

FACULTIES OF MATHEMATICS & STATISTICS

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH UNDERGRADUATES

Friday 13th May 12:30pm-2:00pm in N3.12, Mathematical Institute

Present: Prof Stuart White (Chair), Prof Jan Kristensen, Dr Neil Laws, Dr Vicky Neale, Dr James Munro, Giulia Lanzafame (MURC President and Diversity and Inclusion Rep), Cameron Lee (MURC Access Rep), Ivan Vasenov (MURC Treasurer), Zhe Ooi (Publicity and Careers Rep), Phillipp Wiedemann (MURC IT Officer and Secretary), Sofia Marlasca Aparicio (MURC Fourth Year Representative), Charlotte Turner-Smith, Keith Gillow and Ali Goodall.

In attendance: Clare Sheppard

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Andy Jung (MURC Mathematics and Computer Science representative).

2. Meeting held on Friday 4th February 2022

(a) Minutes

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

(b) Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

It was raised that the report on combining the Mathematics and Mathematics and Statistics admissions process was progressing through departmental committees. It will still need to go to further departmental and university committees before it can be approved and published in the UG admissions prospectus.

3. Minutes from Department of Mathematics Teaching Committee

These minutes were presented for information only.

4. AV Update

Keith Gillow reported on this item. It was raised that all 19 teaching rooms (both lecture and class rooms) are scheduled for an AV refit. The refit will be an upgrade on the current arrangements, including both audio and visual enhancements. All teaching rooms will also have the capability for lecture capture once the refit has been completed. The cost of the refit is substantial, and has been driven by academic need. The original timeline for the refit was between July to September, but due to unfortunate delays some rooms will be done this summer, the rest will hopefully be completed by Easter.

No concerns or questions were noted.

5. Race Equality Action Plan

Ali Goodall presented the Race Equality Action Plan in writing for JCCU feedback. It was noted that the departmental Race Equality Working Group have been working closely with the existing Stats Working Group, and that this plan is subject to updates and changes as necessary – it is an organic process. It was noted that the aim is to review these objectives annually.

It was clarified that the use of 'BME' is in line with the university taskforce directive, although it was acknowledged that this term has limitations. This is why some objectives are more specific rather than general. It was suggested that, in line with the Athena Swan project, that there should be an objective regarding visibility of lecturers of colour at prelims and core part A – this suggestion will be brought back to the working group.

ACTION: *Ali Goodall to report suggestion back to the Race Equality Working Group.*

No other comments were raised. The Committee noted general approval with the action plan.

6. Questionnaires

(a) Hilary Term 2022 statistical summaries

Dr Neale reported on this item. The Committee noted the low levels of feedback – 65 classes and some lectures received no feedback at all. Dr Neale and the MURC Questionnaires Rep have met to see what could be done to improve returns, and they would welcome ideas from the Committee.

It was noted that pre-pandemic years reported higher levels of feedback using paper forms – if there can be a way to make paper forms a more efficient process this might be a possibility, although there will still need to be an online option for those who cannot or do not want to attend lectures and classes in person.

The MURC Reps were encouraged to report to students that feedback is really valued – both positive and negative – and to stress the importance of completing feedback.

The Chair also reminded the MURC Reps that the Departmental Teaching Awards are open, and that the department wished to see more nominations from students. Nominations are particularly important for junior academics looking for permanent positions. The MURC Reps were encouraged to remind students to submit their nominations.

7. Response from Part A Examiners and Update

The MURC report on evidence of 'googleable' papers was presented to the 20-21 Part A examiners after the last meeting. It was noted that the examiners broadly did not agree with the assessment that the papers were easily 'googleable', and argued that there were multiple checks done by the examiners. They noted that the balance of the question and help could be sourced from the internet is a matter of academic judgement. They agreed that last year was unusual and did support Part B examiners using their discretion when applying progression requirements.

It was noted that the proposal made by the department to consider lower the Part C progression hurdle to only take account part B results, and not the overall classification combining part A and B was rejected by the university – the chair noted that he understood that MURC members of the committee would find this disappointing. Committee members asked how these progression thresholds were set: the departments make proposals to the University for approval. University approval is required for making exceptional changes mid-course.

It was raised that the Part B examiners are permitted to waive progression requirements on a case by case basis when there is an evidential basis for doing so and the part B examiners have been reminded of their powers in this regard. The Chair reminded the committee that it is a matter for the part B examiners as to whether and how to apply this discretion in any case; students should not take this item to mean that the part B examiners would act in a certain way.

8. Open Days and Induction

Dr Munro raised that hundreds of people had attended the two departmental Open Days, and expressed thanks to Academic Administration and the student helpers.

9. Part B and C Options

The item was presented for information only. It was suggested that an email regarding the format of the Parts B and C Options Fair was circulated to students.

ACTION: *Academic Administration to send email regarding Options Fair to students.*

10. A.O.B

It was raised that this was the MURC Fourth Year Representative Rep's last meeting. The Committee noted thanks for their hard work.

The Committee noted best wishes to the MURC Representatives for their exams this summer.

No other business was raised.