## CONFIRMED MURC Meeting 29/11/2016 Minutes

Attendance: Liam Stigant (Questionnaire Rep., Jesus College Rep.), Hannah Merwood (Maths and Statistics Rep.), Dan Fletcher (Arts Rep., Oriel College Rep.), Sam Davies Udina (Maths and Philosophy Rep.), Utsav Popat (Treasurer, Maths and Computer Science Rep.), Rebecca Burmiston (Secretary, Lady Margaret Hall Rep.), Charlie Hutchings (President, Lincoln College Rep.) Matthew Hillman, Andrew Tweddle (Somerville College Rep.), Andreea Iorga (IT Rep.)

Apologies: Anthony Landau (Trinity College Rep.), Lily Miles (Outreach Rep.), Mike Fuller (Pembroke College Rep.)

Meeting commenced at 1.11pm.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting
   a. Minutes approved unanimously
2. Matters Arising
   a. MURC Website (Liam/Utsav)
      i. **Action Point**: To be sorted after the meeting by Liam and Utsav after having received an email from Ben Spells.
   b. HSBC Forms (Utsav)
      i. **Action Point**: Rebecca to complete form after meeting
   c. Maths Socials
      i. Response of other societies (Charlie)
         1. It was noted that other societies have not been contacted yet.
         2. Events would be scheduled for the start of Hilary term if possible, when people aren't yet "worn down by life".
         3. **Action Point**: Charlie to contact other societies over the vac.
      ii. Christ Church Dining Hall (Charlie)
         1. Charlie contacted Christ Church rep, but it was noted they did not reply.
         2. It was suggested that it might be necessary to find out how many people would be interested in a formal before finding a college to host it, although a discount on the meal could encourage people to come.
      iii. 3$^{rd}$ year socials (Charlie)
         1. Charlie contacted Helen Lowe, who said 3$^{rd}$ year socials would be possible, but more information/organisation would be needed first.
         2. It was suggested there could be two socials, one for applied maths and one for pure maths to prevent overcrowding.
         3. Helen Lowe said the department would prefer socials to be held in the afternoon as caretakers would have to be at the department for longer if socials were in the evening.
            a. Lunchtime was also suggested, but it was noted the department can become very busy then.
            b. If an event was in the afternoon, it would need to be late enough to not clash with any lectures.
         4. The department can provide wine (although it was not specified what the cost of this would be) so late afternoon time slot and free wine could encourage people to come

a. If wine is expensive, it was noted that juice and biscuits could be provided.

5. It was noted that the aim of the social would be for 3rd year students to get to know the other people in their classes better, in a period when people move from 'college life' to 'university life'.

   a. 2nd/3rd week was suggested as a possible date, as at the point students would have an idea of who was in their classes but may not know the other students very well.

d. Lecturers uploading zip files instead of pdfs (Utsav)
   i. It was noted this has been mainly solved now.
   ii. The website has also been split into pages for years which is convenient for students.
   iii. **Action Point**: To bring up feedback on the website at JCCU next term. Utsav to check how many sheets come up as PDF and how many as zip files, and to email if this is still a large problem.

e. Maths Peer Supporters (Charlie)
   i. Charlie spoke to the peer support co-ordinator, who seemed happy with the idea.
   ii. Some potential issues were raised.
      1. Regarding safeguarding: Peer supporters are ideal in college as peer supporters know who within the college they can put students in contact with for different issues. The issue with maths peer supporters (as with rainbow peers and peers of colour) is that most support is at college level, and peer supporters will meet with many people from different colleges.
      2. Uni counselling service: the way the counselling service is structures can make it hard to start new projects.
   iii. It was suggested there could be a new poster in department/division about this if it goes ahead.
      1. It was noted many science departments have similar problems with a lack of support in 4th year.
   iv. **Action point**: Charlie to meet with peer support co-ordinator again this week

3. Elections
   a. First Year Rep.
      i. Matthew Hillman nominated himself for the role of First Year Rep.
      ii. An election was duly held.
      iii. Result: Matthew was elected unanimously.
   b. Diversity and Inclusion Rep.
      i. This election was moved to the next meeting.

