

Faculties of Mathematics, Computer Science & Statistics

Joint Consultative Committee with Undergraduates

Friday 4th February 2011

Unconfirmed minutes of meeting

Present: Mr Ben Hoskin (*MURC President*), Mr Chan-Young Song (*MURC Secretary*), Miss Petra Staynova (*MURC Math & Phil Rep*), Mr David Hagger (*MURC Questionnaire Rep, Univ*), Elena Sizikova (*MURC Maths & Comp Rep*), Dr Peter Neumann (*Faculty Teaching Advisor*), Dr Richard Earl (*Admissions Co-ordinator*), Dr Neil Laws (*Statistics*), Ms Louise Sumner (*MPLS*).

In attendance: Mrs Helen Lowe.

Apologies: Young Hyun Choi (*MURC Treasurer, 1st Year Rep*), Jamie Potter (*MURC Open day rep, Maths & Statistics Rep*).

1) Meeting held on Friday 4th February

a. Minutes of previous meeting

No problems from the last minutes were found.

b. Matters Arising

- i. Miss Staynova asked about the issue to do with Maths and Philosophy students having problem of getting to Exam school in time for their philosophy lecture just after their maths lecture. Dr Neumann answered that the best we could do for now was to remind the lecturers to finish their lectures 5 minutes early. This is because scheduling is very restricted. Miss Staynova suggested the possibility of transporting the students. Pointing out that this is being done in many other universities. To this Dr Neumann responded this won't be practical in Oxford. It was also noted that there would be costs involved in providing such a service, the financing of which could be problematic and that the time it takes for the transport to go around and back to the exam school wouldn't be much shorter than people cycling or even walking.
- ii. It was reported that item 4) d. in from the last minutes (about raising the entry level for Part C raising from 2.2 to 2.1) has been approved by the department and is now under consideration by the division. The change will take place from 2013. However, the part about the pass/fail is still under discussion.

2) Reports from the meetings of the Faculty/Teaching/Academic Committees.

a. Mathematics

- i. Dr Earl's report on the changes with 1st year course from 2012-2013:
 - Some minor edits on the applied course.

- Switching from Moderations to Prelims:
 - 5 lots of 2 & a half hour examinations reflect the course structure better.
 - avoiding the current inconsistency of sitting Prelims after Moderations.
 - Maths and Philosophy students will take Calculus and Probability in MT.
 - Maths and Computer science students take a Calculus course taught by the Computing Laboratory in HT.
- b. Faculty: Discussions about the new building:

Dr Neumann reported that: currently, we have the city permissions and are seeking a contractor. The factors which are holding the project back is the lack of funds and the final permission from the university which will be in the Council level. This will be decided in the Trinity term this year. Fortunately, the new building project is in the university's top priority for fund raising. If all is well and begins this summer then it should complete by 2013.

The criteria the council will base their decision on are confidential due to it being a very sensitive issue relating to finance. But some of them will be whether money is present for the building and how much the building is needed by the department.

It was reported that a variety of fundraising methods were being employed.

- c. Relating to the Teaching Committee:
- i. Prizes for the Part C dissertations are being introduced (2 x £100).
 - ii. Teaching award scheme has been currently suspended due to lack of funds.
- d. Statistics:

Dr Laws reported of the number of students being unhappy with their 2nd year Probability lecture. However, issue has been addressed and proper response has been given. A lot of thinking through were evident from the lecturer.

3) MURC Business

- a. Mathematics options for computer science students:

Miss Sizikova reported that many Computer scientists (single honour), wished to be able to take more mathematics options in their 2nd year. For example, Part A algebra will help them with their Quantum course in their 3rd year.

Dr. Earl responded that this must be consulted in the Computer Science department first. One possible problem could be that this reduces the separation of the Computer Science course from the Maths and Computer Science course.

However, in the maths department's point of view, there doesn't seem to be major problems with this change.

b. OUSU Report

- Students found the 2 minutes break in the middle of the lecture useful.
- Most students found no problem with online notes with exceptions of some notes (e.g. Probability A) being uploaded late.
- Most students preferred 2 students in a tutorial.
- Most found no confidence problem in tutorials.
- Almost no students knew anything about research with exception of few who carried out projects.
- It was suggested that more awareness of the summer internships and projects such as the Nuffield Bursaries should be raised.
- Most students felt they had a good idea of what the examiners were looking for.
- Most found that the collections had the right level of seriousness.

c. Comments on the teaching system:

Some suggestions have been made to improve the teaching quality:

- Further training on teaching techniques.
- Monitoring of lecturers on the aspects of teaching once in a while.
- Good lecturers sharing their thoughts to other lecturers.

To this, Dr Neumann responded that in fact trainings are already available for the lecturers and that he has discreet words with the lecturers with lower feedbacks.

4) Questionnaires

Mr Hagger reported that many students found problems with lecturers simply copying the notes on the board word for word without much comments/explanation.

5) Open days 2011

The speaker for the open day has been confirmed.

Dr Earl confirmed the dates for the open days which are 6th & 7th of July and 16th of September. He acknowledged that MURC have been very supportive and helpful last year with the open days.

Chan-Young Song, 11/02/2011