

Mathematics Undergraduate Representation Committee

Thursday 3rd March 2011

Confirmed minutes of meeting

Attending: Ben Hoskin (*President, LMH*), Chan-Young Song (*Secretary, Balliol*), Elena Sizikova (*Maths & Computer Science Rep*), David Hagger (*Questionnaire Rep, Univ*), Jamie Potter (*Open Day Rep, Maths & Stats Rep, Worcester*), Young Hyun Choi (*Treasurer, 1st Year Rep, St. Hilda's*), Chris Tatum (*St Edmund Hall*), Rosie Cretney (*Queens*), Bryn Horsfield-Schonhut (*St. Hugh's*), Jo French (*Keble*), Anne Meiburg (*Lincoln*), Ben Duffield (*St. John's*), Henry Bradford, Matthew Saxton, Axelander Martin, Thomas Hwang.

Apologies: Joseph Chittenden-Veal, Karyn Cooke, Petra Staynova, Kirsti Biggs.

1) Introduction

- a. Minutes of previous meeting, *Friday 27th February 2011*, accepted without further amendments.

2) Problems with 3rd year classes

- a. Matthew Saxton reported that there is a problem with the third year's Odd/Even week system. For example with the special relativity, the problem sheets were too much ahead of its lectures and one needed to read ahead with the online notes which aren't very good. In some cases, the online notes don't exist.
 - 1) One suggested they could divide the fortnightly sheets into two halves of weekly sheets so that the students only do the problems for that week.
 1. Another pointed out that the problem with this is that some courses aren't suitable for weekly sheets.
 - 2) Other responses:
 - Having early term feedback forms (e.g. is the lecturer's handwriting legible?)
 - Email the lecturers to remind them to link the lecture notes to the problem sheets.
 - MURC should email the Maths undergraduates asking if they face the same problem.
- b. Kirsti Biggs sent us an email with a problem a third year student found with the course B10b:

*"There are no worked examples.
The notes miss out all the details.
There is no explanation of what anything means.
He got 2 and a half lectures behind so made up for this by doing a whole lecture on notes in 20 minutes.
His notes are written with very poor grammar."*

 - 1) One of the MURC members was able to second this problem and Ben has agreed to email Peter Neumann about this.

c. B8b

- 1) It was suggested that the course had no clear structure, too much content, unexplained terminology, and the students needed to be able to use MATLAB which is new.
 1. It was suggested that MATLAB needs to be made a prerequisite for this course.
 2. Need more detailed course descriptions.
 3. The department should be made aware of this serious issue.
 4. One suggested a short term solution to this problem which is that BSP project includes sessions on how to use MATLAB so the students could attend to them.
 5. Ben has agreed to email the lecturer about this.

3) Careers Officer

- a. One suggested that there weren't enough careers information for mathematicians.
- b. MURC has passed the amendment for the careers officer's responsibility(see appendix a.) to:
 - 1) researching careers and internships especially suited to mathematics students
 - 2) providing content for IT officer for updating the website and providing publicity of such opportunities.

Someone also suggested to add '3)researching, contacting alumni, provide talk experience' but this made the role too much. Although it was suggested we could form a team of careers officers for this, it was pointed out by someone else that it was already difficult to find people for this position.
- c. Ben Duffield elected as careers officer.

4) Suggested new maths society

- a. Alex Martin has suggested that there is very little opportunity for maths undergrads to see how maths is used. Siam is held only once a term and it's for graduates. The fact that only 28% of the mathematicians go to research means much go to careers. Alex suggests that we need information much more related to maths and mathematicians in Oxford.

5) Careers CV workshop

- a. Careers Service emailed MURC asking:
 - Would CV workshops or drop-in sessions for mathematicians would be welcomed by third and fourth year students?
 - Which term would it be most suitable?
 - Is there a preference for a workshop, drop-in sessions or both?
 - 1) MURC responded that the CV help would be welcomed and that it would be most suitable to be done in Michaelmas (for summer internships applications) as opposed to Trinity when revision takes place. Also workshops are preferred.

6) Open days helpers

- a. In the JCCU meeting Richard Earl asked MURC who would be available to help out in the open days which are held 6th&7th of July and 16th of September.

7) Exam entry forms&Calculators

- a. Matthew Scroggs emailed us some problems he found.

“Exam entry forms: We have to hand them in weeks before the deadline for switching courses and a long time before other subjects, which limits our chance to try courses for a few weeks before signing up to the exam.”

- 1) Someone suggested perhaps this is a problem with the Exam Schools. But one responded that it cannot be the case because the chemists only just decided.
- 2) It was decided that we need more awareness of the key deadlines and what the options are like. The online descriptions are too short and hard to understand.
 1. Anne Meiburg(*Lincoln*) agreed to help out in creating info sheets containing key dates for the beginning of the year.(option choosing, rough exam dates, diary)

- b. *“Calculators: Only certain models are allowed for exams and lots of us have to go out and buy new ones. I know a lot of people who would pay £1 or so to borrow one from MURC if they started such a service (with a deposit to buy a new one if they never give it back?).”*

- 1) MURC thought buy and sell idea was good but we would first need to ask first how many are affected by this, which courses need them and how expensive they are? Decided to discuss again in next meeting.

8) 4th year part c algebraic geometry

- a. Henry Bradford reported us of some of the problems with the course.

-Maths errors in notes, so no one trusts them

-Syllabus and lectures off sync

-No past papers (because new course)

- 1) It was pointed out that the past paper problem applies to other courses such as part c both groups courses
- 2) Ben has agreed to email the lecturers and the JCCU about this problem and for possible specimen papers.

Appendix

- a. m) Careers Rep. – responsible for

- 1) researching careers and internships especially suited to mathematics students
- 2) updating the website and providing publicity of such opportunities.

Chan-Young Song, 26/05/2011