

Joint Consultative Committee with Undergraduates

February 2, 2009

Unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting of 31 October 2009

Present Julia Steinberg, Harry Jackson, Chris Elford, Schyan Zafar, Dr Audrey Curnock (Chair), Dr Joel Ouaknine.

In attendance Mr Yu

Apologies Dr Richard Earl, Dr Neil Laws, Mr Tony Conway, Dr Brian Stewart, Anne-Marie Imafidon.

1. Meeting held on Friday 9 May 2008

- (a) **Minutes.** These were accepted.
- (b) **Matters arising.** It was reported that Synopses and late changes to the Exam Conventions had been handed out to students at lectures. These are now posted on the web.

2. Membership of the JCCU

- (a) **Senior Members.** It was reported that
 - Prof Priestley would be representing the JCMP on the JCCU,
 - This meeting would be Dr Ouaknine's last JCCU meeting,
 - Dr Laws would be replacing Dr Winkel as the representative from the Statistics department,and the Chair added her thanks to Dr Winkel and Dr Ouaknine.
- (b) **Junior Members.** It was noted that elections would be held in week 7. It is likely that the Mathematical Institute will be holding a reception at the start of HT for outgoing MURC members.

3. Examinations 2008. It was reported that anonymised versions of the internal examiners reports had been posted on the web. In addition, for the first time, external examiners reports had also been posted.

(a) **Moderations**

- **Mathematics.** It was noted that
 - the proposal for basing classification in future years on both the Av_1 and Av_2 statistics, and that the proposal had been approved by Teaching Committee,
 - MAPLE marks may be moderated in future years,
 - measures had been proposed to encourage students to answer at most 5 questions. A cover sheet for candidates had been proposed, and a draft would be presented at a future meeting of the JCCU. There was some discussion as to whether there should be a limit on the number of questions candidates could submit, and also what would occur if students did not fill out their cover sheet.

(b) **Part A**

- **Mathematics.** It was noted that the rubric for paper AC2 had been changed, such that every candidate had to attempt at least one question from each section, whilst also removing the upper limit on the number of question attempts for the whole paper, in order to ensure that candidates had a strong background in all core subject areas. Miss Steinberg also added that student feedback was that the Differential Equations section was easier than the other sections, whilst Algebra was much harder. Dr Curnock agreed that this was reflected in the number of question attempts and hence the change noted above.
- **Mathematics & Philosophy.** It was noted that there had been concern over the range of options available to candidates, and that a new paper, AO1(P) had been introduced. In addition, some options were being made temporarily available for 2008-9 only. It was noted that no joint degree has as wide a choice of options as the single Mathematics course.
- **Mathematics & Computer Science.** It was reported that short option papers for Mathematics & Computer Science candidates would also be introduced.
- **Mathematics & Statistics.** It was reported that there was ongoing discussion as to whether or not examiners would be allowed to scale marks for Mathematics and Mathematics & Statistics candidates separately.

- **External examiners.**

- **Körner.** It was reported that:

- * Teaching Committee would urge Part A examiners to deal with medical certificates at Part A, rather than passing them on to Part B examiners for action in the ensuing year.
 - * The department would follow up on Prof Körner’s comment on poor log keeping at Exam Schools.
 - * Where lecturers do not set the questions, lecturers will sign off questions before they go to press.
 - * Rough working should be foot-printed to ensure that the marker has check everything the candidate has written.
 - * The explanation of the USM conversion process had been inserted into the Part A Examination conventions, and will go into the Part B and C Examination Conventions next year.
 - * Invigilators would be asked to contact an examiner for all queries arising in an exam.
 - * Examiners would take into account Prof Körner’s suggestion that questions on paper AC1 could be slightly easier. In addition the issue of how to compare options questions was being looked at.

Miss Steinberg enquired how the low number of Part A USMs in the range 70-100 would affect classification of students taking Part B in 2009. Dr Curnock responded that this would actually give examiners more flexibility in scaling the large number of papers at Part B. It was noted that the outgoing Part A chairman and the incoming Part B chair had held discussions and that the Teaching Committee had also offered guidance to examiners on the proportions in each class that have occurred in recent years and averages both for Mathematics candidates and for MPLS.

