

Confirmed Minutes for MURC Meeting 20.02.2018

Present: Samuel Banks (Fourth Year Rep), Rebecca Burmiston, Clayton Chong, Nathaniel Cleland (First Year Rep), George Cooper (Outreach Rep), Chris Fitzpatrick (Secretary), Dan Fletcher (Arts Rep), Matthew Goh, Edward Hart, Hazem Hassan, Utsav Papat (President, Maths and Comp Sci Rep), Antonin Schrab (IT Officer), Maria-Magdalena Stamatova, Liam Stigant (Questionnaire Rep), Rosemary Walmsley (Publicity and Careers Rep, Maths and Phil Rep).

1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Marianne Cain, Matthew Hillman, Tao Jiang, Sean Liew and Jesse Pajwani.

2)

i) Minutes of the MURC Meeting on 22.01.2018

The minutes were approved

ii) Matters arising not on the agenda

- The constitution was amended as discussed at the last meeting. **Action Point:** UP to email amended constitution to AS for updating the MURC website.
- LS spoke to Dr Neale about the model theory course concerns, who will email the lecturer.
- It was reported that clarification over the OMMS grading and scaling was asked for at JCCU. It was made very clear that nobody will be disadvantaged by the external OMMS students, but had not yet been discussed how the scaling will work. **Action Point:** UP to check at MTC whether any decisions have been made now regarding scaling, and if not to take it back to JCCU.

3) Report from the Mathematics Teaching Committee

- There has been a new computer used for lecture capture resulting in 80-90% success so far, this term.
- The Gibbs prizes have all been increased in cash value. The top prize will now be £150 and the others each £25.
- It had been suggested that the current 3rd years may, at Part C, be graded by a Distinction-Merit-Pass system however was noted that this was not as advertised and will disadvantage low 2i students which may cause a problem with consumer law. It was agreed by MURC that the new system should not apply to current students.
- The questionnaire passed with no problems.
- MURCs concerns that the 4th class will be very different in the new class system and the questionnaire might occur before that happens were raised. MTC agreed to make a new questionnaire to accommodate the new system. **Action Point:** Follow this up at JCCU.

4) OMMS Update (SB/UP)

MURC raised concerns that there are still many advantages and disadvantages over the running of OMMS courses. Many of the advantages are provisions for the external students which was agreed to be very important.

It was asked whether more courses will be offered with the increase in number of students. No, the courses are independent of students and depend only on the research interests of the teaching faculty. It was noted that there will be some new courses next year but this is not related to OMMS, and instead has more to do with the expansion in the AI field.

The new teaching system proposed at JCCU was outlined. It was noted that MURC had some concerns which were first raised at JCCU, and the Education Policy Coordinator from Oxford SU has been consulted who has suggested raising the concerns again with the department.

However, MURC agreed that the department needs time to discuss plans and that the concerns should not be raised again this term.

It was asked whether Part C teaching has been through MTC, and the answer was thought to be no, only at OMMS committee.

5) Follow-up on ambiguous course content (UP)

Dr Earl will email lecturers etc. regarding all the raised courses. **Action Point:** Follow this up by the end of term.

LS spoke to Dr Neale about the suggestion that C2.7 Category Theory needs Rings and Modules as a prerequisite. It was noted the students don't need to know what a ring or module is, instead just the definitions and morphisms. However, when learning about Categories it is reasonable to assume some knowledge of Rings and Modules, and might be off-putting to students who don't understand what they are. Further, it was noted that students are not expected to be familiar with every example as that would require a very broad background knowledge. **Action Point:** RW to report back to students who raised this issue.

MURC agreed that a supplementary page discussing reasons for each prerequisite would be useful.

6) Update on MURC bank account (UP)

Postponed until next meeting due to absence of those involved.

7) UCU Strike action affecting Maths Teaching (UP)

It was reported that the Maths department is not aware of any lecturers striking, however noted that those striking are not mandated to give prior notice. Further, it is the department's policy to reschedule all teaching affected by the strikes, and the department are adamant that no learning will be affected.

MURC raised concern over rescheduling as most of the strikes are planned for 7th/8th week. It was assumed that those who are not on strike will take over the classes and lectures affected, however MURC were not convinced that this is fair on those who support the strike but not striking as they are not part of a union.

It was asked how much notice students will get for cancelled classes. It was noted that the department will usually send out an email as soon as possible, as they have done so far.

It was proposed that students should support the strikes by not going to lectures. MURC generally agreed that no student who wants to attend lectures should be stopped from doing so.

8) UCU Strike action affecting Statistics teaching

It was reported that there will be no SB4b lecture on Thursday 22nd February 2018 due to strikes, and this is the only strike action the department is aware of. This lecture will not be rescheduled as those who might cover are on Sabbatical. The Stats department will inform students of any further updates regarding strikes.

It was asked what the plan would be if the strike continues, and noted that every Thursday will be a potential strike day. The department are considering this further, and so far, are only aware of the coming Thursday. It was noted that most of the work can be covered by students but the worst-case scenario would be a member of staff simply reading out the lecture notes.

9) Any Other Business

- It was asked what the Philosophy department plans in case of strikes. RW was told by a lecturer in the previous lecture that they will be on strike, and highlighted that this is common practice in Philosophy where the lectures run very differently.
- It was asked whether student-written course synopses for each option including the reasons for each prerequisite should be on the MURC website. It was noted that MURC already put their own freshers guide up, and this will be an equivalent for other years. Further, it was highlighted that there should be nothing negative included. **Action Point:** UP to email Helen Lowe about what options MURC has.

It was reported that the department have plans make a guide to clarify the course requirements for Part C and OMMS courses, however this will be put on the course requirements section of the website and so could not be jointly created with MURC.

- MG gave feedback from Queens this term:
Prelims: In Analysis II the lectures did not cover the material in the same order as the lecture notes, with problem sheets therefore often ahead of lectures. Fourier and PDEs were reported to have too much material only in lectures and not in the notes.
Part A: The integration notes were uploaded in stages after the lectures, and it was reported that it would have been helpful if they were before. It was noted that the previous year's notes were still available and similar in content but not order. **Action Point:** LS to talk to Dr Neale.

It was asked what the lecturers are obliged to put online. It was reported that the lecture notes only became more detailed to cater for disabled students who cannot attend every lecture. It was then asked whether lecture capture will replace lecture notes, but was noted that for those who cannot read off the board easily the notes are emailed in advance hence MURC agreed that lecture notes are important to continue to exist.

- It was asked what came of the Undergraduate Study Area discussions. It was reported that it will not be shut off for undergraduates, although they will not be encouraged to use it and the focus will be Part C and OMMS students. In the first few weeks of the year, it might be restricted to 4th years in which case L4 and L5 would be opened. MURC raised that some students will not then have access to chargers and computers, however it was noted that undergraduates will not be banned from the room.
The department has agreed to try to improve the lighting in the room to make it brighter.
- Edward Hart was made College Rep for Corpus Christi College.
- Jess Toudic was made College Rep for Hertford College.

Meeting concluded at 12.38pm.

These minutes were confirmed at the MURC meeting 4th May 2018.