

**INSTITUTE OF MATHEMATICS, PHYSICS AND COMPUTER SCIENCE: MATHEMATICS STUDENT-STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2014, 1-10pm, room 231, Physical Sciences Building**

**PRESENT** Alexander Cooney(Yr 1), Spencer Ncube(Yr1), Sian Swain (Yr1) Chelsea Coulson-Williams(Yr2), Daniel Brookes(Yr2), Damien Clarke(Yr3), Jennifer O'Neil(Yr 3), Leslie Mear(YrM), Daria Andreeva(PG), Sahm Nikoi(Information Services), Alan Jones(AJ), Rob Douglas(RD), Tudur Davies, Adam Vellender(AV), Dave Binding(DB)(all staff).

**APOLOGIES** Ryan Myles-Roberts(Maths Soc)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Myfanwy Cowdy (Minutes)

**1. ELECTION OF SSSC CHAIR**

Damien Clarke was elected Chair of the SSSC.

**2. MINUTES OF 4/4/14**

It was noted that questionnaires would be discussed under item 7.

**3. STUDENT MATTERS**

**Year 3** – Jennifer O'Neil commented about MA326 Topology: she asked for more, less trivial, examples to be given than those received in lectures. A mock exam would be appreciated.

**ACTION:** RD to talk to Rolf Gohm.

Damien Clarke mentioned clustering of assignments, for example 4 in some weeks and 2 in another. It was proving difficult to manage.

**RD** replied by saying that modules are paired in year 3 and assignments should be once a fortnight per module. Some students might be unlucky if they hadn't chosen 3 pairs. Pairs are selected according to cohort compatibility and also courses taught by the same lecturer.

Student representatives commented about the unsuitability of some lecture rooms. It was noted that a venue much used in previous years, room 320 PSB, had been taken out of use as it was deemed unsuitable.

**RD** asked students how they would feel if 320 could be modernised like Llandinam A6.

320 was seen as a suitable room; examples could be followed more easily due to the room possessing large whiteboards.

**RD** and **AV** agreed that room 320 was suitable but that seating (and desk space) needs upgrading.

**RD** asked what the H & S issue was for withdrawing the room and comparison was made to A6 Hugh Owen. **AJ** noted that the stairs to level 3 of the Physical Sciences Building may be an issue.

**Year 2** – It seemed that less support was given this year for the exam based modules. Help Desk support (or similar) might help.

**RD** asked if the students were seeking support directly from the lecturers; they have an open door policy so shouldn't be too difficult to find them.

Jennifer O'Neil said that the last year's Help Desk was underused (albeit possibly because opening times were not widely known).

**Year 1** – It was mentioned that Dynamics, Geometry and Calculus assignment deadlines were close together and students were finding it hard. It was suggested prioritising which one to do first might help, and also to make use of resources provided.

Level M - M level students had been helping out with the Help Desk. Some had withdrawn due to the excessive paperwork HR demands when drawing up a contract.

Some students missed out on email communication from the Maths degree scheme lists.

**RD** mentioned that Maths and Theoretical Physics schemes F340 and F341 are not on those lists as the schemes belong to Physics. The matter had been addressed since and Years of Degree Schemes for F340 and F341 had been emailed. Martin Greenall also had been made aware of the fact that some students had been missed out from some communications.

**AV** – queried if there was any way of adding ID's manually to a list?

**ACTION** – RD to ask Trystan how to add to maths degree lists manually.

**AJ** suggested emailing the module of the Minor Project, MAM9720.

**PGs** – It was felt that the compulsory modules were much too time consuming. The workshops had also increased to 20 this year (from 16 last year).

**ACTION** – **RD** would refer this to Daniel Burgarth.

#### 4. **MATHS SOCIETY**

**RD** was reporting on behalf of Ryan Myles-Roberts. It was the final week for entries for the logo competition for the Departmental hoody. Details could be viewed on the Maths Society Facebook page.

Further details would be made available soon about the Christmas meal on Constitution Hill. Last year it was hailed a great success.

MathSoc would welcome suggestions of any professionals in Industry who would be prepared to give a talk on their work/company to the Maths Society.

**ACTION:** Martin Greenall to collate any suggestions, and put relevant people in contact.

The Maths Society was growing in number. This could be attributed to increased participation in 1<sup>st</sup> year Induction and Open/Visiting Days.

**Damien Clarke** suggested that it wasn't widely known how to contact the Maths Society. The Students Union web site should list the Maths Society email address (scty92).

**DB** asked what information was on the Mathematics Department web pages. It was confirmed that there was a link on the web pages to the Maths Society Facebook page.

#### 5. **NSS**

Some NSS analysis by AU, augmented with comments, was distributed prior to the meeting. The KIS data for Mathematics at Aberystwyth (G100) was circulated at the meeting.

Damien Clarke noted the disappointing score for the "Staff have made the subject interesting" category. This was discussed; examples of how students could use maths to solve work problems would be welcomed.

There was some discussion concerning feedback. RD asked the students if the exam feedback on Blackboard had been useful – it was deemed useful but only if you could still remember the exam when looking at Blackboard. The main Mathematics Department web page still seemed to be lacking Maths exam papers.

**RD** said that lecturers should be placing them on Blackboard and if not they should contact the lecturers concerned.

**AJ** explained how the displayed NSS data was prepared. There were 22 questions, which respondents would answer with an integer response between 1 and 5, 1 representing strong disagreement, 5 strong agreement. The figure recorded was the percentage of responses in the 4 or 5 category.

**Jennifer O'Neil** mentioned that the Mathematics Department was the highest rated in AU for Student Satisfaction. According to the Students' Union, some of the Department's policies were under consideration for use elsewhere.

**RD** said that Final year students would be strongly encouraged to fill in the 2014/15 NSS from January onwards.

## 6. STAFF MATTERS

**NEW LIBRARY ARRANGEMENTS.** Sahm Nikoi summarised these. The students were asked for their view on the new card swiping arrangements. Some cannot access the Library as they haven't yet activated their card.

**ACTION** - A reminder email to students to activate their cards, with details of how to do this.

Books can be self issued (and returned) using a Library PIN, which can be obtained from Student Profiles.

It was asked if Library Opening Hours could be posted on the door for clarity. Leslie Mear noted that it was difficult to obtain books from store.

## 7. QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire data summaries, for semester 2 of the 2013/14 session, were circulated.

The return for MA112 (Differential Equations) was noted as low, possibly due to the 9am lecture. The hand in rate is declining in general (compared to previous years).

There was a discussion of possible additions to the questionnaires, especially tick boxes to denote whether the student was on a maths or physics degree scheme, or if they had studied further maths, statistics and/or mechanics at A-level.

The questionnaires will usually be handed out in Week 9 (week beginning 24<sup>th</sup> November).

## 8. AOB

**HELP DESK** – The Help desk was in demand on Tuesday as an assignment was to be handed in soon afterwards.

**ACTION:** Lecturers to be reminded to send model solutions to Jennifer O’Neil, the Help Desk Coordinator.

**EXAM TIMETABLE.** – Students should be notified before the end of term regarding exam times as the first draft was usually done in November.

**Date of next meeting.** Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December, same time and venue.

The Chair then brought the meeting to a close.