

Department of Mathematics: Student-Staff Consultative Committee

Wednesday 27th April, 13:30 – 14.45, Teams Meeting

Present: 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); Zac Bufton (Postgraduate representative); Nika Karsanova (VEK1, Faculty Careers Student representative); Alex Pitchford; Adam Vellender (ASV2); Adil Mughal (AQM); Kim Kenobi (KIK10); Rob Douglas (RSD, Chair); Simon French (SIF4, Library); Morwenna Jeffrey (MRJ11, Careers); Shelley Fullwood (Academic Registry, Minutes); Marina Hughes (MGH5, Academic Registry); Zoe Hayne (Faculty Student representative).

Apologies: Llio Davies (Welsh Medium representative); Megan Atkinson (Year 3 representative, MathSoc); Erin Lawrence (Year 1 representative); Rory McCranor (Year M representative); Tudur Davies.

1. Minutes of 02/03/22

Minutes were accepted.

2. Matters Arising

- i. KIK10 to review the distribution of teaching sessions in MA35210 for the 2022/23 academic year.

Update: Completed.

- ii. Department to arrange in-person mock exam for Level M students in December.

Update: Ongoing, date not yet reached.

- iii. AQM and Simon Cox to review MA(MT)256/MA25710 submission deadlines.

Update: Confirmed that deadlines were reviewed and adjusted.

- iv. RSD to discuss issue of deadlines with the MP/MT12910 module co-ordinator.

Update: Completed. Deadlines for summative assessment were well spread (although in combination with formative assessments, some clustering).

- v. Year 0 representative to record any low temperatures in VC B1.07 and report via TUN.

Update: Completed. Digital thermometer kindly provided by RSH8 was not used.

- vi. SIF4 to inquire whether PS library closing time could be extended to 18.00.

Update: Library closing time remains the same as a part of risk assessment implemented during Covid. Control over the building sits with site security, and their current instruction is that all buildings are shut by 18.00. It might be reviewed in the foreseeable future.

- vii. Date of the next SSCC meeting

Update: Date was confirmed and communicated.

- viii. KIK10 to email to students and ask for suggestions for Careers events.

Update: Completed.

3. Student Matters

3.1 Tell Us Now

3.1.1 Lack of revision week this academic year and Year 2 exams clustered in weeks 1 and 2 of the exam period.

In August 2021 dates for Resit Exam Boards were pushed back due to Covid disruption and the high numbers of students involved. The start of Semester 1 2021-2022 was postponed; the decision by Senate to scrap revision week in Semester 2 2021-2022 was against the wishes of academic departments. Combined with the decision to cut the duration of face to face lectures to 45 minutes, this was bound to cause problems. RSD confirmed that the last week of teaching (w/c 02/05) will be exam focused.

With regards to the Exam Timetable it was noted that this year presented constraints in the form of various exam formats still in place in other departments e.g. 24 hour alternative assessments (online exams). This made it difficult to mitigate the lack of a revision week by a later start in week 1 of exams.

An option to address the number of early Year 2 exams was proposed but could not be implemented due to clashes.

Year 2 Student Representatives noted that students were not given opportunity to comment on a draft Exam Timetable.

Meeting agreed that revision week and an opportunity for students to give feedback on the Exam Timetable before the final version should be reintroduced.

3.1.2 “No detriment” rule dropped for 2021-2022

Scrapping August resits for full marks for any candidate (regardless of original mark and circumstances) did not sit well with the recent influx of Covid cases amongst students and staff, however, policy had been changed by the Academic Registry.

It had been queried with the PVC for Learning and Teaching, but no answer had been received. Students are advised to prepare and submit a Special Circumstances form if they feel they have been disadvantaged. They are encouraged to contact Personal Tutors/RSD for more tailored advice. Special Circumstances can be submitted until the end of the May Exam period.

3.2 Year M

Verbal comments (prior to meeting): no issues.

3.3 Year 3

- i. The Maths Department was praised for prompt dealing with students' queries and concerns.
- ii. RSH8 commented that a few exams were close together but with wide range of options in Year 3 that might have been expected in some cases. It was acknowledged that Timetabling face challenges to spread a considerable number of exams over 15 days.

