

FACULTIES OF MATHEMATICS & STATISTICS

Joint Consultative Committee with Undergraduates

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 3th February at 12:30pm in N4.01, Mathematical Institute.

Present: Prof. Stuart White (Chair), Philipp Wiedemann (MURC Chair), Dr. James Munro, Yifu Zhang, Rei Ota, Yuxin Wang, Mario Marcos Losada, Maria Matthis, Prof. Jan Kristensen, Georgi Filipov, Ishwar Karthik, Dr. James Newton, Aamina Rizvi, Dr. Neil Laws, Clare Sheppard

In attendance: Imogen Harbinson-Frith

Apologies: Dr. Vicky Neale

1. Minutes of meeting held on 28th October 2022.

Minutes were approved as an accurate record.

2. Student Fees Planning.

It was raised that the department is proposing to maintain its current fees for all undergraduate programmes for incoming students, subject to the University's 9.9% uplift. This is likely due to the current economic situation. It was raised that increasing fees is a concern, as it may mean that some students may consider not continuing to Part C, and that it may discourage students from pursuing academia.

Students asked how this would affect those in receipt of scholarships. It was noted that scholarships awarded by Oxford University (such as the Reach Scholarship) typically cover all fees for the normal duration of their studies (so will rise to meet the new fees).

It was clarified that the fee increase has been made in accordance with the University's advice. It was clarified that this will only effect new students.

It was concluded that while the student representatives do not welcome the fee increase, they do understand why it is being implemented. It was agreed that student feedback should be passed on as appropriate.

3. Report on matters raised in Examiners Reports (oral report)

It was raised that examiner's reports were released quite late. It was noted that students would prefer to have the examiner's reports released by Michaelmas week 2, so that this item could be taken in the MT JCCU meeting when the students have more recently taken the exams. It was noted that this is not always possible due to various factors, such as the workload for Academic Administration staff. It was also noted that many UK universities do not release such detailed examiner's reports to their students.

It was agreed that a link to the University's policy on academic appeals could be added to the departmental examinations webpage. However, students were reminded that the burden of proof for an academic appeal is high, and students are not able to appeal or request a remark on the basis

of academic judgement. It was noted that the department's processes for checking marks is rigorous and errors are exceedingly rare.

ACTION: A link to the webpage on the University's policy on academic appeals to be added to the departmental examinations page

4. Part C progression requirement

This proposal concerns changing the Part C progression requirement for Mathematics and Mathematics and Statistics, so that students can progress to Part C with a 59.5 or above in Part B alone. It was noted that the weighting of Part A and B examinations will not change, and that BA classifications will still be calculated in the same way as in previous years. There is no change planned for Mathematics and Computer Science students (as the computer science exams has courses running over part A and B). Students queried whether similar discussions are going to be held for Mathematics and Philosophy.

ACTION: CS to raise the proposed Part C progression requirement change for note to JCMP and Computer Science Undergraduate Teaching Committee.

It was noted that the timeline for implementation is still unclear, as we have to give a minimum of a year's notice and consult with EPS over the earliest this change could be introduced.

It was noted that students did not welcome the loss of academic discretion that examiners previously had in matters of progression and felt the mitigating circumstances route for considering exceptions to the progression requirement is suboptimal.

ACTION: MPLS to be invited to next JCCU meeting.

The committee supported the proposal, whilst recognising that its implementation may not be quick.

6. Discussion of student consultation exercise

The student consultation exercise took place in Week 2. Students participating produced helpful and considered comments which has been fed into the three departmental working groups, and this was a constructive and useful exercise. However, it was not as well attended as one might like, with only 10% of part B and C students engaging. It was suggested that the bulletin may not be the best way to circulate meetings and news as students would be discouraged by having to click a link, and perhaps lecture announcements could also be used for events of this nature.

7. MURC business

(a) Solutions to past papers

It was raised that the department does not release the solutions to all past papers. It was explained that collections are often made from past papers, so that not all solutions cannot be released. Two years ago, the department changed policy following discussions at JCCU to start releasing solutions to all exams taking place in even years going back to the last major syllabus change.

It was raised that some college tutors are more willing to help with solutions than others. Students observed that by releasing more solutions, the department could help prevent this from affecting students. However there is the trade off between

Students queried the availability of prelims resit solutions for even years.

ACTION: Stuart to look into Prelims resit solutions for even years, and bring this to teaching committee if they are not available on the website. [Post meeting note: these solutions are not available, so this will be considered in TC HT week 7.]

ACTION: Stuart to raise at TC the need to clearly state department policies on provision of solutions so that students can understand what solutions they can expect to find.

It was raised that students would like access to very old past papers, although it was noted that some solutions will not exist (and none were written with the intention of being released) and that these papers are often too old to be helpful to students.

(b) Maths and Philosophy logic and set theory courses examinable at part A.

It was raised that there is an imbalance between part A and B workload (e.g: 6 Maths exams in part B, 4 in Part A). A concern was raised that the weighting and grading could be affected by this imbalance. It was noted that students would like to be able to sit the exams for Logic and Set theory in the same year that they are being taught them. It was noted that the outcome from these discussions at JCMP should be circulated to JCCU.

ACTION: Maths and Philosophy rep to raise this with JCMP.

8. Reports from the meetings of the Faculty and Teaching Committees

(a) Mathematics

It was noted that the departmental strategic Working Group meetings are ongoing. It is expected that these groups will be producing interim reports which will come to JCCU next term.

(b) Statistics

It was noted that the centralised admissions process for Mathematics and Mathematics and Statistics has been approved by all university committees, and will be implemented in the admissions round of December 2023. It was noted that by the end of 4th term the students will need to decide between Mathematics and Mathematics and Stats. It was also noted that if students want to change course later on they will need to go through their college.

(a) Items to refer to Faculty or Teaching Committee

No business was raised.

9. Open Days

It was agreed that this does not need to be a standing item on every JCCU agenda.

It was noted that there will be an in person open day April 22 (end of week 0). A request was made for a student to do a day in the life presentation. It was noted that this is usually done by MURC, and there is the option of compensation.

ACTION: MURC to source a presenter for a day in the life presentation.

10. Lecture list for Trinity Term 2022

The lecture list will appear on the Mathematical Institute's website

<https://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/students/lecture-lists>

11. AOB

None.