

Minutes

Mathematics JCCU Meeting - Trinity Term 2021

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9 Any other business**9****1 Apologies**

Dr Vicky Neale, Amirul Adil

1.1 Attendance

Prof. Stuart White - Chair

Rodrigo Marlasca Aparicio - MURC President

Abel Ayettey - MURC Questionnaires Rep

Cameron Lee - MURC Access rep

Giulia Lanzafame - MURC Diversity & Inclusion, Maths & Philosophy Reps

Jingjie Yang - MURC Maths & Computer Science Rep

Rachel Laing - MURC Maths & Stats Rep

Thomas Feerick - MURC Treasurer

Ryan Salter - MURC IT, 4th year Reps (taking minutes on behalf of Amirul)

Dr Richard Earl - Director of undergraduate studies

Dr Neil Laws - Director of studies, Department of Statistics

Dr James Munro - Access & outreach officer

Barbara Galinska - Undergrad studies administrator

2 Meeting held on Friday 5th February 2021**2.1 Minutes of Previous Meeting (Friday 5th February 2021)**

Ratified with no objections

2.2 Matters Arising

2.2.1 Information about progression to Part C

The department has not been able to implement individual emails to students who have successfully progressed from part B to part C this year. For this year, Dr Earl suggested we could send an email to all students, informing that all emails about non-progression to Part C have now been sent out, so everyone else can progress?

Students still have concerns about having to tally up their own avg USM to know if they are coming back next year.

ACTION: Dr Earl, Speak to Charlotte Turner-Smith about this, pass on outcome of discussion to Dr Laws.

2.2.2 Usability of exam information site

Students very thankful for model solutions. Also for exam information memes. Thanks to the academic admin team from JCCU. It is noticeable that a large amount of work has gone into this and we appreciate that.

2.2.3 Maths Education and ambassadors scheme

These courses are offered by the education department who are not in position to offer them in the 2021-22 academic year, and the maths institute is not in a position right now to offer promises or a timeline for if and when they might return. The department will communicate this to students at the project options fair, in the form of some slides.

Rodrigo noted that many students hope this can be reinstated in the future and Rachel expressed that it was very important for this to be communicated early to students, as her experience was of having to choose new options at the start of Michaelmas Term, after lecture courses had already started.

Rodrigo asked if students interested in this course could be signposting towards Teaching based resources for mathematics, to which Dr Earl suggested contacting Jenny in the Education department, and Dr Munro suggested promoting the ambassador and outreach work done by the department.

Prof White noted that in its recent meeting teaching committee expressed its support for role these courses play in our programme in the longer term.

ACTION: Link up the messages of course cancellation with information about how to get involved in outreach and ambassador schemes.

3 Reports from Faculty and Teaching committees

3.1 Mathematics

Prof White asked for feedback about how MURC members would like to get the report from teaching committee.

Thomas and Giulia expressed that they would like to be able to see the Teaching Committee minutes, and for them to be available to students in general. Dr Earl said they are published behind SSO, available to faculty, but is not sure if they are available to students or not.

Rodrigo noted that they bring anything that they think is important to MURC, but that they don't think they are supposed to give information to all students (don't want to begin rumours of unconfirmed and undecided policies etc.).

Dr Earl: Could investigate whether it is viable to produce a 3rd set of minutes covering abridged section of the unreserved minutes. Some things have caveats and may not be confirmed, but if Rodrigo were to pass this on, might begin rumours. So we reassure Rodrigo that things are happening, but there is no final decisions made.

ACTION: Investigate the status of teaching committee minutes.

3.1.1 New intercollegiate class registration policy

Discussed in week 7 HT21, and will go live this term. No further discussion.

3.1.2 Electronic submission for intercollegiate classes

Continuation of online work submission will continue for a 1 year trial, after which point it will be reviewed.

3.1.3 Restructured Part C problem sheets

Part C problem sheets to be restructured to make clear what would be covered in class, what is introductory and what is extension/beyond the course. This will be reviewed to then see if it goes to part B.

Rodrigo asked how this review would be undertaken. Prof White said that we would want communication from students and tutors/TAs (grad students). This feedback would then go through teaching committee. Dr Earl: Haven't set a particular criteria.

3.1.4 Workload working group

The workload working group recommended a restructure of the delivery of the prelims Introduction to University Mathematics course, though the exact timeline for implementing this is not finalised.

Dr Earl explained that the problem with this course is that the 8 lectures are haphazardly spread across weeks 1 and 2, so in a normal year students have to come in for 1 random lecture, then tutors rearrange teaching around that. Hoping in future to put the work online earlier so people get into the material earlier on, and longer term integrate with Opportunity Oxford. Dr Laws said that this change would be to allow people to access it earlier. Spreading it over the summer when people may have less to do, would help people be at the same point to start. It was noted that the department shouldn't assume that students are going to be able to learn this over the summer due to different pre-university home situations.

In a broader discussion of the introduction to university mathematics course a number of points were raised: some participants noting that they found the course content difficult and confusing, and the name 'introduction' could be discouraging. Other participants noted how this might be integrated with practises at individual colleges, and the point was made that it would be useful to get a wider undergraduate view on this course.

3.1.5 Dissertation details being removed from public site

The department is intending to move dissertation details behind SSO, as some of these contain ongoing research ideas, which faculty don't want on public websites. A full list of titles and some example projects likely to still be public, but the full explanation and details would require SSO.

