

Confirmed Minutes for MURC Meeting 30/01/17

Meeting commenced at 3.07pm.

Present: Rebecca Burmiston (Secretary, LMH Rep.), Liam Stigant (Questionnaire Rep., Jesus College Rep.), Daniel Fletcher (Arts Rep., Oriel Rep), Sam Davies Udina (Maths and Philosophy Rep., Worcester Rep.), Sam Banks, Marianne Cain, Anthony Landau (Trinity Rep.), Hannah Merwood (Maths and Stats Rep.), Lily Miles (Outreach Rep.), Matthew Hillman (Freshers' Rep.), Utsav Popat (Treasurer, Maths and Comp Rep.), Andrew Tweddle (Somerville Rep.)

Apologies: Andreea Iorga, Michael Fuller

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting
 - a. Minutes approved unanimously
2. Matters Arising
 - a. MURC Website (Liam/Utsav)
 - i. A brief overview of the current website and proposed changes to the website were given. It was noted that the current website is very outdated.
 - ii. **Action Point:** Liam/Utsav to liaise with Andreea regarding the website.
 - b. HSBC Account (Utsav/Rebecca)
 - i. A brief overview of the paperwork needed to finalise access to the account was given. It was noted that the necessary forms would be filled in shortly.
3. Lecture Questionnaires (Liam)
 - a. Prelims
 - i. Generally feedback was good, although Analysis 1 was felt to be too hard, and Linear Algebra 1 to be too long.
 - ii. The department was disappointed with the proportion of people saying pure courses were interesting.
 - b. Part A
 - i. It was noted that there had been problems with the way the Metric Spaces and Complex Analysis course was taught, and the lecture notes provided this year, in that different definitions were given to in the past.
 1. This could lead to difficulties with exams, as defining concepts in different ways can make questions easier or harder.
 2. However, examiners have been notified about this, and will take this into account when marking questions, as questions have already been set and cannot be changed.
 3. The advice given by the department will be to examiners to be careful, not to tell students which definition is 'right'. The department has said that students will not lose any marks for writing down any correct definition – there is not one 'right' definition.
 - ii. With regards to other courses, Differential Equations and Probability were well-liked, although students felt there was not enough new content in Linear Algebra.
 - c. Part B
 - i. The only course with a real issue was Representation Theory. 43% of students said the course was too hard, and it was felt that questions on

problem sheets involved questions which did not relate to lectures.
However, the lecturer received excellent feedback.

- ii. In general, students felt pure courses were too hard, especially Geometry of Surfaces which was felt to have too many convoluted questions requiring a large amount of calculation on problem sheets.
- iii. Some courses were felt to be too long. However, most courses went down very well.

d. Part C

- i. It was noted that some courses were too small for any meaningful conclusions to be drawn from lecture questionnaires – e.g. only four people too Model Theory.
- ii. Across pure courses, around 15-20% of students found problem sheets to be too long. A reason for this may be that in general, 3rd year pure courses have shorter problem sheets than 3rd year applied courses, but problem sheets are about the same length in 4th year.
- iii. Issues with specific courses
 - 1. Category theory – the lecturer was felt to be too abstract, although there were no complaints about the number of worked examples in lectures
 - 2. Functional Analytic PDEs – 71% of student said problem sheets were too long, and it was felt that there were problems with the pace and length of the course.
 - 3. Topics in Fluid Mechanics – 83% of student didn't respond to the question about the pace of the course. A possible reason for this could be that students who are not actually taking the course are attending its lectures (e.g. DPhil students).
 - a. Students not answering questions on questionnaires about problem sheets and the pace of the course also happened in several other modules.

