Minutes

Present: Dr Cotton-Barratt, Prof. Dancer, Dr Dyson, Dr Earl (Chair), Prof. Howison, Dr Jones, Dr Laws, Dr Macdonald, Dr Qian, Mr Spells (Junior Observer).

In attendance: Mrs Lowe, Mrs Turner-Smith.

1. Apologies
Apologies were received from Dr Porter and Prof. Sparks.

2. (i) Minutes of the Teaching Committee meeting of 23rd October 2013
The minutes were AGREED.

(ii) Matters arising not on the agenda
Dr Earl reported on the following matters arising from the previous meeting.

Item 3: Mrs Turner-Smith had made all of the requested amendments to the standing orders.

Item 8(iii): A list of institute notes held by the department had been obtained and would be reviewed.

Item 8 (v): Mrs Turner-Smith and Dr Macdonald had met with Dr Gillow to discuss the provision of laptops for the computational mathematics sessions. The arrangements were working at present.

3. Examiners’ Reports
(i) Mathematics and Statistics Part B Examiners’ Report
There were no comments on this report as it had already been discussed by the committee (meeting of 23rd October).

(ii) Mathematics and Statistics Part A – Aston
The committee received the report from Prof. Aston, noting his complementary comments about the course and the mathematics and statistics students.

Ben Spells commented that students found the level of detail in the mathematics and statistics examiners’ reports helpful.

4. Chair’s Business
(i) Numbering of Part B and C courses
Dr Earl outlined the need for the numbering system for the Part B and C courses to be updated, primarily to address a number of anomalies in the current systems which exist for historical reasons. It was agreed that the numbering system should convey information about the part and subject area to which the course belonged as well as indicating which term the course would be lectured in. The committee considered a number of options before deciding on the following coding:

Part [B/C] Subject Panel [1-10] . Course Number [1-10] Term [(m)/(h)]

e.g. B1.2(h) for the Part B Set Theory course.

The project options and the other/non-mathematical courses would also be incorporated into the new numbering system. It was AGREED to prepare a list of the course codes using this new coding and circulate it to the committee.

ACTION: RAE/HSL
(ii) Departmental Lecturership to promote public understanding of mathematics in the UK
Dr Earl summarised the background to the proposal, explaining that following on from the ‘Development of Exceptional Talent in Mathematics’ workshop run by the Clay Mathematics Institute (CMI) in Oxford in August it is proposed that a programme of summer schools for school and undergraduate students be developed. This would include the UNIQ summer schools, some UKMT summer schools, and a summer school based on the PROMYS programme run at Boston University which the CMI is interested in supporting. The new departmental lecturer would be in particular responsible for organising the PROMYS summer school, and may help with others, as well as developing initiatives to promote the understanding of mathematics and undertaking some undergraduate teaching (the exact duties would be subject to further refinement). The committee were in favour of the proposal noting that it would complement rather than duplicate our existing outreach activities. Dr Macdonald questioned why the PROMYS style summer school would be restricted to UK and EU students rather than being open to students from around the world and it was noted that this was a matter for the CMI to agree on.

[Note after meeting: the proposal does state that the Oxford version of PROMYS would be aimed at students from around the world.]

(iii) Visiting Students from Fudan University
The committee considered the paper from Dr Sanders setting out the arrangements for the visiting students from Fudan University, noting the students would be following a structured one-year course based on the fourth year of the mathematics degree and using the same assessments. It was proposed that this paper could form the basis of programmes for visiting students from other institutions but new proposals would still be considered carefully to ensure that the visiting students were of a sufficiently high calibre and that the programme would be beneficial to them. The committee were asked whether, subject to these provisos, it would be acceptable for the number of visiting students following this programme (or similar) to increase slightly over the next two-three years by four or five students. The committee were broadly supportive of this but raised the following points.

- A college willing to provide accommodation for visiting students would need to be found for new programmes and most colleges only have a limited amount of accommodation available.
- In accordance with Teaching Committee policy, the visiting students would need to be officially recognised by the University in order to be eligible to attend classes.
- The department should ensure that it is involved in deciding which students should be admitted to these programmes.
- An increase in visiting students could impact on the teaching of smaller options, such as statistics courses, which may require additional classes to meet demand.
- If all visiting students were to complete a dissertation it would place a strain on the department’s resources. However, the committee were reluctant to actively discourage visiting students from undertaking project work.
- That the impact on student numbers and the uptake of the MSc courses should be considered.

The committee also discussed the possible impact of the change to the Part C entry level and the increased tuition fees on the number of students proceeding to the fourth year. It was felt that the visiting student programme would provide a useful indication of the level of interest there might be in an independent fourth year. It was agreed that Dr Earl would be the natural point of contact in the Department for similar potential connections in the future.

MPLS Divisional Papers
(iv) Review of scaling
The committee noted the paper from division and the recommendations it made to Education Committee concerning changes needed to the University’s guidance on scaling to make the guidance more representative of current practice within the division.
(v) National Student Survey 2013 results
Dr Earl highlighted the mathematics score for two of the statements on the national student survey: ‘The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance’ (60% agreed) and ‘My communication skills have improved’ (50% agreed). The committee acknowledged that the department has made the examination conventions clearer and also that students may not appreciate the ways in which the degree equips them with communication skills. However, the committee considered that further improvements could be made to address these issues. For the former, it was AGREED that examples of mock answers to exam question scoring 1, 2.1 and 2.2 marks should be published. With regards to the latter, it was noted that some colleges do give their students opportunities to give presentations and Dr Dyson AGREED to collate the resources used so that these could be made available to all colleges. It was noted that a template for latex presentations is available on the website. It was also AGREED to add a talk on how to get the most out of tutorials to the undergraduate induction.

ACTION: RAE/JD

5. Joint Committee for Mathematics & Philosophy
(i) Minutes of the meeting of Tuesday 5th November
Dr Earl drew attention to item 3(b) in the minutes which concerned the availability of mathematics Part B courses for the present Part A mathematics and philosophy students. It was noted that since details of next year’s Part B courses had not been published there was some uncertainty amongst the students about which Part A courses would be essential pre-requisites for the Part B courses they hoped to take. Dr Earl reported that he had written to subject panels to ask them to provide, by the end of week 8, a list of the courses they would be offering in 2014–15 and the pre-requisites for these courses. This information would be circulated to students in week 9 so that they would be able to use this information when deciding which Part A options to study.

6. Department of Statistics Academic Committee
There was no business to discuss.

7. Department of Computer Science Teaching Committee
There was no business to discuss.

8. Joint Consultative Committee with Undergraduates
(i) Minutes of the meeting of Friday 1st November
The minutes of the meeting were tabled. Mr Spells reported that MURC would be discussing a number of the matters arising at their meeting on Friday and would refer matters back to the JCCU meeting as necessary, in particular the issue of the performance of female candidates in examinations.

9. Projects Committee
(i) Minutes of the meeting of Friday 18th October
The minute of the Projects Committee meeting were noted.

10. Undergraduate Admissions business/Admissions Coordinator’s Business
Dr Cotton-Barratt informed the committee that despite the problems with the administration of this year’s test, the process had only been delayed by one day overall. Dr Earl and Prof. Howison thanked Dr Cotton-Barratt for all her hard work.

11. Faculty Teaching Advisor’s Business
There was no business to discuss.

12. MSc Matters
There was no business to discuss.
13. **Draft lecture list for HT 2014** [http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/notices/lecture-lists](http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/notices/lecture-lists)
The draft lecture list was noted.

14. **Subject Panels 2013-14**
The subject panels for 2013-14 were noted.

15. **AOB**
There was no further business.