

**Joint Report of the Council and the General Board, dated 16 May and 27 April 2016, on  
the public display of class-lists and related matters (as revised by the Council's  
Notice of 11 July 2016)  
Ballot on Grace 3 of 13 July 2016**

***Placet fly-sheet***

The Grace on which this ballot has been called concerns the recommendation of the Council and the General Board that the practice of publicly displaying class-lists in any forum in the collegiate University should be discontinued. This does **not** mean the abolition of class-lists or of classing. We believe that publicly displaying class-lists is now undesirable, unnecessary, and without benefit to the proper business of the collegiate University. It no longer serves the purpose for which it was originally intended: students, and those with a legitimate interest in the performance of their students, can now access examination results via CamSIS. Publicly displayed class-lists allow details of individual students to be posted on social media, irrespective of whether a particular student wants his or her performance made known to the wider world. It is clear, from the opinions expressed by many students, Senior Tutors, and others who deal with students in difficulties, and the majority of the speakers at the Discussion on 7 June 2016, that public display of class-lists causes unnecessary stress. We accept that maintaining traditions is desirable when they benefit the collegiate University. We do not consider the public display of class-lists to be beneficial. We do not believe that it somehow represents a positive 'community experience' (as suggested by some speakers at the Discussion). Some have argued that the proposal undermines transparency. We do not accept this. Those with a legitimate interest in the performance of our students will not be disadvantaged by the proposal. We are committed to discussing further with Colleges, Faculties, and Departments how best to share data on examination results for legitimate academic purposes. Anonymized examination statistics will continue to be available (see <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/planning/sso/examinations/index.html>).

The proposal to cease the public display of class-lists was the result of a comprehensive consultation process involving the Colleges, Faculties and Departments, and student representatives, after the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education had received a petition from 1,200 current and former students. That process set out a range of possibilities and the implications of each. It deliberately did not promote the present proposal above other possibilities: but this proposal was, by a very considerable margin, the clear preference of respondents. Only one College and one Faculty supported the *status quo*. The consequent Report was subject to a very lengthy discussion on 7 June 2016 at which the strength of student opinion in favour of the proposal was manifest.

We should recognize the legitimacy of student choice in the use of their personal data. We should listen to our students and to those in the University and the Colleges who have to deal with students under the stress which arises from such publication. We urge you to vote ***Placet***.

C. ABELL  
P. M. ALLMENDINGER  
R. ANTHONY  
D. R. J. BAINBRIDGE  
I. BORZYM

J. L. CADDICK  
A. C. DAVIS  
E. V. FERRAN  
A. M. FULTON  
D. A. GOOD

P. N. HARTLE  
P. S. JOHNSTON  
F. E. KARET  
S. LAING  
H. M. M. LEES-JEFFRIES

M. LEWISOHN  
J. D. MCLARTY  
S. MARTIN  
M. J. MILLETT  
S. M. OOSTHUIZEN  
R. PADMAN

G. T. PARKS  
S. PEARCE  
J. SHAKESHAFT  
K. L. STOEBER  
H. E. THOMPSON  
G. J. VIRGO

S. WELLER  
I. H. WHITE  
M. R. WORMALD  
C. J. YOUNG

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***Non Placet* fly-sheet**

The Grace on which this ballot has been called seemingly concerns the recommendation by Council and the General Board that the public display of class-lists should be discontinued. But, the original proposal was extremely detailed (*Reporter*, 6426, 10 May 2016) including not only suppression of the class-lists but also the supply of mark books to Colleges, which would be anonymised save for the College's own students. Nor was it clear what the circulation of full mark books would be within departments. The Grace of 13 July is ambiguous regarding the implications for release of exam data to Colleges. It further seems clear from documentation circulated since, that there are now no detailed plans for transmission of exam data should the vote on 25 November endorse proposals to discontinue the posting of class-lists. As a result, members of Regent House are being asked to vote in favour of a proposal which lives in an information vacuum.

