julia Wolf
Director of Taught Postgraduate Education
Faculty of Mathematics
University of Cambridge
[Email: director-tpe@maths.cam.ac.uk](mailto:director-tpe@maths.cam.ac.uk)