

JCCU Meeting Friday 9th May 2008 2.15pm Higman Room, Maths Institute

Present: Julia Steinberg (*St. Hilda's, Chairperson of MURC*), Harry Jackson (*Corpus Christi, MURC Secretary*), Anne-Marie Imafidon (*Keble, MURC Computer Science Rep & Computing Officer*), Chris Elford (*St. John's, MURC Maths & Philosophy rep*), Schyan Zafar (*St. Peter's, Questionnaires Rep*), Dr Audrey Curnock (*Mathematics Teaching Committee, Joint Committee for Mathematics and Philosophy*), Dr Joel Ouaknine (*Computer Science*), Dr Matthias Winkel (*Statistics*), Mr Tony Conway (*MPLS*), Sandy Patel (*Graduate Studies*).

Apologies from: Poppy Wyeth (*Worcester, MURC Treasurer*), Charlotte Stonehouse (*Mansfield, Fourth Year rep*), Kanna Parasurman (*Worcester, Maths & Statistics rep*)
Dr Brian Stewart (*Mathematics Undergraduate Teaching Advisor*), Dr Richard Earl (*Schools Liaison Officer*).

Minutes (Unconfirmed)

1. Meeting held on 1st February 2008

- i) Minutes from the last meeting were held as a true representation of the meeting
- ii) Matters arising:
 - Item 5 – it was reported that a MURC meeting was held on the 5th March and that most MURC positions were now filled

2. MURC Business

- i) The minutes of the latest MURC meeting were discussed, specifically item 3, the issue of questionnaires. It was suggested by members of MURC that the questionnaires be made available online (possibly on Weblearn) instead of in lectures, so that undergraduates who stop attending lecture courses before the end of term would have a chance to explain why. Dr Curnock suggested that this system could be trialled with one lecture course to see whether it would be successful, but that responses would not be entirely anonymous as students would need to log-on to ensure authentication. It was noted that universities who switched to online questionnaires reported higher response rates. Dr Ouaknine pointed out that there is a near 100% response rate among people in lectures when questionnaires are handed out, and that this would not be the case with an online questionnaire. Finally it was noted that online class registration is currently being trialled, and that if this proves a success questionnaires could be considered next.

A note after the meeting: Physics have been using online questionnaires and we will look at how this works and its success.

3. Reports from the meetings of the Teaching Committees/Academic Committees:

- iii) Statistics: Nothing to report. It was noted that no questionnaires were received from the Mathematics department this year. This will be rectified.
- i) a. Mathematics: Class descriptors. It was reported that the class descriptors have been revised. A 2:1 is now “good or very good” instead of “good”, and a 1st is “excellent”. Also, while the old descriptors only mentioned “problem solving and knowledge” as required, the new ones stress the importance of “logic and reasoning”. It was reported that an effort had been made to tie these in with the subject benchmarks “threshold level” and “typical level”, but that the meaning of “typical level” was unclear (it was suggested that “modal level”, the previous phrasing of the benchmark, would have been better). It was clarified that the class descriptors are helpful when marking papers, as well as for discussion concerning borderline candidates.
- ii) b. Mathematics: 2009 Examinations. There will be changes to mathematics examinations as outlined in minutes of the previous meeting (item 3). There will be changes to the number of questions on papers and to the examinations taken by joint honours candidates: they will now take a short question paper at Part A for Mathematics & Philosophy and Mathematics & Computer Science. It was reported that the department is bringing in transcripts, lists of a candidate’s results in all undergraduate public examinations. Transcripts will only contain information from this summer and onwards, so for instance undergraduates currently in the third year will not have results from their first and second year on their transcripts. It was noted that most universities have already implemented this. Finally it was noted that there is a new declaration of authorship for written work.
- ii) Computer Science: Nothing to report.
- iv) Maths and Philosophy: It was asked whether a final decision has been made on the B1 module for maths and philosophy joint honours students, who currently take this in their second year. It was reported that this has not yet been confirmed, but that issues being considered were the increased workload for second year students taking a third year course and the issue of joint honours students taking B1 classes in both their second and third years. Exact arrangements would be noted in the revised handbook for 2008/09 and supplement for current students.

Undergraduate Courses Development

- i) It was reported that synopses for mathematics Part B and C courses would be published in week 7. Online registration for these courses would be available by week 9 for a deadline on Wednesday. It was noted by the MURC Chairperson that 2nd year students have exams in week 9 and so would find it difficult to register by the deadline. It was agreed that the deadline for second years would be extended until Friday of week 9. It was explained that the data from registration were needed in time to produce a lecture list before faculty leave for the summer. The MURC chairperson asked whether the synopses would definitely appear Monday of week 7 or whether they would be delayed. It was agreed that if the synopses were late there would be an extension to the registration deadline. It was noted that last year’s synopses would mostly be accurate, but that it was necessary for undergraduates to know for sure which

courses are available by week 7. It was agreed that this would happen, but noted that occasionally courses are unavoidably cancelled due to illness etc. On Part C options, it was noted that option C3.1 runs every other year, that C5.1 and 5.2 had been changed slightly (specifically they have new titles) and that C6.4a may not run as a lecturer has not yet been found.

- ii) It was noted that there will be a Part C options afternoon for third year students on Friday of 8th Week between 3 and 4:30 pm.
- iii) It was noted that as well as information on options there will be information on projects at the options afternoon. It was further noted that there is a guide to projects on the maths institute website and it is hoped that a lecture on projects will be given on Monday of 6th Week. It was reported that the department is keen for more people to submit projects and that there is interest among students. There has recently been a faculty seminar on projects to generate interest.
- iv) It was noted that the maths department offers opportunities for summer projects abroad. There are links with Princeton and Caltech universities. It was asked whether there is information about these on the website; there is not, but it was agreed that a web page will be made.

5. French Classes

- i) It was noted that many maths departments, including Cambridge, offer languages classes. Oxford continues to offer them to third and fourth year students in mathematics or mathematics & statistics, with 30 places available. They will not be assessed, but they will appear on the new transcripts. They are aimed at relative beginners. An email will be sent describing how to apply.

6. Questionnaires

- i) It was reported that there was a meeting between the MURC Questionnaire rep and Dr Curnock to discuss the questionnaires. The responses were broadly positive. The MURC St. John's rep reported that students had found the final question sheet for the Part A Groups in Action course extremely difficult. Dr Curnock replied that this had been discussed at Teaching Committee, there had been discussions with the lecturer and the course was to change next year, possibly merging with the groups course, which it was felt is currently too geometrical in nature. Other changes in Part A courses were discussed: Professor Tod will now lecture Calculus of Variations. It was noted that there were problems with the B10b course, and that extra guidance and revision lectures will be provided.

7. Admissions matters

- i) Julia Steinberg was thanked for her talk at the recent open day, which was very well received.

8. Induction of First Year Students, MT 2008

- i) It was noted that representatives from MURC and the Invariants Society will meet freshers for their induction during 0th Week next term.

9. Divisional Matters

- i) The minutes of the latest Divisional UJCF meeting were discussed. More guidance on projects was suggested.

10. AOB

- i) It was noted that undergraduates wishing to view pass lists online must set up VPN access before they leave Oxford. There is information on the maths website about how to do this.
- ii) It was noted that Maths and Statistics reports do not appear on Minerva, and suggested that tutors be advised to look at these reports as they currently sometimes miss them. It was agreed that this would be looked into.

HJ 23/5/08