

Department of Mathematics: Student-Staff Consultative Committee

Monday 15th November, 11:30 to 13:00, Teams Meeting

Present: Joshua Hill (Year 1 representative); Erin Lawrence (Year 1 representative); Hannah Cooper (Year 2 representative); Trys Hooper (Year 2 representative); Megan Atkinson (Year 3 representative, MathSoc); Rae Hughes (Year 3 representative); Helen MacDougall (Year 3 and Joint Honours representative); Rory McCranor (Year M representative); Llio Davies (Welsh medium representative); Zac Bufton (Postgraduate representative); Alex Pitchford; Adam Vellender; Adil Mughal; Kim Kenobi; Tudur Davies; Rob Douglas (RSD, Chair, Minutes); Connie Davage (Information Services); Morwenna Jeffrey.

Apologies: Simon French; Shelley Fullwood; Marina Hughes.

RSD to chair the meetings whilst they are run via Teams. Participants were welcomed to the Committee, especially Student Representatives and Connie Davage, the latter substituting for Simon French.

1 Minutes of 22/4/21

Minutes were accepted.

2 Matters arising

Joint honours students' exam timetables were congested. Of particular concern was online Maths exams following on immediately after the end submission time of a 24 hour assessment period for a Computer Science or Physics paper.

Action. Report this concern to student representatives on Faculty Academic Affairs Committee.

Update. The "Final" semester 1 exam timetable for 2021/22 included an instance of the above for (almost all of) Mathematics Year 1: student representatives and staff alike made their views known, and the timetable was adjusted.

3 Student Matters

3.1 Tell Us Now

None received by the Mathematics department.

Biology Main (EL 0.26) has been cold during some lectures. Tell Us Now sent to Estates.

Updates: Temperature of 11.8 Celsius recorded in MA30510 Differential Geometry lecture (17:00 to 17:45). Reported via student representatives at Faculty Academic Affairs Committee: once more referred to Estates.

3.2 Year M

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3.3 Year 3

(i) It was noted that a lecture (given by another department) had overrun by 15 minutes prior to a Mathematics lecture.

Update: email sent out at Faculty level reminded staff that lectures were supposed to stop at quarter to the hour.

(ii) It was confirmed that MA35810 Information Theory was considered a "Pure" module, and would have an examination hall assessment in January.

(iii) More examples in lectures and the opportunity to submit assignments for marking would be welcome in MA30510 Differential Geometry. The lecturer was happy to provide both.

(iv) A member of the student cohort had been eating hot food in lectures: this is against University regulations.

3.4 Year 2

(i) Students are welcome to email/use Teams to discuss any exercises set in MA/MT20110 Real Analysis lectures.

(ii) Students would appreciate use of the third lecture slot in MA20310 Abstract Algebra to go through examples. It was explained that this module has twenty-two lecture slots, as per other ten credit Maths modules. The occasional use of the third slot was possible, although it was also available for Careers, etc., as needed.

(iii) It was requested if lecture notes could be uploaded for MA26620 Applied Statistics. The lecturer replied that taking your own notes was an important part of student learning.

(iv) Some dissatisfaction with FG/PM26020 Mathematical Physics. Recordings from last academic year were sometimes used; it would be appreciated if some assignment questions, designed to be more tricky, were marked as such; the postgraduate tutor who led some sessions did not seem well prepared.

3.5 Year 1

Under current University regulations, MP/MT10610 Calculus lectures are being given online. A Drop-in Teams session was available, and the lecturer was happy to make materials available even sooner to make these sessions as productive as possible. Under current plans, MP/MT11010 Further Algebra and Caluclus is due to be given face to face.

3.6 Year 0

No representative present.

3.7 Welsh Medium

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3.8 Joint Honours

(i) Representative had surveyed other joint honours students: Mathematics better appreciated than other departments. Tablet or document camera presentations were liked.

(ii) It was noted that some joint students with Computer Science wished that they had chosen Statistics, rather than Applied, options.

Action. Advising would be adjusted for first year joint students with Computer Science, possibly with an online tool to show which options were available after certain choices. However the department does not want to discourage Applied Mathematicians with computing expertise, who would be particularly suited to postgraduate research in areas of departmental expertise.

(iii) Much discussion about the content of FG/PM26020 Mathematical Physics and how useful it is. It was felt by students that some topics are better covered elsewhere in the Mathematics degree.

Staff Comment. Some sympathy with the above: staff hoped that Mathematical Physics would help with understanding modelling of physical processes, interpretation of terms in equations. However certain mathematical concepts are only understood in stages. For example, solutions of the Heat equation as a decoupled infinite series can be appreciated by (i) seeing that it is a formal solution (FG/PM26020); (ii) understanding the process by which it is generated (MA/MT34110); (iii) justification that this represents all solutions (MA38010). Seeing mathematical concepts in different situations strengthens understanding and extra practice improves speed and accuracy.

3.9 MathSoc

MathSoc are organising a Christmas Meal; details will follow.

3.10 Postgraduate

All well, especially when it was appreciated that teaching sessions currently run from on the hour to a quarter to the hour.

4 Surveys

Document describing NSS and AMTS Action Plans provided.

National Student Survey Action Plan. (i) Dedicated exam advice email available, seeing increasing use: maths-exam-advice@aber.ac.uk; (ii) exam timetable would

be improved by better central co-ordination; (iii) the Maths Student community will be supported by more face to face teaching.

Annual Monitoring of Taught Schemes Action Plan. (i) Effective attendance monitoring, keeping an eye on student wellbeing. (ii) Foster a happy atmosphere amongst Maths students.

Regarding (i), details of how MOPS would operate could have been more widely discussed, but it was working reasonably smoothly according to year tutors.

Lightweight Module Evaluation Questionnaire. Very few returns; general contentment from those who responded. Best percentage returns from Year 1, especially Welsh medium.

5 Employability

(i) Careers service is currently remote only. Physical Sciences Library (PSB) open; staff present for mornings.

(ii) A number of Teach First initiatives ongoing: written applications; effective use of Linkedin.

6 Staff Matters

(i) PSB necessarily has windows open, but there needs to be a procedure for these to be shut during storms.

(ii) What would be an appropriate event to promote the 2022 National Student Survey? Discussion postponed to next meeting.

7 Any Other Business

Next meeting to be held (via Teams) on Monday 13th December.