

FACULTIES OF MATHEMATICS, COMPUTER SCIENCE & STATISTICS

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE WITH UNDERGRADUATES

A meeting of this committee was held on Friday 3 February at 2pm in the New Higman Room, Mathematical Institute.

Present: Chan-Young Song (*MURC Chairperson*), Young Hyun Choi (*MURC Secretary*), Nimish Telang (*MURC Treasurer/Bookstall Manager*), Elena Sizikova (*MURC Mathematics & Computer Science Rep and Careers Rep*), Annekathrin Meiburg (*MURC Questionnaires Rep*), Ben Spells (*MURC First Year Rep*), Dr Peter Neumann (*Faculty Teaching Advisor*), Dr Neil Laws (*Department of Statistics*), Dr Richard Earl (*Chair, Director of Undergraduate Studies & Joint Committee for Mathematics and Philosophy*).

In attendance: Mrs Lowe

Apologies: Seung Jai Lee, Matthew Saxton, Petra Staynova and Ms Louise Sumner.

Minutes

1. Meeting held on Friday 28 October 2011

(a) Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were **ACCEPTED**.

(b) Matters arising not on the agenda

There were no further matters arising.

2. Reports from the meetings of the Faculty/Teaching/Academic Committees

(a) Mathematics

Fourth-year workload: it was reported that the increase in the fourth year workload for the Mathematics, and Mathematics and Statistics courses had been confirmed. From Michaelmas term 2013, students on these two courses would need to offer eight 16-hour lectures courses for examination. A mathematics dissertation would have a weighting of two 16-hour courses and a statistics dissertation a weighting of three. Discussions about the workload for the Mathematics and Philosophy, and the Mathematics and Computer Science courses were on-going. Approval of this would still be needed from Division and the Senior Tutors Committee.

MMathPhys: it was hoped that the MMathPhys degree would begin in Michaelmas term 2015 and would, therefore, be open to students beginning their degree in Michaelmas term 2012. There would be a minimum entry requirement for students wishing to transfer to the MMathPhys for the fourth year of their course.

(b) Computer Science

There was no report. It was decided that the Department of Computer Science should be asked whether they still wished to have a representative on the committee.

(c) Statistics

Dr Laws had nothing further to report.

3. MURC Business

MIT Exchange: MURC were generally supportive of this idea but felt that there were a number of issues which needed further clarification, in particular how credit would be awarded for the year.

Dr Earl reported that there had been no further discussion of the proposal at the Divisional Academic Committee.

Exam entry: Mr Song reported that some students found the examination entry date for the Part B and C exams too early, resulting in them having insufficient time to choose which Hilary term courses they wished to offer for examination. It was noted that the Mathematical Institute has to abide by the dates set by the Examination Schools and that Schools have to co-ordinate the examination entry for many different courses. Nevertheless, Dr Earl and Mr Song agreed to contact the Examination Schools to ask whether it would be possible to change the entry date.

Open day: it was reported that Mr Saxton would be giving the MURC talks at the open days in April and May.

Specimen solution: Mr Song asked whether any progress had been made with producing specimen solutions to exam questions. It was noted that the Faculty are wary of producing such solutions in case they are seen by students as the canonical solution to a question. It was suggested that notes on good examination practice could be produced. It had been queried whether it would be possible to request that assessors' reports be more detailed, particularly when explaining a question with which a large number of candidates had struggled, so as to help students when they were revising questions. It was agreed to refer the matter to the Mathematics Teaching Committee.

4. Part A Review

Dr Earl reported that the new first year course structure would begin in the next academic year with the main changes being minor revisions to the course syllabi and a move to five examination papers which would now be Prelims rather than Mods.

A paper detailing the proposed new structure for the second year of the course was tabled. Dr Earl highlighted the main changes to the course syllabi and explained the new examination structure, which was based on that used for Part B. Dr Laws reported that the courses on Probability and Statistics would be core courses for Mathematics and Statistics students.

Comments were sought on the proposal and it was commented that a course on modules was preferred to a course on fields as it was thought that the latter would overlap with B9a.

5. Fourth Year Load

See minute of item 2 (a) above.

6. National Student Survey 2012

(a) Results from 2011

The committee considered the results of the 2011 NSS survey, noting that the Mathematics course ranked highly for overall course satisfaction. Dr Earl reported that the Mathematics Teaching Committee had discussed areas where student satisfaction had been lower, such as understanding examination conventions and opportunities to develop presentation skills. JCCU suggested that possible ways to address the latter included introducing more opportunities to give presentations and holding a talk on presentation skills.

(b) Survey for 2012

MURC were asked to assist with encouraging students to complete the 2012 survey.

7. Questionnaires

(a) Michaelmas Term 2011 statistical summaries

The statistical summaries were noted.

(b) Report on Michaelmas Term 2011 lecture questionnaires

The meeting received Dr Neumann's report. Ms Meiburg commented on the low numbers of questionnaires returned for some courses and asked whether the questionnaire forms could be put online. It was also asked that lecturers be made aware that MSc students attending Part B or C courses should also be allowed to complete a questionnaire. It was noted that any concerns raised by students would be followed up with the relevant lecturers, however the feedback received was generally very positive.

A number of the comments received had been concerned with the availability of lecture notes online and it was suggested that students should be reminded that there is no requirement for lecture notes to be posted online. It was also noted that it is not standard practice for solutions to problem sheets to be posted online.

8. Open Days 2012

The dates of the departmental open days were noted.

9. Lecture List for Trinity Term 2012

It was noted that the lecture list would be published in due course.

10. AOB

It was asked whether lecturers could be reminded that they should notify students if they change their problem sheets after posting them on the website.