(c) **Part B**

- **Mathematics.** It was reported that:

- The issue of allowing examiners to scale marks for Mathematics and Mathematics & Statistics separately was being looked at.

- The possibility of a prize for Mathematics & Statistics candidates was being looked into.
- The process by which marks for Physics candidates taking Mathematics papers was under review, given that in 2008 the B7.2/C7.2 paper had significantly more Physics than Mathematics candidates.
- **Mathematics & Statistics.**
 - It was reported that the policy on late amendments and announcements was under review, and that queries should be logged in the Exam schools' log and the candidate's script.
 - Miss Steinberg asked that the change in the number of questions in paper BS1 be publicised. Dr Curnock agreed to ask the Statistics department to include this change in a Notice to Candidates.
- **External Examiners**
 - **Rees (Mathematics).** It was noted that Prof Rees had commended the exam process, but had asked for more information to be relayed to her during the course of the academic year.
 - **Budd (Mathematics).** It was reported that Prof Budd had also commended the exam process, but had requested more information be made available on coursework assessment.
 - **Rees (Mathematics & Philosophy).** It was noted that there had some confusion with rounding conventions, and that this needed to be clarified. The conventions themselves are clear.
 - **Frigg (Mathematics & Philosophy).** Dr Curnock reported that Dr Frigg's comments would be passed on to the JCMP.
 - **Pitts (Mathematics & Statistics).** Dr Pitts' comments were noted.

Miss Steinberg asked whether the change in number of questions on each exam paper would mean that part of the syllabus is not examined. Dr Curnock responded that setters would be asked to set questions so that each question covered a broader part of the syllabus than before.

(d) **Part C**

- Examiners' reports for Mathematics, Mathematics & Computer Science, Mathematics & Philosophy and Mathematics & Statistics were noted.
- **External Examiners**
 - **Salamon (Mathematics)**. Dr Curnock drew attention to Prof Salamon's suggestion to carefully examine candidates at the top and bottom of the mark range.
 - **Rogers (Mathematics)**. These comments were noted.
 - **Salamon (Mathematics & Philosophy)**. These comments were noted.
 - **Fearnhead (Mathematics & Statistics)**. Dr Curnock noted that Prof Fearnhead's complaints had arisen from a lack of information supplied.

4. **Reports from the meetings of Faculty/Teaching/Academic Committees.**

(a) **Mathematics.**

- Dr Curnock reported on the international evening for students, drawing attention to the draft program. She asked for any MURC representatives who are international students to help organise the evening, and Miss Steinberg agreed to send Dr Curnock suitable suggestions. Miss Steinberg also suggested that the aims of the international evening might be better served by smaller, but more regular events, perhaps based in colleges.
- Prof Robin Wilson's lecture on "Oxford Figures" at 2pm on Wednesday 26 November was noted.
- Dr Curnock presented a paper from the Student Union in Student Academic Representation, noting that the Mathematical Institute had student representatives on the Teaching, Departmental and Research Committees. She asked if students could help to draft a student course evaluation form.

(b) **Computer Science.** There were no items to report.

(c) **Statistics.** Comments from Dr Laws were noted.

5. **Questionnaires.** These were noted.

6. **Open Days and Inductions.** Dr Curnock thanked the MURC representatives who helped at the undergraduate induction afternoon.
7. **Lecture List for HT 2009.** This item was noted.
8. **AOB**
 - (a) **B568.** Miss Steinberg passed on a request from MURC that college tutors give a class on B568, for which no class was currently given. Dr Curnock agreed to pass on this request.
 - (b) **Part B problem sheets.** Miss Steinberg noted that some Part B problem sheets had been published late. Dr Curnock agreed to make enquiries.

Notes after the meeting

1. There were no comments returned on the circulated minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were accepted as a result.