4. Elections

a. Diversity and Inclusion Rep

- i. Marianne Cain nominated herself for the role.
- ii. Marianne was asked why she would be a good candidate for the role.
 - 1. It was noted that Marianne set up LGBTQubed, a society for LGBTQ Maths, Stats and Computer Science students.
- iii. An election was duly held.
- iv. Marianne was elected unanimously.

b. President

- i. Utsav Popat nominated himself for the role.
- ii. Utsav was asked why he was qualified for the role.
 - 1. It was noted that Utsav has experience as MURC Treasurer, and has almost managed to gain access to the HSBC account.
- iii. An election was duly held.
- iv. Utsav was elected unanimously.

c. Treasurer

- i. Matthew Hillman nominated himself for the role.
- ii. Matthew was asked which snacks he would buy as Treasurer.

1. It was noted that Matthew would buy digestives, but also that he would take complaints and requests.
 - iii. An election was duly held.
 - iv. Matthew was elected unanimously.
5. Teaching Committee Report (Utsav)
 - a. 2 hour lecture courses
 - i. It was felt that in general, students find it difficult to concentrate for two consecutive hours of the same lecturer.
 - ii. However, some two-hour lecture courses are necessary in exceptional circumstances – e.g. if a lecturer is only teaching for one day a week.
 - iii. Lecturers with two hour courses will be advised to have a ten-minute break at some point in the lecture so students can catch up with the material.
6. Archive for old lecture notes (Lily)
 - a. It was noted that students can't access lecture notes from previous years. In some cases, this would be very useful – for example, Part B students accessing short course lecture notes from Part A. An archive would be very useful for this, and an 'old materials' tab could be used to prevent confusion with current notes and problem sheets.
 - b. It was also noted this was previously brought up at JCCU as part of a larger discussion.
 - c. **Action Point:** To bring up at next JCCU meeting.
7. Pay for graduate students (Rebecca)
 - a. It was noted that MURC had been approached by a grad student TA, who had concerns regarding workload and pay issues in the department, and how these issues might impact undergraduate students.
 - b. The consensus from MURC was that graduate TAs are very important to undergraduates and their work is greatly valued, but as a committee there is not much MURC is able to do about this issue other than bringing it up at the JCCU. It was noted that the Maths department is already aware of the issue.
 - c. In addition, it was noted that it would be useful for MURC to have some contact with graduate reps, in case situations in the department affecting both undergraduates and graduates arise in the future. This could take the form of a termly meeting, for example.
 - d. **Action point:** To bring this up at JCCU.
8. AOB
 - a. A list of topics to bring up at JCCU was discussed.
 - i. This list of topics decided on was:
 1. Lecture notes (archive for lecture notes, lecture notes being uploaded as zip files)
 2. Pay for TAs
 3. List of graduate reps
 4. Lecture capture
 5. Clarification of USM algorithm
 - ii. **Action Point:** Rebecca to email this to Helen Lowe as the MURC Agenda for the next meeting.
 - iii. Changes to the Maths and Computer Science course in order to give students the opportunity to take more applied options was discussed, but it was decided this needed to be researched further.

- b. Printing in the Maths Department
 - i. This was brought up at a previous JCCU meeting, and is unfeasible due to high costs.
- c. Classes
 - i. It was reported that some 3rd and 4th years had some issues with how the class system operates, for example due to poor communication between TAs and class tutors.
 - ii. As all students will have their own opinions on classes, it was decided that all students would be asked about whether/what changes should be made to the class system.
 - iii. **Action point:** Utsav create a survey to send out to students asking for feedback on classes.
- d. Maths and Stats Teaching Committee
 - i. It was noted that only 14 offers were made for Maths and Stats this year – this was down from 20 last year.
 - ii. It was suggested at the committee that entry into Maths and Stats could change, so that students don't have to decide whether they want to study Maths or Maths and Stats until the end of first year (at least). This will be discussed at the next JCCU meeting.
- e. Information on Options
 - i. It was noted that the amount of information students have on options before they pick them varies greatly between colleges.
 - ii. It was suggested that MURC could have a section on their website about different options students can take, written by students who have taken them.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.27pm.