

MURC Agenda – 1st Meeting, Hilary Term 2014, 29/01/2014

Present: Alex Homer, Brigitte Stenhouse, Ben Spells, Rose Ryan Flinn, Michael Holloway...

Minutes and Matters Arising

(a) Minutes of Previous Meeting

Amendment to minutes: Roll call wasn't taken, so we are not aware of everyone who attended. From votes that took place we know 16 people attended. The minutes of the previous meeting were **accepted**.

(b) 3rd/4th year collections

It was noted that there is no consistency regarding which colleges offer collections and which do not, and that collections are a valuable practice for exams. It was suggested that Teaching Assistants offer to mark collections for their respective classes. This would be easy for colleges to arrange payment as the TA's details would already be on OXCORT. The TA could discuss with the class which paper would be sat.

(c) Communication skills and problem sheet discussion group

It was decided it would be appropriate to approach the Mirzakhani Society and the Invariant Society before JCCU, so as to ensure they did not feel we were replacing a service they offer. It was suggested that providing refreshments would make it different from merely a group of people sitting in the institute working, however funding would have to be found for this, and it would mean we could not hold the sessions in a room in the Maths Institute. The sessions will be aimed at parts B and C, to supplement the classes as students no longer have tutorials, and may not share classes with people they know. It was suggested launching the initiative in Trinity and using revision as a framework.

General Business

- (a) Motion to remove inactive College Reps (Proposed by: Alex Homer, Seconded by: Brigitte Stenhouse)

College reps are required to reply to general emails, and many have not been. Thus these college reps should be removed in order to find replacements.

14 in favour, 1 abstention – motion **passed**

Ben has noted that he knows of one rep who has not been to a meeting in approximately 2 years, and that we need a proper procedure for removing inactive college reps.

- (b) College Rep elections : None.

- (c) Reports from departmental committees/Lecture Questionnaire Report

Presidents Report: Alex noted that Applications has been removed from Prelims, replaced by Extended Geometry. As of this meeting Optimisation has been replaced by Extended Statistics (statistics and data analysis, 4 lectures a week in trinity term). There are forums on the new website regarding the strategic review, however many noted they did not know this. Ben noted he finds the new maths website difficult to use. It was noted that the department has no obligation to provide lecture notes, however libraries don't necessarily have all the recommended texts to fill any gaps.

Maths and Computer Science Report: Rose suggested that there should be an Ethics course for all students but was unsure on how to implement that.

Questionnaire Report:

Prelims It was noted that overall Prelims were fine, however problem sheets were found too hard. Probability was given a brilliant review.

Dynamics 45% thought the course was too fast and 18% thought it wasn't explained well. This course was taught by Dr Earl, who had little time to prepare as the original lecturer dropped out due to personal reasons. It was noted we do not know why lecture notes were not easily available.

Geometry 57% thought the course was inaudible and 40% thought the course was not well explained. 28% thought the course had insufficient examples, and 37% thought problem sheets too hard. It was noted there will be a different lecturer next year

Part A

Linear algebra 37% of students couldn't obtain good course notes. It was noted that the notes that were provided were from students typing them up over the summer. The course was also thought to have not been explained well, and was not structured. It was noted that the same course last year was given much better reviews, and we are waiting to see if this changes next year.

Part B

Geometry of Surfaces 57% thought the problem sheets too hard/much too hard, and 20% thought the course was too fast. It was noted that Dr Dyson has discussed the appropriate level of difficulty for a problem sheet with the lecturer.

Martingales through measure theory This course has again been reviews as too hard and too fast, however it is supposed to be so no changes are going to be implemented. Ben noted that it should be put in the synopsis that the course is designed to be challenging.

Communication Theory – 68% thought the course wasn't well structured, and 28% thought it was not explained well. It was noted that the lecture notes didn't match lectures, as it was taught from a pure point of view, then applied, and then off syllabus information was provided at the end. Dr Dyson has had a discussion with the lecturer, who is new. It was noted the lecturer used visual aids effectively.

Part C

Model Theory It was noted that the lecturer didn't write on the board, and explained proofs without writing them down. It was noted that lecturers are briefed before they give a lecture course.

Homological spaces 67% thought the problem sheets were too hard and 30% thought the course was too fast. It was noted that the sheets were too hard last year too.

Group Theory 57% thought the course was much too fast while 42% found it too hard. 43% said there were not enough examples. Alex suggested we should bring up the recurring issue of courses being too hard and too fast at JCCU.

Mathematical Geoscience It was noted that responses leaned towards too hard.

Numerical Linear Algebra It was noted that responses were generally negative, with 59% saying the problem sheets were too hard. It was noted that students disliked the lecturer using slides.

Further Quantum Theory It was noted this is the first time this structure has been used for quantum theory, and that students found it too fast and lacking in examples.

Best Review: Mathematical Ecology and Biology 96% of students found the lectures interesting, and 88% found the course worthwhile. It was noted that no one thought the problem sheets were too easy or too hard.

(d) BSP/OEE/BEE/CD/OD mark schemes

It was noted that many people have real difficulty understanding what is expected from a project and find the wordings extremely vague in the mark schemes. Ben noted that examples of 1st/2.1 standard works are provided. Alex noted he will raise the issue at JCCU when he raises the issue of bonus marks being awarded in exams. Ben suggested asking for more specific examples, perhaps in a 10 point range.

(e) Part A review

Alex noted this is coming up, and will most likely happen in Trinity.

(f) MURC Website

Alex noted the website is a little out of date, and suggested making a weebly page. We will raise it at JCCU and listen to their opinions.

(g) Exam Entries for Parts A, B and C students

James noted that this is the first year that our options are to be input by ourselves on to the computer system. It would be helpful to discuss how this is to be done, and any upcoming deadlines. It was noted the deadline for exam entries has been delayed.

(h) Departmental Strategic Review

A work party will convene before the next MURC meeting.

(i) Class scheduling

It was noted that some classes are weekly and some are fortnightly, and this makes time planning difficult. Further, it was noted that the frequency of classes was not always reflected in the length of tutorial sheet. It was suggested we raise this issue at JCCU. Alex noted that the statistics department prefer weekly classes, and it is unlikely we will be able to find a solution that is suitable for everyone, including joint schools students.

(j) Provision of textbooks DEFERRED

(k) Student representation on committees DEFERRED

(l) Bookstall (request for volunteers for if we do a physical bookstall in the Mezzanine)

Alex requested volunteers for the book stall, to be held next week.

(m) MURC Nomination for OUSU teaching awards

It was decided we should nominate the Martingales lecturer and Dr Goldschmidt.

(n) Any other business

Alex suggest that we have a rep that meets with someone in the stats department to discuss questionnaires. This was generally felt to be a good idea, however there was no consensus on which rep this should be.

Alex noted that we should have a bank account fairly soon.

14:07 end of meeting.