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## MATHEMATICS UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

**Monday 27 April 2015, 2:00pm, MR10**

**Present:** Nigel Peake (Chair) (NP), Julia Gog (JG), Stuart Martin (SM), Margaret Duff (student member) (MD), Tom Harris (student member) (TH), Julia Hawkins (JH), Stephen Siklos (SS), Amy Dittrich (minute secretary) (AD).

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Ross Lawther and Paul Russell.

### 2. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 26 January 2015

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

### 3. Future of STEP Easter School

The Committee received and noted the paper on the STEP Easter School. SS reported that the current STEP Easter School is valuable, but that there is a relatively low limit on the number of students who can be accepted, and that Easter of year 13 is very late to start STEP preparation.

The Committee discussed the possibility of replacing the STEP Easter School with a version of the STEP Correspondence Course, which is running as a pilot this year. Potential applicants could start the course in July of year 12. After the Cambridge interviews in December only those with an offer would continue.

The paper on the future of the STEP Easter School will be on the agenda for the Faculty Board meeting on Thursday 30 April. If the Board endorses this proposal, the Committee will discuss it further, with a view to starting the new course this summer.

**Action: NP**

[Note added subsequent to the meeting: the College's Bursars' Committee has now agreed to fund the STEP Easter School for a further 3 (??) years. The Correspondence Course will continue independently, and will recruit a further 250 students in September (which is considerably fewer than the number that would have had to have been recruited to compensate for the absence of the Easter School).]

#### **4. University proposal on admissions testing**

The University is consulting on pre-admissions testing in light of proposed A level reforms. If the reforms go ahead, there will be no AS levels, and no UMS marks at the end of year 12. This could mean that both the number of weaker students not being discouraged from applying, and the number of stronger students not being encouraged to apply, could be significantly higher.

The main proposal from the consultation is to introduce a test in November, which would be used for deselection of candidates before the interview stage. The Committee discussed this proposal at length. The main concerns were:

- a pre-interview test could be off-putting to applicants, many of whom choose to apply to Cambridge because STEP is taken much later than BMAT, giving them more time to prepare;
- having the test at the end of year 13 allows it to cover a broader and more useful range of material;
- having the test at the end of year 13 also allows a longer period for intervention for students from less advantaged backgrounds;
- a lot of time and money has been invested in a proactive system of widening participation for STEP, and if the system was changed it could take years to reach the same level of support.

The Committee agreed to recommend not introducing pre-interview testing, and continuing with STEP. JG agreed to draft a paper detailing this recommendation, with widening participation input from JH. This would be drafted and approved by circulation in time for the next Directors of Studies meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> May. If approved this would then be put to the Faculty Board on 21<sup>st</sup> May. NP agreed to briefly report this to the Faculty Board on 30<sup>th</sup> April.

**Action: JG, JH, NP**

#### **5. Date of next meeting**

Another meeting may or may not be required later in Easter term, depending on the progress of the two main issues of this meeting. The Committee agreed to play it by ear and decide at a later date.

#### **6. AOB**

##### **(a) Winter pool procedure**

JG gave an update following on from the previous meeting's discussion on the winter pool procedure. The Admissions Forum have agreed that the next winter pool can be 20 minutes

longer. The Committee agreed to put a proposal to the next DoS meeting to remove the reading of names stage of the pool, on account of it being time-consuming and unnecessary.

**Action: JG**

**(b) STEP Preparation portal**

JH announced a new STEP Preparation portal, at [maths.org/step/](https://maths.org/step/), in place of the previous Ask NRICH site. The new website is not currently funded, and is instead being run by MMP in their free time, and by volunteers.