3.1.6 Gender diversity targets

Very regrettably, department has missed its gender diversity targets for Prelims and Part A lecturers for this year and the forthcoming year. This policy is now being reviewed by teaching committee and the equality, diversity and inclusion committee.

3.2 Statistics

Dr Laws reported that the statistics department felt overall the same as the mathematics teaching committee on a number of those things. They aim to maintain consistency between the departments. A lot of points from Mathematics above have been adopted too within Statistics

3.3 Items to refer to Faculty or Teaching Committee

Nothing noted.

4 MURC Business

None in advance.

Prof White emphasised that it is helpful to get the point points raised in the advance (including AOB by email to the chair in advance), so that faculty members of JCCU are able to provide better answers to queries raised by MURC.

AOB was brought forward to ensure MURC points are made during this meeting:

4.1 Provisions for part C exams in 2021-22

What are provisions for Part C exams. Some people have done all of their university exams open book, will there be a change to this for next year, people having to learn a new exam format.

Prof White: No decisions made for any exams in regards to pandemic for 2021-22 academic year.

Dr Earl: No arrangements made yet.

4.2 Teaching arrangements for 2021-22

Thomas: Current policy on reuploaded lectures? Can lecturers reuse lectures from last year?

Prof White: If bespoke videos were made in Trinity 2020, then they could be reused in Trinity 2021, with lecturers encouraged to review and correct where appropriate. No decision has been made regarding teaching arrangements for Michaelmas Term yet.

There was a broader discussion of video lectures and potential directions in which policy on what is a very new development might develop in the medium to longer term.

5 Questionnaires

Prof White: Noted the low questionnaire response rate from last term, and emphasised that as we're videoing lectures essentially for the first time, we very much want to receive feedback from students about how this is being received.

Thomas: We get asked for feedback, but we don't see that anything is being changed. Having looked back at problem sheets and notes from 6 years ago, some of them seem totally the same. Rachel: Hard to make changes if you only get handful of responses. Can we incentivise people to actually respond better?

Dr Earl: Can see concern if sheets haven't changed. Prelims only 7 years old, when it was overhauled then. Stats course is very different to previously. We have taken feedback from students and faculty: got rid of courses on *applications* (due to student feedback) and *optimisation* (due to faculty feedback). Some courses haven't changed but this is probably because if it's not broke we don't try to fix it. Some courses took 2-3 years to be right. Might have 20% saying of students saying a course was a bit too easy and 20% a bit too difficult, which is fine. Dr Earl also gave an example from his own practise of changing problem sheet difficulty in response to student feedback.

It was asked whether the department could publish syllabus information changes and Dr Earl explained that the department is very wary about having multiple syllabuses, and Prof White observed that past syllabuses (but not schedule of units) are available

on the course archive.

Rodrigo: Were there more responses to questionnaires with it going on the website?

Prof White: Notable decrease in responses, potentially because of the lockdown in HT.

Dr Earl: Captive audience feedback is the best way, other departments do online ones and get very few responses. Paper forms in lectures and classes seem to work much better, so hopefully will be better again in future.

Dr Munro: Do we collect stats from TAs on how students are doing on problem sheets? This might be a missed opportunity. Anonymised data from class reports.

Prof White: Summarised by emphasising that while it can sometimes feels like feedback isn't being acted on, in fact both the department and individual lecturers do take it very seriously, but the department can't always communicate what changes have been made (and indeed many lecturers regularly make small changes to their practise based on feedback and reflection and the department doesn't know).

ACTION: Investigate whether class TA data data could be collected to get an idea of how well courses were going in general, and between classes.

6 Open days and induction

Dr Munro: Thanks to ambassadors who have taken part in Online Open Days. Two or three more at end of June/start of July which will be online only. Trying to make "what's it like being a maths student" video for these open days. Working with ambassadors and MURC on this.

Don't yet know if September open day will be online only (strongly suspect that it will be though).

7 Part B and C Options

7.1 Registration for mathematics Part B and Part C courses

Deadline Friday week 10 TT. Exams going to be finished by Friday week 9.

7.2 Mathematics Part B/C options fair

Pre-recorded videos by the end of Week 4 TT21. Form to contact individual lecturers, and ask questions. Students really encouraged to do this. If get same questions, can put FAQs together.

7.3 Projects lecture

Will be in the form of slides made available around/with the options fair. Will include information about Mathematics Education/Ambassadors courses (discussed above) here too.

8 Induction of First year students in MT 2021

Dr Earl: Undecided because things may change over long vacation. For the current academic year, a variety of slides and videos made which was good for students not in time zone.

Dr Laws: Did people think videos were good, or would recorded live session be better?
Thomas: 0th week, students very busy. May be less likely to watch a video whereas more inclined to attend a live session.

Rodrigo: Pre-recorded a bit of a cold welcome. Live session with questions at the end would be very good for students.

Dr Earl: Concerns about doing Q&A in a recorded session. People may not want to ask anything if it is recorded.

Ryan: Could do anonymous submissions with slido.do to help with issues with recordings and lecturer vetting questions before read out.

Dr Earl: That would be good for running a recorded session.

9 Any other business

Prof White said it will be good to (hopefully) see MURC members in Michaelmas in person with **PIZZA!** (this is minuted to ensure pizza is delivered as promised).

ACTION: Prof White: ensure there is pizza at the first meeting of JCCU in Michaelmas term.