

# Department of Mathematics: Student-Staff Consultative Committee

## Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 13:30 – 14.45, Teams Meeting

**Present:** Jay Brooke (AMB55, Year 0 representative); Joshua Hill (Year 1 representative); Hannah Cooper (Year 2 representative); Trys Hooper (Year 2 representative); Rae Hughes (RSH8, Year 3 representative); Helen MacDougall (Year 3 and Joint Honours representative); Rory McCranor (Year M representative); Zac Bufton (Postgraduate representative); Nika Karsanova (VEK1, Faculty Careers Student representative); Alex Pitchford; Adam Vellender; Adil Mughal (AQM); Kim Kenobi (KIK10); Tudur Davies (ITD); Rob Douglas (RSD, Chair); Simon French (SIF4, Library); Morwenna Jeffrey (MRJ11, Careers); Shelley Fullwood (Academic Registry, Minutes); Marina Hughes (Academic Registry), Zoe Hayne (Faculty Student representative).

Apologies: Llio Davies (Welsh Medium representative); Erin Lawrence (Year 1 representative); Megan Atkinson (Year 3 representative, MathSoc)

### 1. Minutes of 13/12/21

Minutes were accepted.

### 2. Matters Arising

i. Over-running lectures from other departments.

**Update:** Has been monitored in semester 2. Completed.

ii. Discussion was held about the content of FG/PM26020 Mathematical Physics and its suitability. It was felt that some topics are better covered elsewhere in the Mathematics degree.

**Update:** Meeting was held with Physics Director of Learning and Teaching to discuss the matter.

iii. It was reported that there is no mock paper available for MA35810 Information Theory. Extra support was requested.

**Update:** Confirmed that extra support was put in place. The exam was well answered.

iv. Uncertainty over whether Semester 1 exams would switch from exam hall to online.

**Update:** Students were informed all Maths exams to be moved online prior to January exam period start.

v. Delay in providing feedback to the students.

**Update:** Staff were reminded to provide feedback as quickly as feasible.

vi. A student on the Data Science degree was struggling; there are no options in the first two years.

**Update:** No student responded to the invite to discuss this with the Maths Director of Learning and Teaching.

vii. KIK10 to email to students and ask for suggestions for Careers events.

**Update:** Ongoing, will be completed immediately after the SSCC meeting.

viii. Date of Semester 2 SSCC meeting

**Update:** Date was confirmed and communicated.

### 3. Student Matters

### 3.1 Tell Us Now

None received.

### 3.2 Year M

No issues raised.

### 3.3 Year 3

- i. Students enjoyed Problem Classes that were used as example classes prior to handing in problem sheets; some would like this practice extended to other modules. It was noted that giving problem classes reviewing problem sheet questions after submission was the traditional format of providing support and feedback.
- ii. A number of students reported that some days contained as many as 8 hours of teaching activities. One cause seemed to be the distribution of sessions in MA35210 Topics in Biological Statistics, with many contact hours in some weeks.  
**ACTION: KIK10 to review the distribution of teaching sessions in MA35210 for the 2022/23 academic year.**
- iii. The clarity of communication from Maths regarding arrangements for the May 2022 exams was praised. For finalists exams will be entirely online assessment; for lower years a mixture of exam hall and online examinations will be used, the former giving necessary practice for what is expected to be the default arrangement in the future. This leaves the question of how students proceeding from Year 3 to M of an MMath degree would get practice for exam hall assessments; a mock exam in December 2022 was suggested.  
**ACTION: Department to arrange an in-person mock exam for Level M students in December 2022.**
- iv. MA30510 Differential Geometry of Curves and Surfaces: clarification was sought regarding moderation of exam marks. Summary of departmental reply follows. There were complaints of too much calculation in section A which hindered showing basic knowledge of the subject. Scaling to a pass mark was made accordingly. The nature of alternative assessments dictate that it is challenging to find suitable questions for section B, as you need to avoid problems that have readily available solutions. Scaling adheres to guidance found in the Mathematics Student Handbook (see Marking Criteria, p.24), as section 3.5 of the AU Academic Quality Handbook contradicts itself.  
RSH8 confirmed that students were content with the scaling.

### 3.4 Year 2

- i. Timetabling: students noted two hour gaps between teaching activities on certain days which frustrated some. However, it can also be seen as sufficient time to recover between sessions and prepare for the next one, or carry out study/attempt problem sheets.
- ii. Linear Algebra (MA/MT21410): some students expressed their desire for more examples whereas others were content. The lecturer noted additional examples were considered in detail in problem classes.