4. USM Algorithm (Hannah)
   a. Hannah said that students had approached her with concerns about how USM was calculated for Parts B and C.
      i. For module X, the algorithm looks at what everyone taking module X got last year, and awards grades for module X based on this.
      ii. This mainly affects small courses which tend to be harder, and more firsts are given.

        iii.   It was also asked whether it is necessary to use such an algorithm for Part C, as it is a standalone qualification.

        iv.   It was noted that students can't see actual algorithm that is being used, and there were also concerns about whether this was fair.

    b.   There were specific concerns about Maths and Stats students (who tend to do worse in part A (especially as the algorithm only looks at core courses in Part A), and don't want their chances to be hindered in Part B because of the algorithm)

        i.   The Maths and Stats committee stated they only use the algorithm as reference, and don't base grade boundaries on it – it is used as a safeguard and a guide for Parts B and C, and not at all for Part A or Prelims.

    c.   Richard Earl has previously stated that the department works out grade boundaries roughly with algorithms, then looks at the questions on the paper, then looks at the papers on the grade boundaries. He is satisfied it is fair but the issue has come up before.

        i.   It was noted that grade boundaries for maths are likely to be 'fairer' than those for a humanities subject, where there is more subjectivity over marking essays.

    d.   It was suggested a clearer description in the examiner's report of how the algorithm worked and how it was used could alleviate students' concerns.

    e.   **Action Point**: To bring up at JCCU.

5.   Teaching Committee Report (Charlie via email from Helen)

    a.   Archive of old lecture material

        i.   This was previously brought up in JCCU.

        ii.   The IT department is currently sorting this out.

    b.   Examiners to stay for full exam

        i.   Helen Lowe said this would explicitly be encouraged

    c.   Digital Education Ideas

        i.   MURC were asked whether they had any ideas about how digital technology could be used in teaching.

        ii.   **Action Point**: To go away and think about this.

    d.   Course handbooks and examiners reports are freely available – do people know this?

        i.   Generally, yes was the consensus.

    e.   Lecture capture

        i.   It was notedd equipment was mainly installed now and then installation would be finished over Christmas, ready for trial use in Hilary term.

            1.   Equipment has been installed in L1, C6 and a small lecture room.

            2.   The exact courses which will be recorded are currently unknown.

        ii.   It was suggested that after full courses of lectures have been recorded, an archive could be made, as it could be useful to attend new lectures having seen old lectures from last year.

        iii.   A large drop in lecture attendance was not forecasted.

            1.   It was brought up whether a drop in lecture attendance would be a problem.

               a.   The lecturer has to give a lecture, and shouldn't be asked to give one to an empty theatre.

               b.   If there is a benefit to face-to-face lectures, attendance will not decrease greatly.

        2. The department could monitor how often lectures are watched online as well as in-person attendance

    iv. **Action point**: To bring up questions about lecture capture at JCCU.

6. Annual Report (Charlie)
    a. The annual report was presented and an overview was given.
    b. The report was unanimously approved.
7. Arts Rep Constitutional Amendment (Charlie)
    a. The amendment was proposed by Charlie and seconded by Utsav, and a brief overview of the amendment was given.
    b. It was asked what the addition of the arts rep would contribute to the JCCU.
        i. It was noted reps don't stick to their positions of the JCCU, and a bigger MURC front is always helpful there.
    c. A vote was duly held.
    d. Result: The motion was passed unanimously with one abstention.
    e. The full text of the amendment is at the end of this document.
8. AOB
    a. Lecture Questionnaires – Part B students are not asked about their gender but Part A students are
        i. **Action Point**: To bring up at JCCU.
    b. Class Questionnaires – tutors looking at students whilst they fill in questionnaires can make them uncomfortable
        i. It was noted that class questionnaires do not have the same degree of anonymity as lecture questionnaires as there are fewer people in a class than in a lecture.
        ii. It was suggested class questionnaires could be completed online, although this could lead to a lower level of feedback.
        iii. It was also suggested the tutor could leave the room while questionnaires were completed and then come back, or could hand out questionnaires at the start of the class along with envelopes.
    c. A visiting student has a poor tutor (grad student), but is only one of two students tutored by them so can't complain anonymously about this
        i. It was noted their GPA depends on problem sheets marked by this tutor, so this is an issue.
        ii. Although this is just one case, we should consider the welfare of visiting students in general more.
        iii. It was suggested the student could go to their senior tutor, who should keep this anonymous.
        iv. It was noted that visiting students should receive high quality tutorials as part of the 'Oxford experience'.
        v. **Action Point**: Utsav to contact and help this specific student. There is not much we can do generally now, but can bring this issue up at JCCU if this is a more general problem.

Meeting was concluded at 2.30pm.

## **Amendments to the Constitution**

Amendment 1: Removal of paragraph 39 in its entirety:

"One member of the Administrative Committee, nominated in the AGM, shall additionally hold the position of Arts Rep, and shall be delegated by MURC to the Arts Committee of the Mathematical Institute. The Arts Rep shall not be a member of the Exec, unless they simultaneously hold one of the offices listed in Paragraph 38."

Amendment 2: Addition of a subparagraph of paragraph 38:

"(n) Arts Rep. – responsible for:

(i)     Attending Arts Committee as an undergraduate representative;

(ii)     Attending JCCU meetings. "