3.4 Year 2

- i. Linear Algebra (MA/MT21410). Exam for this module is scheduled on the first day of the exam period and is to be sat in person. The latter was taken into account when the exam paper was prepared.
- ii. Complex Analysis (MA/MT21510). Students had raised issues with the module co-ordinator directly. Some liked the teaching style more than others: as a plus, slides were available prior to the lecture; some preferred the “writing at thinking speed” of a tablet/document camera.
- iii. Numerical Analysis (MA/MT25220). Students welcomed the positive response following feedback in the previous SSCC. Some issues with the balance of practical and theoretical material.
- iv. Hydrodynamics (MA/MT25610). Module is well received, albeit hard.
- v. Advanced Dynamics (MA25710). Module is well received.
- vi. Applied Statistics (MA26620). One comment suggested that preference would be to change this to a thick module. ASV2 responded that material would be too intense for one semester and might become onerous. Practicals, in particular, might suffer under this change.
- vii. Exams in-person in May 2022. it was questioned whether facemasks would be required in May. MGH5 confirmed that a facemask is encouraged, but not compulsory; supplies will be available at Exam Halls.
If students find themselves unable to attend in-person exams due to illness (including Covid and self-isolation) they are advised to submit Special Circumstances.
The Exam Office is in the process of e-mailing instructions and guidance for in-person exams and students are strongly advised to keep an eye on their e-mails.

3.5 Year 1

- i. There is a consensus that marking in Career and Skills Development (MP12910), in particular of the CV, did not seem consistent. RSD commented that providing all required assignments are submitted, the module is bound to be passed. Passing this module contributes to successful progression into Year 2, but the module mark will not affect an overall cascade average.
- ii. Some students on Further Algebra and Calculus (MP/MT11010) find the module content rushed. Module co-ordinator addressed this by offering more examples and solutions (outside lectures).

3.6 Year 0

- i. No issues reported.

3.7 Welsh Medium

Written communication: no issues.

3.8 Joint Honours

Comments have been covered in the items above.

3.9 MathSoc

Nothing reported.

3.10 Postgraduate

Content.

4. Surveys (MEQ Semester 2)

4.1 Module Evaluation Questionnaires

Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) Summary Data for Semester 2 was distributed by RSD.

Fair Marking column was changed to Timely Marking, as this issue had been raised at past SSCCs.

Year 1 were the best in responding with the Statistics module gaining least satisfaction.

Year 2 response rate was not too good but that might have been impacted by Covid outbreaks amongst staff and students. Complex Analysis delivery style was being addressed in the conversation between Student representatives and the Module lecturer.

Year 3 response rate was quite poor; lectures have not been well attended.

MEQ Semester 2 Report will be written in due course. Complaints about the timetable from Year 3 and Year M will be included.

5. Employability

- i. KIK10 recommended the talk by the Head of Statistics for HEFCW on how to make your job application as successful as possible. The recording is now available in [UG Maths section on Blackboard](#).
- ii. Employability opportunities will continue to be communicated to the students. However, no events are going to be organised in the next few weeks due to exams.
- iii. MRJ11 reminded students that registration for the AberForward scheme is still open.
- iv. VEK1 noted a (bilingual) survey had been distributed to gather data about how students would prefer to learn about Careers opportunities. The response rate was not encouraging.
<https://forms.office.com/r/ALtrVSDmu> is the link to the survey.
- v. KIK10 is hoping to organise an event at the start of the next academic year focusing on use of Applied Maths in Industry and Academia.

6. Staff Matters

SIF4 reported Hugh Owen Library is open 24 hours, 7 days a week currently, with study spaces available. Physical Sciences Library is currently open 8.30-17.30 Monday to Friday.

Voting for Year 2,3 and M 2022/23 Maths SSCC representatives will open w/c 09/05.

RSD (on behalf of staff) thanked all undergraduate and postgraduate representatives for their service this year. In a time of meagre questionnaire returns, SSCC is a vital way of getting the student voice heard.

7. AOB

- i. The Maths Department has been nominated as Department of the Year in SU Staff/Student Awards. Rae Hughes has been nominated in Student Staff Member of the Year; Zoe Hayne as Student Mentor and Volunteer and Rob Douglas as Lecturer of the Year. All nominees were congratulated and wished good luck.

Update. Rae Hughes and Zoe Hayne (Student Volunteer) won.