The only major argument put forward by the Placet campaign is that posting exam results outside the Senate-House causes a small minority of students unnecessary stress, a view endorsed by a petition to the VC signed by 1200 current and past students. But, in a subsequent referendum organised by CUSU, 55.23% of the 4,758 turnout of current students voted in favour of retaining publication of class being posted outside the Senate-House at the end of Easter term, but with a simpler route for students who wish to remove their name and results. CUSU is now campaigning for retention of publication.

It is clear that many students see the abolition of class-lists as depriving them of the public recognition of their achievements. In addition, without publicly available class-lists it will be much more difficult for employers, universities and the Press to verify the qualifications of particular individuals. There have been some high profile cases of fraudulent claims in recent years that have been refuted by those investigating having access to public class-lists. Moreover, university transcripts are easy to forge, as at least some Cambridge Colleges have found to their cost when admitting graduates from other universities. Hiding a student's poor results will not be helping them, we should prepare them to go out into the world. The results from many professional qualification examinations are still published. It is not possible in the majority of professions to conceal poor performance.

The Placet fly-sheet asserts that if the public display of class-lists is abolished then "*those with a legitimate interest in the performance of their students, can now access examination results via CamSIS*". Firstly, in a university which receives a substantial proportion of its funding from public sources, all those involved in teaching undergraduates have a legitimate interest in outcomes. Also, the suggestion that details of student examination performance are available to those who might benefit from having this information and can be accessed via CamSIS, is misleading. Authorisation to view records on CamSIS is currently highly restricted. Supervisors cannot access results of a student unless they are a Director of Studies at the same College. Even Directors of Studies cannot see results of their supervisees at other Colleges. It important for supervisors to know how their students from other Colleges perform on examinations. This has implications on a range of issues, from

deciding appropriate supervision pairings to writing reference letters for jobs and graduate education.

Sharing information between Colleges is essential for maintaining high standards in education. It allows Colleges to identify subjects where additional teaching support is needed, or where admissions procedures need to be revisited. It also enables Colleges to follow the progress of those pooled and taken by other Colleges. If data is not shared, statistical analysis of certain groups of students will become impossible even for Senior Tutors and Admissions Tutors – two important innovations in recent years in admissions have initially relied on work done by individual Admissions Tutors, with access not only to admissions data but also to outcomes. These are the use of UMS in assessing applications and the introduction of offers including A\*s at A level. The CAO has neither the time nor the manpower to conduct all of the desirable research into academic performance. It is particularly important in a period of uncertainty and change caused by the introduction of linear A levels and new admissions assessments that research into effective means of assessing undergraduates is carried out by as many qualified senior members of the University as are willing and able. Restricting access to exam data will thus not only reduce transparency but will also prevent effective selection of future students. The Placet fly-sheet states that “*Anonymized examination statistics will continue to be available (see <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/planning/sso/examinations/index.html>)*”, however these statistics are sufficient for only the most basic research. Given that the University's most high profile OFFA target concerns admissions from the Home Maintained sector, it is vital to be able to analyse results by College, subject, fees status, school type and gender – such analysis is not possible with the existing format of the Undergraduate Examination Statistics.

The students have now voted by an 11% margin to retain the class-lists, and we urge you also to vote ***Non Placet***.

D. S. H. ABULAFIA  
J. A. D. ASTON  
C. J. B. BROOKES  
C. P. CAULFIELD  
M. DAFERMOS  
N. DATTA  
M. L. DUNAJSKI  
J. L. EATWELL  
S. R. ELLIOTT  
A. R. FERSHT  
A. FLEET  
N. J. GAY  
R. E. GOLDSTEIN  
C. K. HADLEY  
Z. HADZIBABIC  
S. E. HAKENBECK  
E. M. HARPER  
D. R. HEWITT  
S. B. HOLDEN  
R. D. HOLDER

P. T. JOHNSTONE  
M. P. JUNIPER  
A. R. KELLS  
A. KOMASHIE  
M. H. KRAMER  
P. O. KRISTENSSON  
J. LASENBY  
H. N. LATTER  
M. D. S. LAZARUS  
I. B. LEADER  
D. LIANG  
J. R. LISTER  
G. J. MCSHANE  
J. E. MORGAN  
J. A. NEUFELD  
M. J. PERRY  
A. I. PESCI  
D. R. PRATT  
G. RANGWALA  
P. ROBINSON

