

Consultative Committee for Mathematics in the Natural Sciences

*DRAFT Minutes of a meeting held on
Monday May 13th 2013 at 4.15 p.m.,
in Meeting Room 12,
Centre for Mathematical Sciences, Wilberforce Road*

Present: Dr Sue Colwell (Convenor), Dr Chris Lester, Dr Harvey Reall, Dr Alex Thom, Mr Oliver Jackson, Mr Matej Vecenik.

Apologies: Dr Ben Allanach, Dr Mark Spivack, Miss Alex Howes.

1. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

2. Part IA, A course: Miss Howes, who was unable to attend, reported by e-mail.

Lecture Course: Dr Jardine-Wright

Generally there had been much more positive feedback than in previous terms. The pace was said to be 'good', and some even said 'perfect'. The amount of prior knowledge assumed was quite small, but this was felt to be appropriate. Many students mentioned that the handout was too incomplete and they spent too much time copying down material rather than thinking about it. However, some people said that it was much easier to concentrate with things to write down. Some students requested that the lecturer put up the complete notes on CamTools after each lecture as it is hard to copy up notes if they miss a lecture. They also requested space in the handout for doing examples in lectures and pointed out that a list of notations used in matrices would be useful.

The questions on the board before lectures were very well received, and the students think it is a really good idea. They also like the 'Do It Yourself' questions in lectures as they are a really good incentive to keep concentrating, and to keep up with the lecture.

Some students use the book by Riley Hobson and Bence, although some prefer Stephenson's 'Mathematical methods for science students' as they feel RHB has too many details.

3. Part IA, B course: Mr Jackson reported.

Lecture Course: Dr O'Donnell

The students find the lecturer really engaging and think his lectures are very good. They find the material quite easy, as most of them have met it before. They found suffix notation the most difficult part, but even that was understandable. The pace of the lectures is good, and the notes are also good. They are almost complete with small gaps, and the complete ones are available on CamTools. In lectures the lecturer mostly sticks to the notes, but he sometimes makes a few additional points. He does lots of examples in the lectures, and he demonstrated some Tripos Questions which was helpful. The examples sheets contain quite a few simple questions, but some more interesting ones as well which the students welcomed, but they repeated their request that the examples sheets should list appropriate Tripos questions for each section. Some people do read books e.g. RHB, but most rely on the lecture notes.

The students commented that the Lent Term is very full compared with the other two terms, and suggested that the material could perhaps be shuffled around a bit, or the syllabus could be extended.

4. Part IB course: Mr Vecenik reported.

Lecture course: Prof Green.

People are very happy with the lectures, and think the Lecturer is the best this year. The rep was unable to find a single person who doesn't like them, and everyone agrees that the pace is good and the material is interesting. The lecturer hands out very full lecture notes with no gaps, but in the lectures themselves he puts up pre-prepared overheads which are basically a

handwritten summary of the lecture notes. These overheads, which are later put on CamTools, make very good use of colour to highlight different things. Sometimes in the notes it is hard to see which are formulae or definitions, and which are examples, but it is clear on the overheads. Some people read ahead in the notes, but they still come to the lectures as they really like his explanations.

The rep. pointed out that Normal Modes have been lectured in every single course he has been to and questioned why it was necessary to do it so many times. As a very small criticism the students felt that the section on Groups should start with definitions rather than examples. The examples sheets were not very difficult, and the examples class did not take place as the lecturer was away and had to reschedule some of his lectures.

There had been a further comment on the Lent Term's course which was that the lecturer had handed out worked examples, and answers to questions, but hadn't put them on-line. People would still like summary sheets for the Lent Term material.

5. Any other business.

There was a general discussion about what instructions were given to lecturers about examples sheets, putting notes on-line etc. The Convenor commented that there was a standard letter that she circulated to Maths Nat Sci. lecturers before the beginning of the Michaelmas Term about such details. One of the other Staff members pointed out that there was a Faculty Guide for New Lecturers giving more detailed instructions and general advice.

The Committee thanked the student representatives for their efforts throughout the year and wished them well in their examinations.