- iii. Complex Analysis (MA/MT21510). Students are appreciative of having notes prior to the lectures. However, high number of students would be in favour of written delivery in lectures (as opposed to talking about slides).  
Lecturer (AQM) commented that current delivery has been proven more effective and sufficient time is provided to copy materials from the slides.  
Students were invited to ask questions during the lectures.
- iv. Numerical Analysis (MA/MT25220). Overall students enjoy the format of this module. However, several students reported that it could be challenging to take notes from text heavy slides. Lecturer (ITD) thanked representatives for this feedback and he will consider modifying delivery for the remainder of the module.
- v. Hydrodynamics (MA/MT25610). Contentment with teaching methods, although several individuals are finding the content difficult. Students are encouraged to submit work so they can receive helpful feedback.
- vi. Advanced Dynamics (MA25710). Module well received by the small number attending.
- vii. Applied Statistics (MA26620). Module well received.
- viii. Twinning arrangements for balancing assignments deadlines/workload do not seem to be working this semester. Whereas deadlines for Linear Algebra/Complex Analysis are dovetailing well, those for Hydrodynamics and Advanced Dynamics are clustering.  
**ACTION: AQM and Simon Cox to review MA(MT)256/MA25710 submission deadlines.**
- ix. Exams in-person in May 2022: students wanted more explanation why MA/MT21410 and MA/MT21510 are to be sat in exam halls. RSD commented that sitting some Year 2 exams in person would be good practice before the final year as, for example, you are answering questions within a tighter time frame. Linear Algebra and Complex Analysis have usually been amongst the easier Year 2 modules; level 2 modules count less towards final cascade averages than better level 3 performances.  
It is expected that resit exams will follow the same format as per January and May; it remains to be confirmed if facemasks will be required in May. (Update: University policy seems to be shifting to optional use of facemasks.)

### 3.5 Year 1

- i. Generally students enjoy the course, in particular Differential Equations (MA/MT11210), Further Algebra and Calculus (MP/MT11010) and Mathematical Analysis (MA/MT11110).
- ii. Some students on Statistics (MA/MT11310) find the module delivery uninspiring. Students are advised to ignore perceived monotone delivery, listen to the content and participate actively.
- iii. Careers and Scheme Development (MP12910). Module delivery appears to be disorganised and without a firm focus for certain topics. Deadlines are clustering together.

**ACTION: RSD to discuss issue of deadlines with the MP12910 module co-ordinator.**

- iv. Exams in May 2022. Exam hall assessments are valuable preparation for Part 2 in-person exams. Results determine whether students proceed to the next year of study; they do not contribute to the final degree average.

### **3.6 Year 0**

- i. Introduction to Statistics (MA00910). Some students find that lecture slides are covered too quickly, they are unable to take notes. This does not appear to be an issue for other students.
- ii. Mathematical Methods for Physicists (PH06520): VC B1.07 reported to be too cold with windows kept open for ventilation. Students are invited to measure temperature in the room and report if found too low. RSH18 kindly agreed to loan a digital thermometer.  
**ACTION: AMB55 to record any low temperatures in VC B1.07 and report via TUN.**

### **3.7 Welsh Medium**

Written communication: no issues.

### **3.8 Joint Honours**

- i. Most comments have been covered in the items above.
- ii. Issue with Computer Science changing their workshops at a very short notice. This has been reported.
- iii. Maths Department was highly praised on their communications regarding arrangements for the semester 2 exam period. Query was raised whether there would be any other FBPS face-to-face exams. It was noted that several exams in the Business School would be taken in exam halls (for accreditation purposes).

### **3.9 MathSoc**

Nothing reported.

### **3.10 Postgraduate**

Content.

## **4. Surveys (MEQ, NSS event)**

### **4.1 Module Evaluation Questionnaires**

Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) report for semester 1 was distributed by RSD.

In summary: a very good set of returns; an encouraging number of submissions received from year 1; fewer responses in other years; positive news that lightweight MEQs are to be discontinued. There were problems with teaching rooms/facilities: in some rooms, technology did not work properly; some rooms were too cold.

#### **4.2 National Student Survey Event**

It had been hoped that the NSS Student Survey event would take place in-person, however, it had to take place in a virtual format (competition/online conference). Three participants won £15 each and high number of students entered.

The current response rate is around 50%. NSS is still open for completion, and finalists are highly encouraged to participate.

### **5. Employability**

- i. MRJ11 noted that there are student representatives working with the Careers in each Faculty to help support activities by consultants as well as gathering students' feedback. Careers are interested in feedback from the students/academic staff in terms of what opportunities they would like to hear of, and how they hear of employability events, so that Careers can develop these opportunities. Nika Karsanova (VEK1) introduced herself as Careers Student Representative for FBPS.
- ii. Careers continue to run webinars on a weekly basis and students are encouraged to get in touch if they missed any information.  
A careers session with year 3 is scheduled for Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March. The previous session was not well attended but was recorded.
- iii. KIK10 confirmed that there are some upcoming events including Talk with Graduate Assessment centres and Talk by Head of Statistics and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

### **6. Staff Matters**

Simon French (SIF4) introduced himself as Subject Librarian for Maths and noted that he offers a Helpdesk in the Physical Sciences (PS) Library every Monday morning, and Thursday afternoon in the Hugh Owen (HO) Library. Everyone was reminded that masks remain mandatory in all public spaces including Libraries.

The Click and Collect service had been moved and is now located near the book return machine in HO Library. Students are invited to follow Library social media groups focused on proposed HO refurbishments and on Primo, the electronic library catalogue.

Query was raised whether there was an ability to close PS library at 18.00 rather than 17.30. SIF4 will report back as soon as information is available.

Students are encouraged to get in touch if they have any questions.

**ACTION: SIF4 to inquire whether PS library closing time could be extended to 18.00.**

### **7. AOB**

- i. Students are reminded to check their e-mails at least once a day during exam periods for possible updates.
- ii. Date of the next meeting to be confirmed. Wednesday afternoon in teaching week 10 is a strong possibility.

**ACTION: RSD to confirm the date of the next meeting.**