

Mathematics Undergraduate Representative Committee

Wednesday 22 October 1997

Present

- [Juliet Kemp](#) (Chairperson), [Terry Boon](#), Musab Bora, [Jim Bowden](#), [Mark Colman](#), Jon Emberson, Katie Golding, [Stephen Gower](#), Philip Hannay, Ruth Holland, Tom Lancaster, Tom Lorenc, Janet Lucke, Stephen Nichols, [Christine Nix](#), Emma Pointon, Julius Ross and [Claire Jones](#) (Secretary). Apologies for absence were received from Josh Bell, [Jim Hanson](#), Camilla Metz, Louise Pickwell, Mike Roberts and Chris Swift.

Minutes of Last Meeting

- [Minutes](#) were approved.

Finals and Mods 1997

- On the whole, the first set of Finals for the new course was thought to be reasonably fair, although a6 was particularly hard and there were no metric space questions on a4, despite this approach being used in lectures. It was felt that less bookwork had been examined than in previous years. Specimen questions for section a were reasonably close to the real thing and one finalist had expressed his gratitude for the general information sent out by Mary Lunn beforehand. It was noted that papers b5 to b8 were scheduled consecutively which seemed unfair on those specialising in applied options. It was suggested that one pure and one applied b paper could be set per day, thus distributing the papers more evenly for a significant number of candidates. One finalist felt it would have been useful if the stickers on desks had shown candidate numbers as well as names and that this was unlikely to compromise confidentiality.
- In Mods, Papers One (algebra) and Three (non-physical applied maths) were felt to be particularly difficult. Some undergraduates thought the exams were markedly different from practice questions and did not perceive them as a fair test of what people "really knew". A sorting algorithm question on Paper 3 was felt to give an unfair advantage to Maths and Computation students who study such algorithms in greater detail than other mathematicians.
- Paper 5 (Hardware and Logic) of Maths and Computation Mod had been found very difficult and bore little resemblance to the work covered in lectures.

Section c

- It was noted that all colleges represented at the meeting, with the exception of St Hugh's, gave their fourth year mathematicians joint JCR and MCR status.

- It was queried how the marks from Parts I and II of finals would be combined. A request was made for provisional honour classes to be published after Part I as is done in other subjects with split finals, as some students had had difficulty in contacting their tutor to find out their results.
- It was noted that two additional section c courses in statistics had been added in Week 0, resulting in three statistics options in Hilary but only one in Michaelmas. [Mark Colman](#) expressed his dissatisfaction with the Techniques in Applied Mathematics course which has 32 lectures, whereas all other section c courses have 16 lectures.
- The meeting was informed that at least one c course (which was also an MSc option) did not have any classes available for it. A group of undergraduates had written to the Sub-Faculty asking for classes to be provided in Hilary, but the outcome of this was not yet known.
- Camilla Metz had written to the secretary to voice the anger and frustration of the fourth year mathematicians she had spoken to. They were finding the classes badly organised and were unhappy with the lack of mathematical modelling courses in section c.
- The problems of choosing a and b subjects when the implications for section c were unknown was once again noted. The choices in the fourth year seem to be very restricted as a result of options studied in Part I. It was questioned how much the options in section c were likely to change in future years and whether the current synopses would be a good guide for undergraduates currently in their second or third years.
- It was requested that the reading lists for section c be given to the RSL so that the relevant books could be moved from stacks onto open shelves, making them more accessible. Those fourth years preparing dissertations were having difficulties in obtaining some of the books they needed, particularly those published outside the UK. A solution to this problem would be to grant them access to the Maths Institute Library, as is done for MSc students.
- There was confusion over the number of c courses fourth years were expected to study, particularly those opting for a dissertation. It was asked whether specimen questions would be available for section c. [Juliet Kemp](#) reported that this had already been discussed at JCCU, but that undergraduates were advised to use lecture notes and problem sheets for revision as each course was likely to vary considerably from year to year.

Bookstall

- Musab Bora announced that the bookstall would be open 9:45am to 1pm on Wednesdays this term and requested more volunteers to help. He reported that business had been good so far this term although not many people had sold books to the bookstall. The sales at the Induction Day had totalled £670.

Open Day Report

- [Mark Colman](#) distributed a report about the 1997 Open Day and a provisional timetable for the 1998 event. The main change planned for the next Open Day is a later start due to the abolition of the admissions talk. This will be replaced by a chance to talk informally to tutors immediately before lunch. Mark drew attention to the problems experienced with the questionnaire in 1997: there appeared to have been some misunderstanding as to whether "1" or "5" was the response for "strongly agree". It was suggested that boxes should be used in future with clear labels at the top of each column, rather than circling numbers as was done last year.

Survey of Numbers Taking Optional Courses

- A questionnaire was distributed to MURC reps, as had been proposed at the previous meeting. Reps were asked to complete the survey by either talking to their colleges' mathematicians individually or by speaking to their senior maths tutor.

Induction Day

- Once again, the Induction Day had clashed with Freshers' Fair, despite the discussion about this at JCCU in Michaelmas '96. Alternative times were suggested including 12-2pm on Friday of Week 0, Saturday morning of Week 0 or Monday afternoon of Week 1, although this might cause problems with lectures. Another suggestion was to have one morning and one afternoon session on Friday of noughth week, with freshers allocated by college in order to avoid clashes with Freshers' Fair (which is organised according to college).

Any Other Business

- [Claire Jones](#) reminded those present that they needed to find a new MURC rep for their college before the next meeting.
- Tom Lorenc will take the vacant place at the next JCCU meeting and [Terry Boon](#) will attend instead of Katie Golding.
- There being no further business, the meeting closed.