

Minutes of the Meeting of Directors of Studies in Mathematics

13th November 2006, 2.00- 4.00

Present: Mark Walters (Peterhouse), Stephen Siklos (Jesus), Paul Russell (Emmanuel), Irena Borzym (St Catherine's), Richard Samworth (St John's), Jonathan Dawes (Newnham), Tadaski Tokieda (Trinity Hall), Amanda Turner (Selwyn), Natalia Berloff (Jesus) Sophia Demoulini (Downing) Konstantin Feldman (Christ's), Hugh Osborn (Trinity), Maciej Dunajski (Clare), Julia Gog (Queens'), Christopher Tout (Churchill), Robert Hunt (Christ's), Stuart Martin (Magdalene), Laurent Storoni (Sidney Sussex), John Lister (Trinity) and Jonathan Evans (Caius).

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mathias Dörrzapf (St John's), Simon Wadsley (Jesus), Nilanjana Datta (Pembroke), Houshang Ardavan (New Hall), Rachel Camina (Fitzwilliam), Imre Leader (Trinity), Ross Lawther (Girton), Adrian Kent (Darwin) and Nikos Nikiforakis (Selwyn).

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 13th November 2006 were approved.

3. Matters arising

No matters arose.

4. Changes to the Tripos

The changes to the Tripos were viewed as three separate items. The first was the split of Algebra and Geometry into two courses: Groups, and Vectors and Matrices. There was widespread support for this change with only one Director of Studies speaking against the proposal (and he was in favour of the change in principle, just not the current proposal). It was noted that it would make the task of finding supervisors for the course substantially easier but that in itself was not sufficient reason for the change.

The second item considered was the proposed change to the Dynamics course. There was widespread concern that this already difficult and unpopular course was being overloaded. Many people felt that the course was disliked because it was too hard, rather than not sufficiently interesting. All but one of the people present would like to see the Dynamics course changed. However, a substantial majority (12:6) felt that the current proposals had not been sufficiently well thought out (especially with regard to the consequences for Part IB) and would like to see any change delayed for a year.

The third item was the proposed non-examinable Easter Term course entitled Concepts of Theoretical Physics. There was no strong support for the proposed course. Directors of Studies were evenly split on whether any Easter term applied course should be examinable. It was remarked that there is an asymmetry in that DPMMS has a (practically) compulsory Easter Term course (Metric and Topological Spaces) and that the Easter Term applied courses are easily droppable.

There was a supplementary item on the proposal to lecture the 16 lecture Statistical Physics course 3 times a week for the first 6 weeks of term followed by a non-examinable 8 lectures from the Astronomy Department. Many Directors of Studies liked the idea: they felt that having the first supervision in the

4th week of term was too late. It was suggested that this might be tried for one year experimentally (10 in favour, 3 against, 5 Abstentions). It was also recommended that student opinion be obtained on the general principle of lecturing 16 lecture courses three times a week.

5. Electronic dissemination of mark lists

There were no objections to the proposal to disseminate Tripos mark lists electronically. There was a clear preference that they be e-mailed directly to Directors of Studies in addition to Senior Tutors. It was thought that the Data Protection Act would need to be checked before doing this.

6. Automatic Pooling Criteria

The meeting agreed to leave these as they are. No alternative suggestion gained strong support and it was thought that remaining the same as other subjects was beneficial.

7. MIT Exchange Report

The report from the coordinator was noted. There followed some discussion about the exchange in general. Concern was expressed about our students going to MIT and returning insufficiently prepared for Part II. (It was not clear if this was inherent in the system or due to the students ignoring advice.) MIT students coming here was thought even more problematic since many of the students have done exceedingly badly (though a few have done exceedingly well).

We voted that mathematicians should no longer take part in the scheme (10 in favour, 2 against 6 abstentions).

8. STEP Easter School

The report was noted. The meeting wished to thank Stephen Siklos for all his hard work running this programme.

Directors of Studies noted that, although Trinity College still provided considerable financial support, each college contributed a sum for each of their students on the school.

9. Supervisor Training Report

The report was noted. It was decided that Imre Leader would be an ideal person to be in a Supervisors' Training Video.

Directors of Studies reaffirmed their commitment to using trained supervisors whenever feasible.

10. Induction Meeting

The report was noted. In response to the comment that some Directors of Studies were still arranging meetings with their students to clash with the Induction Meeting, it was suggested that the Faculty Office e-mail all Directors of Studies about a week before term starts to remind them of this meeting.

11. Applied Maths

It was thought that students often preferred Pure Maths. Many people felt that this was caused by the structure of Part IB. In particular it was thought that many students preferred 24 lecture courses (with the guarantee of one long question on each paper) to 16 lecture courses. (There are three 24

lecture pure courses: Linear Algebra, Analysis II and GRM; and only one applied 24 lecture course: Methods.)

However, no specific recommendations were made.

12. Part III Interviews

There was no opposition to the proposal to reduce the number of interviews from three to two. It was noted that the forms from the interviews were often very slow reaching the relevant Director of Studies. It was hoped that the smaller number of interviews might allow this to be done a little more quickly. In particular, it would be very helpful if they could reach Directors of Studies by the start of the last week of full term so that they are available for the student's end of term interview.

13. Part III Essay submission

A mild concern was expressed that submission of essay direct to the Faculty Office (as is the present arrangement for CATAM projects) would make it more difficult for Directors of Studies to chase up late students.

There were no concerns expressed about bringing the submission date forward. The fact that students would now be selecting courses after they have finished their essays was thought to be an extra advantage.

Both the suggested changes were recommended unanimously (18 present) and it is hoped that they can be implemented for next year if, in the case of essay submission, suitable arrangements can be put in place.

14. Faculty Board representation of College Teaching Officers

There was strong support for the suggestion that College Teaching Officers be formally represented on the Faculty Board. However, it was noted that since places on the Faculty Board are filled by election, some thought will need to be given to a mechanism that would achieve this.

15. Any other business

(i) It was requested that the exam papers sent to Directors of Studies at the start of each year be stapled as a single booklet.

It was noted that the electronic copies available on the web are not the same as the original questions with some errors being introduced and the typesetting being different.

(ii) The item on deselection of candidates was deferred to the next meeting.

(iii) It was noted that a significant correction was made to one of the CATAM projects in the week before the submission date. It was felt that Directors of Studies and students should have been e-mailed directly rather than relying on people checking the CATAM news page.

16. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the practice of having two meetings a year should be continued.

It was agreed that the next meeting should take place in Christ's College, this being a swap in the rota between Christ's and Pembroke.