

Minutes (unconfirmed) of the Maths DoS meeting

Held 11:15, 5 May 2015, Upper Hall 2, Fitzwilliam College

Version compiled at 17:34 on 15 May 2015

In attendance: I Borzym (*CTH*), A Bouayad (*JN*), W Boucher (*SID*), A Briginshaw (*SE*), C Brookes (*CC*), J Button (*SE*), R Camina (*F*, Chair), N Datta (*PEM*), S Demoulini (*DOW*), M Dunajski (*CL*), J Evans (*CAI*), T Fisher (*T*), T Forster (*CH & ED*), J Gog (*Q*), B Groisman (*SID*), R Hunt (*CHR*), R Lawther (*G*), I Leader (*T*), S Pegler (*Q*), A Pesci (*DOW*), S Pitts (Chair of Part III Committee), O Rath Spivack (*LC*), S Siklos (*JE*), P Smith (*MUR*), G Taylor (*JE*), T Tokieda (*TH*), C Tout (*CHU*), S Wadsley (*HO*), M Wingate (*F*), A Zsák (*PET*)

Apologies: S Antonakoudis (*EM*), J Gilbey (*JE*), S Martin (*M*)

1. Introductions were made.
2. The minutes of the meeting of 17 November 2015 were approved after correction of an omission in the list of attendance.
3. **Admission matters:**
 - (a) Future of STEP and the STEP Easter School: There was a lengthy discussion of the issues regarding the STEP Easter School and the proposed correspondence course, with many advantages and disadvantages weighed carefully. At the end of the discussion there was a vote which, by a large majority, supported switching to a correspondence course. One of the main factors contributing to the majority view was the number of people who could participate in the correspondence course, while the number of people who could feasibly attend the STEP Easter School is becoming much smaller than demand.
 - (b) Current admissions round and proposed procedure for the next winter pool: Dr Gog proposed a few changes to the Winter Pool procedure: (i) to omit the reading of names with College expression of interest; (ii) to allow the Colleges with mature students only to have first choice of those students; (iii) addition of a phase to deal with deferred entry students. While a couple reservations were expressed, there was strong support to approve the changes.
 - (c) Pre-interview admissions testing: After a lengthy discussion the meeting gave unanimous support to the position of the Mathematics Undergraduate Admissions Committee (MUAC) that we should continue with STEP as a condition to be met after receiving an offer, and that we should not introduce a pre-interview test for applicants. There was substantial discussion about how we would handle a growth in the number of interviews. It was felt that, given the importance of access and other considerations, an increase in the number of interviews was a more acceptable price to pay than accepting the risks associated with a pre-interview test.
 - (d) Part III Admissions: At the previous meeting Dr Forster's letter regarding Part III admissions had been received and it was recommended that the letter should go to the Part III Committee. As Chair of this committee Dr Pitts reported back to the DoS meeting. In particular she reported on work by the Part III Committee

aiming to discourage students from attempting courses different from the ones their applications suggest they could handle. This action was welcomed by the meeting, who agreed that the flexibility of Part III was one of its attractions, but noted the need to guide students to make sensible choices.

A general (disgruntled) discussion of Part III admissions then followed.

4. **Tripes matters:**

- (a) New payment system for the Part III seminar series: The meeting received the report on Part III Seminar group leader payment. The consensus was that the new scheme worked well this year.

Dr Pitts reported that transcripts would from now on reflect the fact that a Merit in Part III is considered a first class result. The minimal percentage mark for a Merit will be 70%. It was remarked that not all Colleges are aware that the Merit mark to be a first class result. Senior Tutors and others can be referred to the Faculty Board's classification criteria as written in the Faculty Board Advice to Examiners, received by each Part III Examiner and Assessor and published as Appendix III in the Part III Handbook (see <http://www.maths.cam.ac.uk/postgrad/mathiii/current.html>), which reads in part "*Merit*. Candidates will have performed at first class level," (p.24 of 2014-15 version).

- (b) Supervision data: The meeting received the tables of supervision data.
- (c) DoS feedback on the trial scheduling of Complex Analysis/Methods: The meeting reported that the trial scheduling of CA/CM for 3 days/week in the first 5+ weeks of term was perceived to be a success. Students appear to have no objections to the schedule. The change allows for supervisions to conclude before the end of term, alleviating pressure at the start of Easter term. The question of whether more courses should be "accelerated" in this way was briefly discussed, but without strong opinions voiced either way. Support for further changes would depend on student wishes and feasibility of rescheduling a specific course.

- 5. **Rota of Colleges** for appointing future DoS conveners. The meeting received the rota which, although incorrect in places, did correctly note that the next meetings would be at King's

6. **Any other business:**

- (a) Athena Swan: Dr Rath Spivack reported on the recent Open Day. She renewed her offer to help arrange a diverse team of helpers at Colleges.
- (b) Part II C course in Automata and Formal Languages: Dr Forster offered to help coordinate and find supervisors for this new course.