

# FACULTIES OF MATHEMATICS, COMPUTATION AND STATISTICS

## Joint Consultative Committee with Undergraduates

A meeting of this Committee was held on **Friday 3 February 2006 at 2.15 pm** in the Higman Room, Mathematical Institute.

Present : Katherine Leonard, *Jesus College* (MURC Secretary), James Holwell *Exeter*, (MURC Chairperson elect), Hannah Clapham, *Hertford*, (MURC Secretary elect), Helen Beggs, *Merton* (JCCU Representative), Matthew Cornford, *Somerville* (JCCU Representative; Open Day Coordinator), Helen Turner, *Merton* (JCCU Representative), Linus Mattauch, *St Hugh's*, (MURC Mathematics & Philosophy representative), Dr G L Luke (Mathematics Teaching Committee/Subfaculty Chairman), Dr G A Stoy (Senior member representing the Joint Committee for Mathematics & Philosophy), Dr R Earl (Schools Liaison Officer), Yan-Chee Yu (Deputy Academic Administrator)

Apologies: Dr Neil Laws

## UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

### 1. Meeting held on 28 October 2005:

#### i) Minutes

Section 5 iv) was said to be unclear and will be rewritten thus:

In the Part C exam there will be the equivalent of three units instead of the four papers in previous years. Candidates will have to answer two questions on each half unit.

#### ii) Other matters

None

### 2. Open Days 2006

Open days will be held on Saturday April 29<sup>th</sup> (first week Trinity Term), Wednesday June 28<sup>th</sup>, Thursday June 29<sup>th</sup> and Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September. A MURC Open Day representative has been asked to give a 15 minute presentation of the student perspective of studying Mathematics at Oxford on the Saturday April 29<sup>th</sup> open day.

### 3. Schools Liaison Officer matters

There are five Oxbridge Conference Days; Newcastle March 20<sup>th</sup>, Manchester March 21<sup>st</sup>, Leicester March 24<sup>th</sup>, Cheltenham March 27<sup>th</sup>, Sandown March 28<sup>th</sup>. These are events where there are about 1000-2000 year twelve students. Undergraduates are usually taken along to act as helpers. Although the Mathematical Institute does not itself nominate representatives, any one who is interested in being a helper should email paul.teulon@admin.ox.ac.uk.

#### **4. Intercollegiate class scheme**

- i) A survey was sent out to those students who attended both 6x1 hour classes and 4x1.5 hour classes. The result of the survey was evenly divided.
- ii) There have been complaints about uneven workload. Some students have ended up being allocated all classes in either odd or even weeks. A system was set up to indicate to students which weeks they should have which classes, but not everyone knew used this and so for them it did not prove useful.
- iii) It was suggested that lecturers should publish the times of their classes before the start of term, so students can decide which classes they will aim for. Although lecturers won't know the exact number of students who will attend classes, and therefore the number of classes needed, the numbers who registered should be taken as indication.
- iv) Hand-in dates for work should be posted as soon as possible, and the hand in date should not be more than two working days before the class.

#### **5. Examinations 2005**

It was reported that the Proctors ruled that 2005 B5 exam was compromised and that the marks should not be used. Subsequently students were given the choice of retaking an examination on B5 exam again; the paper set will be different from that set for the main 2006 cohort and sat earlier in Trinity Term.

#### **6. Reports from the meetings of the Faculty/Teaching/Academic Committees:**

##### **i) Faculty Committee**

It was decided that the report from the Faculty Meeting would no longer be included in this meeting as MURC has representatives at that meeting.

##### **ii) Teaching Committee**

- a) The teaching committee has been discussing disability issues. They want to be able to make satisfactory provision for all disabled students, and on the whole the present provision has been found to be satisfactory. They are unwilling to insist lecturers post typed lecture notes on the web before the start of each term as they believe it will affect the quality of the teaching and learning.
- b) Several tutors reported their views that there was too much material in the rings part of the AC1 paper.
- c) Many students are not answering the Geometry question in the Moderations exams. A student reported that experience has shown that the geometry questions set took too long to write out. Where it is placed in the question paper may also affect the number of answers. It needs to be placed either at the beginning or the end as it is often marked by a different examiner. It was also pointed out that the geometry on the Analysis paper was lectured during Trinity Term and students had less time to prepare for the examination.

- d) In future there will be some collaboration with the Physics Department. Next academic year physics students will be able to come to the mathematics faculty for lectures on Relativity. They will be a cap of 40 physics students, and their classes will be arranged by the physics department. In addition to the existing Part B Relativity and Electromagnetism, delivered next year in Michaelmas Term, a half unit on General Relativity with lectures delivered in Hilary Term will be available to both third and fourth year mathematicians.
- e) For second years, lectures on Electromagnetism will be delivered in place of Quantum Theory. A Part B half unit on Quantum Theory will be available in Hilary Term.
- f) There should be a rich menu of mathematical physics for the fourth years.
- g) There are going to be decisions made on the Part A course.

iii) **Academic Committee**

- a) The academic committee has been discussing the recent report by the Working Party of Selections and Admissions. This has been misreported in press, but suggests centralizing the admissions procedure. There are concerns that the applications procedure for getting into Oxford is viewed as opaque and difficult, and that choice of first college can influence your chances of gaining a place. They also worried that in some subjects all the strong candidates were applying to one or two colleges. The committee agreed that it makes little sense to have a uniform system for all subjects as there is great difference between some subjects, for instance, difference in numbers of applicants for different subjects, and whether it is required to submit work, or whether a test is set. The Mathematical Sciences group already runs an advanced system, and work very hard to ensure that the best candidates are offered places.
- b) Suggestions have been made that applications should not include a first choice college. It was pointed out that it would be helpful if girls could opt for an open application excluding St. Hilda's for their first choice college. A response should be made in March.
- c) IAUL has produced a document on awarding money for excellence in teaching. A committee will be set up to consider this.

**7. Course Evaluation Questionnaire Results:**

The MURC questionnaire representative meets with Dr Luke to discuss the results, and to produce a report.

**8. Elliptic Curves**

An apology was made about the misinformation circulated which suggested that this course was available to both third and fourth years. It is only available to fourth years, and those third years who do want to take it can attend lectures, and intercollegiate classes if their college is willing to pay for them, and if not, they still may attend but will

not have their work marked. The Mathematical Institute is considering whether it is possible to make it available again next year.

**9. Emails.**

- i) Automatic advertising was ceased a few years ago due to students complaining of too much junk mail. However the Mathematical Institute does get employers contacting them.
- ii) It was decided that MURC would look into setting up a mail-list via the website of those interested in receiving careers information. They will report to Dr Luke after their next meeting.

**10. Lecture Lists**

- i) The Lecture List for Trinity Term is starting to be prepared.
- ii) A complaint was made that the lecture list appeared very late for Hilary 2006. This was due to having to wait for other subjects to decide on their timetables before the Mathematics timetable could be finalized to prevent as many clashes as possible. The timetable posted on the main Oxford Admin site was subject to change, and the timetable posted later on the Mathematics Institute website was the correct, updated version. It was pointed out that it would be helpful to have a link on the Mathematics website to the admin site, so that students would be able to have a rough idea of their timetable.

**11. Other Matters raised by Junior Members**

There were no matters raised.

**12. AOB**

There was no other business to be discussed

KL, GL 03/05/06