

# Faculties of Mathematics, Computer Science & Statistics Joint Consultative Committee with Undergraduates

*Friday 1st November 2013*

## **Minutes of meeting**

**Present:** Dr Richard Earl (*Director of Undergraduate studies, Joint Committee of Math and Philosophy*), Dr Rebecca Cotton-Barratt (*Admissions and School Liaison officer*), Dr Janet Dyson (*Faculty Teaching Advisor*), Dr Neil Laws (*Director of Studies, Dept. of Statistics*), Ben Spells (*President, Open-Day Coordinator*), Ryan Murphy (*Treasurer*), David Abed (*Secretary*), William Juan (*IT rep*), Stewart Jerome (*Maths and Statistics*), Rachel Ahlquist (*Maths and Philosophy*), Lewis Morgan (*Maths and Computer Science*).

**In attendance:** Mrs Helen Lowe

**Apologies:** Joel Cawte (*Careers and Publicity Rep*), Michael Holloway (*Questionnaires rep*), Ms Catherine Goodwin (*MPLS*)

### **1) Meeting held on Friday 13 May 2013**

#### **a. Minutes of previous meeting**

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

#### **b. Matters arising**

Dr Earl confirms that progress on the 'archive of online lecture notes' and past paper solutions for Parts B & C was on going and hopefully should be ready in time for Trinity term 2014. As agreed at a recent Teaching Committee meeting, the number of past paper solutions available to students will be 2, reduced from 3 previously.

### **2) Membership of JCCU**

The names of the junior and senior member of JCCU were noted.

### **3) Oral Report on Matters Raised in Examiners Reports**

External examiners had raised concerns about the use of scaling. It was noted that there is a difference in scaling methods used between subjects throughout the university, although no change to the current system was being suggested.

Dr Earl said that the new Prelims course would be reviewed during Trinity 2014 instead of after the 2014 exams as originally intended and that MURC would be consulted, either through JCCU or directly as part of the working committee.

Dr Laws said that the Statistics' Academic Committee had discussed whether the positioning of the compulsory and non-compulsory questions on Prelims papers is significant. There was no strong feeling from JCCU about this.

Ben Spells noted that Paper V was found to be difficult – as stated in the Prelims Examiners Report - and asked that this be considered at the Prelims review.

#### **4) Reports from the meetings of Faculty/Teaching/Academic Committees**

**Gibbs Prize:** Dr Earl discussed the possibility that the Gibb's prize money would be increased, and the consideration of using the money to add second year prizes. MURC agreed that this sounded like a good idea.

**Outreach:** The question of how to organize further outreach was raised, specifically to address the issue of schools with lots of A\* grades in Mathematics but no applicants. Dr Cotton-Barratt mentioned that the department would try to target such areas and visit schools, possibly with Oxford Maths student involvement. The issue of whether the Maths department requires a student ambassador scheme was raised but dismissed as colleges already have student ambassador schemes, and the Mathemagicians already partly fill this role.

Dr Cotton-Barratt also mentioned other current outreach initiatives, such as revamping the website. It was stated that the UNIQ summer school program is to be expanded to include over 100 students.

The gender ratio of successful applicants was also raised. The possibility that the disparity is due to one further down the system was suggested, most notably at Further Maths level.

**Athena Swan:** Dr Earl mentioned that the Athena Swan bronze award for female representation has been awarded to the department. He pointed out that the specific gender issues that need addressing are not just admission rates but additionally the problem of fewer women continuing to the 4th year. A potential reason being suggested is that more women enter employment after the 3rd year. As part of resolving this problem, a promotion of the 4th year was held earlier in the term to encourage students to think about continuing on the course.

Rachel Ahlquist raised the question of female exam success rate. This was most noticeable in recent Maths and Philosophy examinations, as well as on taught masters courses, although Maths and other joint schools saw disparity in results too.

**Action: MURC to discuss the gender issue at the next meeting.**

#### **5) MURC Business**

**Mailing lists:** MURC has had some feedback from students saying that they have missed out on some careers related emails that were only sent to certain groups of people (eg. just to certain joint schools). Dr Earl said that Academic Admin had been trying to send out emails to the appropriate groups of people because they had been receiving complaints about sending too many emails. Several solutions were suggested, such as an electronic bulletin board to be placed on the department website restricted by single sign on authentication.

**Action: MURC is to consider this problem further at the next meeting.**

**New building:** MURC reported it had had positive feedback from students about the new building. Some students asked whether it would be possible to have a whiteboard in the undergraduate study room. It was reported that Charlotte Turner-Smith had asked that a whiteboard be ordered for the room.

In addition, some students asked that they be allowed access to the Maths department for study and meeting purposes out-of-hours. Dr Earl suggested that this may not be possible due to health and safety issues and insurance restrictions.

**Part A Exam deadlines:** MURC had received concerns about the deadline for Part A exam entry. Dr Earl said that the current deadline – end of 4<sup>th</sup> week in Hilary – would not be a problem for the majority of students due to the new Part A structure. However, it could be a problem for Maths and Computer Science and Maths and Philosophy because the short options paper, for them, is optional. As a result, they would need to make the decision to enter for the exam before doing any of the courses. Dr Earl raised the hope that students could be exempted from the cost of changing examination entries due to the early deadline.

**Action: MURC to discuss the issue at the next meeting.**

**Class sign-up for Statistics:** MURC raised the issue of class sign-up for statistics being done through the lecturer, which causes significant problems for students doing both Maths and Statistics options because of potential timetabling clashes. MURC suggested that it would be helpful for students to be able to sign up for Statistics classes through Minerva, as is currently done with Maths classes. After some discussion Dr Laws said that an email would be sent round to students informing them of the present arrangements. In addition, the problem should be mitigated somewhat as Maths class lists will be up earlier in Hilary so that students can prepare their possible clashes appropriately.

**Access to Past Exam Papers:** The question as to whether it is possible for a student/tutor to see a specific exam paper that the student has written was raised. The conclusion was that this was not a departmental matter and that students can request marks and comments within 6 months of an exam through the University's Data Protection Officer.

## **6) Questionnaires**

Dr Dyson noted that the questionnaire returns and results from Trinity term were satisfactory. Ben Spells raised the point that 51% of students found the Applications Problem Sheets too difficult and Dr Dyson suggested that they would not be re-used again this year in their previous form.

## **7) Open Days and Induction**

It was noted that Open days are to be held on May 3/May 10.

## **8) AOB**

There was no AOB, and the meeting concluded at 3.00pm.