J. E. SALE  
D. S. SECHER  
D. B. SKINNER  
M. C. SMITH  
RICHARD J. SMITH  
A. M. SPENCER  
F. M. STAJANO  
B. J. STAPLETON  
M. L. SUTHERLAND  
J. P. TALBOT  
G. VINNICOMBE  
S. J. WADSLEY  
Y. WAN  
J. WHALEY  
P. M. H. WILSON  
P. WINGFIELD  
G. P. WINTER  
A. M. YOUNG  
A. ZSÁK

## CUSU Fly-sheet on Class-lists [*Non Placet*]

### Context

In Michaelmas 2016, via a referendum of CUSU's membership, 55.34% of 4,758 students voted in favour of **keeping the class-lists tradition with an easier-opt out system** (44.26% voted against). In light of this result **we are urging you to vote *Non Placet* on the removal of class-lists in Grace 3 of 13 July 2016**, in order to mandate the University to proceed with an easy opt-out system for students.

### A matter for students

It is clear that students have raised concerns about the difficulty of being excluded from the public class-list; yet as the referendum shows, many students are resistant to the notion that *their* choice for *their* result to be displayed, in-line with a tradition many wish to continue, will be taken away from them.

An opt-out system that is simple (i.e. marginally effortless) promotes a pragmatic response to negative student feedback; one that continues to empower students and asserts respect for the collective will of current students. Professor Virgo, on behalf of the General Board, promoted the importance of student choice during the Senate-House Discussion on the matter; he advocated for student choice to be respected on this issue. The students have voted and expressed quite clearly that they do not want the class-list to be abolished.

### Benefits of an easy opt-out system

Those students in favour of the Grace have failed to make a case to fellow students for abolishing class-lists when an easy opt-out system is possible. It is unhelpful to polarise the Grace 3 ballot as tradition against mental health; class publication need not contribute if students can so easily opt to be excluded. For example, student testimonies of how the class-lists have helped mental health sit alongside contrasting testimonies; yet at the root of many students' negative views and experiences of class-lists are the administrative barriers that prevent students from easily opting out of the open publication of their grades and needing to justify their reason for doing so.

An easy opt-out process is one where students are able to complete an online form, verified by email to a University email address; the process should not require students to *make a case* for their exclusion from the class-lists publication, but simply opt out of the process and do so within a reasonable time-frame prior to the publication of grades.

### The feasibility of the opt-out system

The notice in response to the Discussion cited two reasons for not favouring an opt-out system: (i) it was not asked for; and (ii) the associated administrative burden.

CUSU's recent referendum, with one of the largest turnouts in the union's history for a single-issue, makes clear that students wish to retain class-lists with an opt-out process.

We believe that an opt-out system should not create such an administrative burden; minor amendments to working practices could accommodate an online form that creates a register

of those to be in/excluded from the process. Especially where that form can be promoted through the students' unions of the Collegiate University, via tutors and the UAS. The scheme originally proposed by the Joint-Report arguably creates a far greater administrative burden than an easy opt-out process. Even if the claims about increased administrative burden are true, these arguments must be weighed against the stated benefits that students believe class-lists would bring to a great number of students (including those for whom the class-list is a great help and those for whom it is not).

## **Conclusion**

This is primarily a student matter and the students have spoken. We urge the University to listen to its student members: to vote ***Non Placet*** on Grace 3 and to support the establishment of an easy of opt-out system.

E. ATTRIDGE  
S. A. BUCK  
L. CHEBIB  
E. M. M. DAVIES  
A. V. DOKU  
J. C. DRURY  
R. E. A. GOODALL  
R. N. HULDISCH  
A. KAPUR  
J. T. LEVIN  
R. E. SHAH  
N. SOANE  
N. M. V. TAYLOR

