

Biannual meeting of the Directors of Studies in Mathematics

DRAFT (UNAPPROVED) MINUTES

Date and time Monday 18th November 2013, 9.30

Venue Trinity Hall, Graham Storey Room

Present Stephen Siklos (Jesus and Admissions), David Stewart (Kings), Julia Goedecke (Newnham), Julia Gog (Queens'), Susan Pitts (Part III Committee), Rachael Camina (Fitzwilliam), Mathias Dörrzapf (John's) Adriana Pesci (Downing), Stephen Cowley (Emma and Faculty Chairperson), Jonathan Evans (Caius), Nilanjana Datta (Pembroke), Barry Groisman (Sidney), Wayne Boucher (Sidney), Irena Borzym (St Caths), Robert Hunt (Christ's), Sophia Demoulini (Downing), Orsola Ruth Spivak (Lucy Cavendish), Tom Körner (Trinity Hall, DoS committee chairperson).

1. Apologies: Stuart Martin, Vicky Neale, Simon Wadsley, Peter O'Donnell, Jack Button, Colm Caulfield.
2. Minutes of the previous meeting. It was remarked that one Director of Studies had spoken strongly against the two A star proposal. Peter O'Donnell is director of Studies at St Edmunds.
3. Matters arising from the minutes. There were none.
4. Tripos matters: Parts IA, IB and II
 - a The report from the Faculty Teaching Committee on the 2013 examinations was considered. The meeting welcomed reconsideration of the C courses, but hoped that major changes could be done on a step by step basis to make them easier for the students to cope with. The meeting would like to see concrete proposals for electronic submission both of CATAM projects and Part III essays. Provided reasonable proposals were forthcoming, the meeting would support electronic submission. The meeting echoed the external examiners in calling for much stronger penalties for plagiarism. Weak treatment of this breach of academic values was deeply unfair to honest students.
 - b The meeting noted the abolition of alpha and betas in CATAM.
 - c A new timetable for examinations is proposed which will increase the interval between exam sessions. The meeting was in favour of this as an experiment this year, but wishes the student body to be consulted on its experience of the experiment.
 - d The meeting thanked all those involved with the induction meeting.
 - e Directors of Studies were asked to publicise the scheme 'Maths Cafe' whereby students can study in the main CMS common room 2-5 Saturday afternoon. (Tea, coffee and biscuits and a friendly graduate mathematician provided.)

5. Tripos matters: Part III (Note the reference to Part III under 4)

a The meeting looked at a number of documents including the response to the Part III examiners.

b The meeting expressed great satisfaction with the following decision of the Senior Tutors.

The Senior Tutors Committee has confirmed that, as the MAST attracts the undergraduate fee in line with the corresponding Part III, there should be parity of provision for direction of studies and supervision between the two courses, and between colleges. In particular, the Committee has agreed that, in order to meet their obligations to Mast students, Colleges should ensure that all have a Director of Studies. Some Colleges do not admit undergraduates and therefore might not have Directors of Studies in the subjects concerned, and will need to engage an external DoS. The hope is that Departments will be able to assist Colleges in securing an external DoS should they encounter difficulties. I should be grateful if you would make appropriate people in your departments aware.

c The meeting expressed its general satisfaction with the College/Faculty arrangements for Part III. It agreed that support for student learning could take a variety of forms, but confirmed that when Colleges paid for such support there should be appropriate reporting via CAMCORS.

The Chairperson and Dr Pitts emphasised that suggestions for improvement of the student experience and incidents when communication broke down should be sent directly to the Chairperson of Part III. There was no reason to wait until the next meeting of the DoS

d The proposal from Professor Lister for the marking of exercises in certain Part III courses was commended to the Part III Committee as precisely the sort of experiment that should be supported.

6. Admissions

a It was agreed to follow the same Winter pool procedure, as last year. Dr Siklos agreed to consider what modifications were necessary to meet the new arrangements for mature students and the meeting agreed to leave the matter entirely in his hands

b Faculty Open days

The dates of this year's open days are: Saturday 26th April and Saturday 3rd May. (Chosen so as not to clash with A-level.) Dr Siklos reported that the popularity of the mathematics open days was causing timetabling problems. Some colleges had moved their open days from dates originally proposed and the resulting overcrowding had only been resolved by having two sets of lectures — clearly not a sustainable solution.

7. STEP

a Easter School. The meeting expressed its thanks to all involved.

b STEP report. The meeting expressed its thanks to all involved.

8. The Chair of the Faculty asked for the proposed election of a member of the Permissions Committee to be brought forward. The Chair of the meeting would try to organise this electronically.

Present members

Professor I B Leader Chair, DPMMS Course Director (T)

Dr D M A Stuart DAMTP Course Director (JN)

3 Directors of Studies in Mathematics

Dr C J B Brookes 2015 CC

Dr S Martin 2013 M

Dr A I Pesci 2014 DOW

2 members appointed by the Faculty Board of Mathematics

Dr S M Pitts 2015 N

Dr M B Wingate 2014 F

There should never be more than two members of the same college.

9 Supervisors website and related matters.

[a] Directors of Studies were urged to make sure that potential supervisors knew about the website and used it.

[b] The Teaching Committee is urged to investigate the possibilities of using Moodles. It appears that this technology would provide a uniform method for presenting course notes and exercise sheets for the students and further information including the names of existing and potential supervisors for the staff.

10 Student numbers. There was an extensive, but surprisingly unheated, discussion of the matter. The Faculty and the Colleges strongly supported outreach both directly (to produce applicants) and indirectly (through the Millennium Mathematics Project to raise the general standard of knowledge and enthusiasm). We needed to build on this firm foundation. If money became available the STEP Easter school could do even better in its support of students from ordinary backgrounds.

There was strong and unanimous support for the setting up of a joint Colleges/Faculty admissions committee.

Chairperson's Note I will consult the Faculty Board and, if they agree, draw up detailed proposals (consulting Dr Siklos, the Chair of the Faculty Board and others) for such a committee. These proposals will be submitted to the Directors of Studies (possibly by e-mail) and to the Faculty Board for further consideration.

11 Other business. There was none.

12 Date of next meeting: The chairperson will e-mail before the end of term.