

Mathematics Undergraduate Representative Committee

Thursday, 28th January 2010

Unconfirmed Minutes of Meeting

Present: Henry Bradford (*St John's, President (Chair)*), Stephen O'Keeffe (*Hertford, Secretary, Fourth Year Rep.*), Alex Harrison (*Keble, Treasurer*), Samiha Ismail (*Keble, I.T. Officer*), Rosie Cretney (*Queen's, Open Day Co-ordinator*), Karyn Cooke (*Keble, Publicity Officer*), Petra Staynova (*Pembroke, Maths & Philosophy Rep.*), Ben Hoskin (*Lady Margaret Hall, First Year Rep.*), Anne-Marie Imafidon (*Keble*), Josephine French (*Keble*), Bryn Horsfield-Schonhut (*St Hugh's*), Kirsti Biggs (*Magdalen*), Michael Kearns (*Hertford*).

Apologies: Kazuhiro Nomoto (*Merton*)

1. Meeting held on 27th November 2009

(a) Minutes. These were accepted.

(b) Matters Arising. None.

2. Vacant Committee Positions

(a) Maths & Computer Science Rep. Anne-Marie Imafidon was elected unopposed.

3. Mailing Lists and I.T. Issues

The MURC mailing lists and Mathematical Institute login account were discussed. Samiha reported that she had received a request from the departmental IT team asking if they could remove the shared-access computer account and delete the murc-announce mailing list. There were no objections to the latter, although Stephen commented that the account is used to host the MURC web pages. Samiha agreed to raise this with the IT department to see if the pages could be relocated. It was also noted that MURC has access to a mailing list run by OUCS (murc-at-maillist.ox.ac.uk) and Samiha questioned whether this could be used instead of the murc-members list. This issue is currently unresolved, but will be addressed in the near future.

4. B5a Course

It was noted that a student had contacted MURC regarding concerns they had with the MT 2009 B5a course. Henry reported he had received similar feedback from other students and Anne-Marie asked whether the results of the course questionnaire had indicated this too. It was agreed that this should be raised at the next JCCU meeting.

5. Timing of Examinations

Petra reported some students have concerns regarding the timing of Moderations papers. In particular, they feel that 3 hours is not sufficient time to answer 5 questions and that most time in an exam is spent on 'bookwork', rather than parts of questions requiring more thought. She suggested that each paper could be given to a faculty member to complete in order to judge the time needed for a student to complete them.

Some discussion followed and points raised included the fact that bookwork is regarded as an important part of the syllabus. Moreover, mark allocations are designed to reflect the time spent on each part of a question and the Maths Institute tends to balance bookwork with harder problems in order to differentiate between exam candidates. It was also noted that courses do vary in difficulty and the structure of the Moderations and Part A courses is currently under review. Stephen enquired whether student consultation would take place as part of the review and Henry agreed to check this with Dr Curnock.

6. End of Year Questionnaire

Stephen reported the 2009 committee had begun work on an end-of-year questionnaire and a draft was circulated. Petra commented that the Philosophy Faculty currently uses online questionnaires and suggested the Mathematical Institute do the same. (See item 9). It was agreed to pass the questionnaire on to Dean to discuss further with Dr Curnock.

7. Careers Rep.

It was suggested that MURC could create a position for a Careers Rep. who would be responsible for updating the website and noticeboard with job adverts and help with the organisation of careers events. Henry agreed to discuss this with Dr Curnock.

8. Study Skills and Finals Forum

Henry reported that each year, students at Parts B and C are offered exam preparation classes. Previously, these have been run by Dr Scataglioni-Belghitar who will soon leave Oxford. Both Anne-Marie and Stephen commented they were unaware of such classes and suggested that they could be more widely publicised in future. Henry added that they could also be extended to Part A students too. It was also noted that from now on, OUSU will expect departments to organise these sessions themselves.

9. Weblearn

Henry reported that the Minerva class lists system will be retired in the next few years and a replacement system is currently being sought. Presently B6b and B8b are trialling Weblearn as an alternative and Dr Curnock would welcome any feedback from students taking these courses. Furthermore, Weblearn is also being considered as a possible submission system for projects and dissertations, although there is a certain degree of incompatibility with LaTeX files. Petra suggested using the system to host online questionnaires and it was agreed that the end-of-year questionnaire could be used as a trial.

10. Part A DE's for Maths & Computer Science Students

It was noted that some Maths and Computer Science students have experienced problems with the Part A Differential Equations course, in that some parts rely on knowledge of Part A Complex Analysis and Mods Calculus of Two Variables. It was suggested that students wishing to take Differential Equations be advised about these issues so they don't restrict their options at Parts B and C. In addition, as a short term solution, it was suggested that Maths and Computer Science students be provided with an alternative question whenever knowledge of material relying on courses they may not have taken is tested.

11. Social Event

Stephen proposed the idea of a social event for the outgoing and incoming committees. Rosie agreed to organise this and contact people with the arrangements.

12. AOB

- Jo enquired as to whether it would be possible to increase the number of 'Other' mathematical options students are allowed to take at Part B. Rosie suggested that the 'O' category could be split into sub-categories and a quota imposed on each group. Henry agreed to raise this at JCCU.
- Henry reported he would shortly distribute questionnaires from a student at Warwick about the Oxford maths course. Dr Curnock is keen for students to take part as she believes it will prove informative for the faculty and the student concerned will provide further information at the next JCCU meeting.
- Alex reported he will shortly put up lists of books currently in stock on the noticeboard. He also suggested publicising the bookstall in the Engineering Department and Comlab. This

was agreed.

- Henry asked if each committee member could provide a photo of themselves, which will be put on the noticeboard.
- Karyn reported many first year students would be interested in buying MURC or Invariants hoodies. Rosie replied that the Invariants are currently investigating this and would probably send out details in the future.

SO'K 01/02/2010