## Placet fly-sheet

This fly-sheet is an appeal to members of the Regent House who shall vote on the Grace concerning the public display of class-lists. In a recent referendum of the student body, 44% of 4758 students voted for the student union to continue campaigning for their abolition, with 55% voting to campaign to keep class-lists with an easier opt-out system. It must be made clear that no student voted for the *status quo*. We are – or we represent – students who are predominantly from minority groups: disabled students, black and minority ethnic students, women students, and LGBT+ students. Issues stemming from the publication of class-lists disproportionately affect us. This is a BME attainment gap,<sup>1</sup> a disability attainment gap,<sup>2</sup> and a gender attainment gap.<sup>3</sup> As minorities we are often more likely to be affected by mental health issues.<sup>4, 5</sup> Historically, the battle for equality has rarely seen the majority vote on our side. We acknowledge the result of the student referendum. We do so aware that throughout the campaign period there was a lack of clear information concerning potential outcomes. Some students believed that voting to keep class-lists with an easier opt-out was tantamount to getting one. Some students may have also believed that to vote ‘no’ was to vote in favour of maintaining the *status quo*, rather than it constituting an opportunity for abolition. We recognise that the option for an easier opt-out is not offered in this ballot, and would constitute an expensive and time-consuming administrative burden on the part of the University. We believe that the **only** viable option is the abolition of the class-lists. Even if the choice were between abolishing class-lists and keeping them with an easier opt-out system, we would still reject class-lists.

We believe that ‘opting out’ is a misnomer. A student’s absence from the list is a conspicuous one. This unwelcome visibility is just as acute as when class-lists display a student’s poor grade due to reasons of illness or disability. We accept the desire to uphold University traditions where they do not adversely affect student wellbeing. It has been claimed by some students that class-lists represent a genuine benefit to student mental

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<sup>1</sup> Noted by the final report of the BME Working Group as ‘a cause for concern’; data over a five-year period shows that the average attainment gap between White and MBE UK-domiciled students is -3.9% for Class 1 passes and -7.3% for ‘good’ passes, in favour of White students.

<sup>2</sup> Data shows that across the past three years (2014–2016), the average attainment gap between disabled and non-disabled students was -4% in favour of non-disabled students for 1.1 grades. Across the same period for 2.2 grades, the attainment gap is 3%, with disabled students more likely to get lower grades. Certain disabilities show the starkest difference: Almost 24% of students with two or more medical conditions graduate with a 2.2, compared to 8.4% of non-disabled students. Autistic students are also more likely to get 2.2s (15.7% vs. 8.4% non-disabled) and 3rds (8.6% vs. 1.9% non-disabled), [http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/planning/sso/examinations/es\\_2016.pdf](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/planning/sso/examinations/es_2016.pdf), p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> According to University figures, 31.6% of men vs. 22.7% of women got Firsts across all subjects in 2016, [http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/planning/sso/examinations/es\\_2016.pdf](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/planning/sso/examinations/es_2016.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Gay, lesbian and bisexual people are 2 to 3 times more likely to report having a psychological or emotional problem than their heterosexual counterparts. See: Elliott, M. N., Kanouse, D. E., Burkhart, Q., Abel, G. A., Lyratzopoulos, G., Beckett, M. K., Schuster, M. A., Roland, M. 2015. Sexual Minorities in England Have Poorer Health and Worse Health Care Experiences: A National Survey. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 30(1), pp. 9–16. Available at: <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11606-014-2905-y>.

<sup>5</sup> People with learning disabilities present with a higher prevalence of mental health problems compared to those without. In a 2007 UK population-based study of 1023 people with learning disabilities, it was found that 54% had a mental health problem. The largest proportion of students registered with Cambridge’s Disability Resource Centre by HESA category are students with specific learning disabilities.

health. We do not believe this. We believe that the serious harm caused to a large minority of students far outweighs any benefits gained in one or two individual cases.

We urge you to consider the points raised in this fly-sheet alongside the other *Placet* fly-sheet.

We urge you to vote ***Placet***.

F. AKINDE-HUMMEL

C. H. G. ALLEN

E. G. CAREY

R. L. COPE

M. D. DRIVER

M. Z. GAUNTLETT

J. GODAWATTA

R. E. A. GOODALL

W. T. M. HEWSTONE

M. D. KITE

M. KRISH

O. M. OLUFEMI

A. R. PICK

N. PICK

A. J. W. SEBATINDIRA

A. SUSNICK

SIYANG WEI

L. Y. WONG