

Department of Mathematics: Student-Staff Consultative Committee

Monday 13th December, 11:30 to 13:00, Teams Meeting

Present: Jay Brooke (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); Llio Davies (Welsh medium representative); Zac Bufton (Postgraduate representative); Alex Pitchford; Adam Vellender (ASV2); Adil Mughal; Kim Kenobi (KIK10); Tudur Davies; Rob Douglas (RSD, Chair); Elizabeth Kensler (Information Services); Morwenna Jeffrey (MRJ11, Careers); Shelley Fullwood (Academic Registry, Minutes); Marina Hughes (Academic Registry).

Apologies: Simon French; Erin Lawrence (Year 1 representative); Megan Atkinson (Year 3 representative, MathSoc, written comments received); Jordan Brennan (Year 3 representative)

RSD to chair the meetings whilst they are run via Teams. Participants were welcomed to the Committee, especially those attending for the first time: Jay Brooke, Shelley Fullwood, Marina Hughes and Elizabeth Kensler, the last substituting for Simon French.

1. Minutes of 15/11/21

Minutes were accepted.

2. Matters Arising

- i. The exam timetable for Joint Honours students was 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.
Update: It was brought to the attention of Faculty Academic Affairs Committee – thanks to the students and staff who reported this. Timetable was adjusted accordingly. Generally, content with exam timetable.
- ii. The temperature in Biology Main (EL-0.26) was too cold.
Update: RSH8 has had a reply from Tell us Now which said equipment to improve temperature would cost £7K. The impression was that it would be sorted after Christmas, but the room is actually feeling warmer.
- iii. Over-running lectures from other departments.
Update: E-mail has been sent out at Faculty level to remind staff to finish lectures at quarter to the hour. Representatives said it seemed to still be an issue during the past week (including a 20-minute over-run).
Action: RSD to monitor this in Semester 2.
- iv. It was noted that some Joint Honours students with Computer Science wished that they had chosen Statistics, rather than Applied, as options.

Update: Maths staff are going to adjust advice for Joint Honours students. ASV2 is trialling an online tool for looking at options available after certain choices (e.g. if you take this module at this stage, this is what your options will be going forward).

- v. 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: Some topics are studied multiple times, but in increasing depth and sophistication, e.g. solutions of the Heat equation. Maths staff hoped that the module would help with understanding of physical processes.

Action: RSD to discuss with the Physics Director of Learning and Teaching.

3. Student Matters

3.1 Tell Us Now

None received.

3.2 Year M

No issues raised.

3.3 Year 3

- i. It was reported that there is no mock paper available for MA35810 Information Theory. A mock paper was requested for MAM5820 as well.

Action: RSD to contact module co-ordinator to request extra support to be put in place if no mock paper is available.

- ii. Representatives asked whether there was a contingency plan if in-person exams are cancelled (for some modules). Nothing had been announced yet but students are encouraged to keep an eye on emails. Staff would need time to rewrite papers if exams are moved online; students would have to adjust their preparation.

Action: Students will be informed if Pure Mathematics exams are moved online.

- iii. The issue was raised with regards to what happens if someone tests positive for COVID and has an in-person exam. The expectation is that student submits a Special Circumstances Form and will be granted an H resit (August resit for full marks).

3.4 Year 2

- i. Real Analysis (MA/MT20110): content is well explained and clear. The Panopto recording for assignment 2 was considered very useful. A request was made for more information (with regards to marking comments) on the problem sheet when handed back. The response was that numerous comments are already provided. Students are welcome to ask individually for any additional feedback.
- ii. Abstract Algebra (MA20310): helpful and respondent feedback from the lecturer was really appreciated. Students had received feedback for assignment 1 but not for assignments 2, 3 or 4. Assignment 2 was submitted 5 weeks ago, so the general feeling is that the delayed feedback might not serve its purpose. The model solutions had been published but the students would like their assignments back. In the current regime is not easy to get marking done quickly.

