Consultative Committee for Mathematics in the Natural Sciences

Minutes of a meeting held on
Monday 25th February 2019 at 1.00 pm,
in Meeting Room 10, Centre for Mathematical Sciences, Wilberforce Road

Present: Dr Sue Colwell (Convenor), Dr Austen Lamacraft, Dr Jorge Santos, Dr Mark Spivack, Dr Christopher Thomas, Ms Anna Bui, Mr Ross Brown, Mr Fadle Arouna

Apologies: Dr Alex Thom

Dr Thomas left the room whilst the IB course was being discussed.

1. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

2. Part IA, A course: Ms Bui reported.

Lecture Course: Prof Worster

Ms Bui had sent out her own survey and 72% of people responded. 70% said the pace was OK, but 30% said it was too fast.

The lecturer makes them take their own notes, but he does upload his notes on to Moodle immediately afterwards. This gets mixed responses; 60% of the students like it as they say it makes them concentrate, 30% would like printed notes as well. In particular they would all like a printed summary of the course at the end. Many people have printed out Prof Dalziel's lecture notes from 2013 which Prof Worster pointed out to them.

In general the students don't find the material as familiar as last term's, but some would like him to go faster and hence have time for examples.

The lecturer is audible. He uses a visualiser, and displays only one page at a time, but on two screens. He doesn't zoom in, and some people can't see the screens very well. By and large his handwriting is legible, but when it comes to e.g. drawing contours or sketching graphs, the students would appreciate printed copies of those sections.

He is good at explaining concepts, and there is good feedback on the lectures in general. He does do some Tripos questions in lectures, and he hands out copies of these.

The Examples Sheets are fine.

The attendance is stable, and the main block in the centre of the lecture theatre (Physiology) is full.

The things the students have requested most are printed summary notes, and recording of Lectures.

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

Lecture Course: Dr R. Rafikov

The lecturer gives out incomplete handouts, and fills them in by hand. The students would appreciate it if the completed notes could go up on Moodle sooner. The printed notes do not contain diagrams and the students ask if he could print them out, especially the ones in 3D.

He uses one big screen, and his handwriting can be difficult to read, especially from the back of the room (BMS lecture theatre).

He occasionally goes off topic, and although this can be interesting the students have no room to make notes on these digressions.

Some feel that he spent too much time at the beginning telling people about the context. They find the pace a bit slow, slower than last term. Most people have done 1st order ODEs, so they think he could have done this bit more quickly. Also they feel the section on SHM was a waste of time, as everyone who has done physics knows it already, and the others don't understand it. They think it wasted time in supervisions too.

Although the lecturer checks whether they have understood, and clarifies things if necessary, but he does not always do this for the bits they find hard.

He does do examples in lectures but he doesn't say whether they are Tripos Questions or not.

The examples sheets are good.

The attendance started out about 80%, and fell to about 50%. This has been maintained except on Saturdays, when it is about 40%.

There has been no drift between the A and B courses.

4. Part IB course*:* Mr Arouna reported.

Lecture course: Dr C. Thomas.

This course has been well received. The pace is reasonable, and the lecturer explains things well. He hands out a big set of notes with gaps (4-6 lectures at a time) and puts a printed version of the notes (not the ones he makes in lectures) up on Moodle later, but these still do not have the diagrams in. Some students find the proofs a bit sketchy, but in general people think they are at an appropriate level.

The lectures were moved to the Cockroft because of numbers, but the room was very cold as the heating had not been turned on, and the doors were left open (this has now been rectified).

The lecturer is audible and legible, but the OHP flickers which makes things a bit difficult.

There were no complaints about the Examples Sheets.

The Examples classes were well received. The lecturer tells the students which questions he intends to go through in advance.

There are often comments that this course is directed exclusively towards physicists and assumed knowledge of physics, but the IB rep does Psychology and HPS and finds the course interesting and accessible, partly because his supervisor explains things very well.

The attendance has been maintained, and the room is still full.

Note about MathComp: – The students would appreciate more information deadlines.

5. Any other business.

The results of the second week questionnaires had not been circulated in advance, but were available at the meeting and the student representatives were given time to read them. The comments were generally in line with those they themselves had received.

The students reported that they don't need to use books very much, but the book by Riley, Hobson and Bence was useful for IB, as well as for IA. The students do use Wolfram Alpha a lot, and also many are familiar with Desmos because they have used it at school.