Action: RSD to remind teaching staff to provide feedback as quickly as feasible.

- iii. Numerical Analysis (MA/MT25220): module is going well. There are a mixture of opinions regarding assignments: some thought them confusing and instructions vague. Demonstrators are present to help in practicals, but, unfortunately, student attendance was not as high as expected for those sessions.
- iv. Distributions and Estimations (MA26010): no comments received.
- v. Applied Statistics (MA26620): students praised the animal examples and the lectures were considered engaging. Question was asked whether solutions for previous practicals could be released. ASV2 commented that feedback is given during the sessions themselves. Several students felt there was not sufficient time to prepare for the report; they had not written one before. ASV2 noted that extending the deadline longer than 2 weeks would be impractical. Report writing is an open-ended activity; to give a model template would be too prescriptive. Marks will be returned Wednesday/Thursday in the week commencing 13/12.
- vi. Mathematical Physics (FG/MP26020): second half going better. General preference for handwritten notes instead of PowerPoint slides. Past papers and solutions would be helpful as there are none available online.
It was suggested the students should approach the lecturer directly about past papers. It felt that some of the examples are more geared towards Physics and not necessarily covered in Maths. However a requirement for the module is to develop modelling skills.

3.5 Year 1

- Probability (MA/MT10310): issues raised during Module Evaluate Questionnaire had been dealt with.

3.6 Year 0

Content.

3.7 Welsh Medium

Content.

3.8 Joint Honours

- i. Most of the issues were addressed at the last meeting.
- ii. A student on the Data Science degree was struggling; there are no options in the first two years of study.
Action: It was recommended that the student should talk to RSD (Maths Director of Learning and Teaching); the above comments should be passed on to the Computer Science Joint Honours representative.
- iii. The representative commented that her own attendance was below 40% and wondered how the monitoring process is operating. It was noted students who had performed capably in the past, with evidence of engagement (such as watching Panopto recordings), might not be

contacted. Students are encouraged to request a meeting with their personal tutor at any time they experience difficulties. MOPS monitoring is more intense in years 0 and 1.

3.9 MathSoc

Nothing reported.

3.10 Postgraduate

Content.

4. Surveys (MEQ, NSS event)

4.1 Module Evaluation Questionnaires

Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) data had been circulated. These were summary statistics for key questions, percentages of 4 or 5 responses. Sometimes a module might be performing better than the summary suggested (e.g. overwhelming numbers of 5s), but this meeting is concerned with underperformance. Welsh medium versions of modules are combined with English medium codes. A positive set of results; whilst the Differential Geometry of Curves and Surfaces (MA30510) satisfaction was on the low side, other questions received 100%. Return rates were poor in some modules; Year 1 was an exception, bar the Calculus (MP/MT10610) module which was given and surveyed online.

4.2 National Student Survey Event

Discussion about the format of the National Student Survey (NSS) event which will be held early next year. Coffee and cake was a popular choice previously, but if it is an in-person event it would need to be held outside. Combining the event with a talk was favoured. KIK10 will be in contact with students.

5. Employability

- i. The Careers Service closes Thursday 16th December for Christmas and reopens 4th January.
- ii. MRJ11 asked if students would like any particular topics covered. Teaching (in schools) is popular. A Teach First representative came in to hold a talk twice this semester.

Action: KIK10 to email to students and ask for suggestions for Careers events.

6. Staff Matters

- i. Hugh Owen Library is open until Thursday 23rd of December. The whole library will be open 24/7 from the 4th of January. Mask wearing is compulsory. The Physical Sciences Library shuts 5 p.m. on the 23rd of December and reopens Tuesday 4th of January. Panopto downtime is scheduled for the 8th of January.

7. AOB

- i. Dates for the semester 2 meetings to be confirmed. Teaching weeks 5 and 10 is a possibility. Might be Wednesdays; it depends on the timetable.

Action: RSD to confirm the date of the next meeting.