

# Biannual meeting of the Directors of Studies in Mathematics

## APPROVED MINUTES

**Date and time:** Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2017, 11:00 am

**Venue:** Room MR4, Centre for Mathematical Sciences

**Chair:** Julius Ross (DoS Convenor, Sidney Sussex)

**Present:** Christopher Tout (Churchill), Anastasia Kisil (Corpus Christi), Anita Faul (Selwyn), Julia Gog (Queens'), Orsola Rath Spivack (Lucy Cavendish), Irena Borzym (St Catharine's), Wayne Boucher (Sidney Sussex), Colm Caulfield (Churchill College/Part III Chair ex officio), Nilanjana Datta (Pembroke), Berry Groisman (Sidney Sussex), Chris Warner (Robinson), Thomas Forster (Clare Hall), John Lister (Trinity), Stephen Cowley (Emmanuel), Rachel Camina (Fitzwilliam), Clive Wells (Hughes Hall), Julia Goedecke (Newnham), András Zsák (Peterhouse), Anders Hansen (Peterhouse), Ross Lawther (Girton), Stephen Siklos (Jesus), Nick Nikiforakis (Selwyn), Matt Saxton (Queens), Gareth Taylor (Corpus), Simon Wadsley (Homerton), Jack Button (Selwyn), Tadashi Tokieda (Trinity Hall), Robert Hunt (Christ's)

**Apologies:** Maciej Dunaski (Clare), Anthony Ashton (Homerton), Stuart Martin (Magdalene), Holly Krieger (Murray Edwards), Nathanael Berestycki (Kings), Jonathan Evans (Gonville and Caius), Peter O'Donnell (St Edmund's), Matthias Dörrzapf (St John's), Grae Worster (Chair of Faculty Board)

Notes for the Minutes: Emma Grosvenor Myer (Undergraduate Office)

### 1. Introductions

The Chair (Dr Ross) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. Minutes of the previous meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2016

There was some incorrect reporting in the draft minutes which has now been corrected, and these comments have been removed from the final minutes. These revised minutes were approved.

### 4. Admission matters:

#### a) STEP

Dr Siklos reported on the new STEP papers proposed for 2019. He outlined the main differences between the syllabus, and the fact that despite a different format the functionality is the same. Dr Siklos concluded that he will report that the DoS Committee is happy for this to come into force in 2019.

b) Mathematics Subject Convenor

Dr Gog presented an update report summarising the key statistics on the 2016-17 admissions round. She noted a slightly higher proportion of offers to female students, but it remains to be seen if this will translate through to places. Dr Gog thanked the DoS's for providing information in a timely manner. She did however feel that the poolside meetings were too fast, with 122 applicants being seen in 45 minutes, and she recommends one to two minute breaks at the end of each round for people to catch up.

Regarding the summer pool procedure, Dr Gog proposed that it is kept the same as in previous years, to which the DoS's agreed.

Dr Warner expressed his willingness to cover for Dr Gog as subject convenor whilst she is on sabbatical leave for the academic year 2017-18. Dr Gog has suggested this to the Admissions Forum, who appoints the subject convenor.

c) MUAC

i) Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the MUAC meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> February were received without questions.

ii) Alternative Offer and the response of the Admissions Forum

Dr Cowley introduced this item by saying that following the MUAC meeting, the Admissions Forum came up with its own proposal, which was contrary to the request of the Faculty.

The relevant extract from the (unconfirmed) minute from the AF meeting states:

*"A proposal was received for consideration (AF 17/03/9). The Director of Admissions reported that whilst this item had been discussed very late in the February meeting, it had been agreed that it required further careful consideration.*

*After a detailed discussion, during which a number of views were expressed, it was generally felt that the proposal was of great interest, but that there were real reservations about the details. In particular, it was recommended that there needs to be a clear message that applicants are required to take both papers, not just one, even if there is more flexibility on the grades required. There would need to be clarity over which Colleges were taking part in any pilot scheme (balancing this with the agreed messages about College choice), and the groups to which flexible offers might be made. Research into correlations of tripos performance of under-represented groups and STEP scores also needs to be refreshed. A suggestion was made that, in order to simplify the position, it could be stated that typical offers would be in the range of 1,2 to 5,1, with applicants from those underrepresented groups being made an offer at the lower end of the range.*

*It was agreed that the Director of Admissions would take an alternative proposal back to the department for their view. It was noted that this trial would be for 2019 entry and it was agreed that the Director of Admissions would bring a formulation of words back to the next meeting. Colleges were asked to contact the Director of Admissions if they had any real concerns."*

Dr Cowley pointed out that this response missed the point of the original proposal, but he thought it would be worth trying again to get the Admissions Committee to understand what we want to do.

Dr Siklos remarked on the differing structural admissions systems between Oxford and Cambridge, and Dr Cowley added there is seemingly a perception in some schools that it is easier to gain entry into Oxford than Cambridge. However, Dr Goedecke said that Cambridge interviews more than twice as many students as Oxford, which has a prior de-selection process.

After some discussion, two questions were voted upon:

- “Do you support the idea of some colleges using the alternative offer as a trial” :

This was supported by all but one member of the committee in attendance.

- “Which colleges would be interested in entertaining the idea of using the alternative offer in their own college?”:

The following members showed an interest (Dr’s. Borzym, Siklos, Cowley, Warner, Camina, Groisman, and Rath-Spivack).

Since the meeting Professor Berestycki (Kings) has also indicated interest).

iii) Open Days

Dr Rath-Spivack reported on the findings in her paper that has already been submitted to the Faculty Board. Using Eventbrite, a poll was conducted to obtain useful gender mix statistical data. Dr Rath-Spivack thanked the colleges for their contribution. The Open days attracted almost exactly the same number of students on the first and second days. Dr Rath-Spivack was concerned that a handful of students were unaware that the colleges held their open day in the morning, despite it being made clear on the website and the Eventbrite pages. She intends to revise the wording to make it even clearer.

Dr Goedecke commented on how pleasurable it was to give a talk at the open days, and suggested it would be helpful to have someone chair the sessions in future.

## 5. Tripos matters:

a) Undergraduate marks breakdown

Professor Lister confirmed that the Faculty list of results (with the students in rank order) will be sent to all DoS's and all Senior Tutors. The marks-per-question breakdowns will be sent to the relevant students, to the Senior Tutors of the relevant colleges, and to those DoS's who confirmed that they were the relevant DoS using a weblink that was to be distributed by email. All this should be sent out automatically as soon as the lists are posted/read at the Senate House. This will be for Undergraduates; there is a separate system for Part III.

b) Schedule changes for 2017/18 (i.e starred)

Professor Lister reported on the forthcoming changes to schedules. The major change for DoS's to be aware of is the new schedule to be lectured for IB Optimisation.

Professor Lister highlighted concerns from students on the specific course ‘Analysis of Functions’.

c) Supervision Feedback

Dr Goedecke reported that a trial was conducting for Queens' circus resulting in 48 students for Michaelmas and 35 for Lent filling in the feedback form. There were lots of positive comments from supervisors who found feedback helpful. Dr Gog suggested that the trial needs to run for another year. Dr Goedecke added that there would not be much more work to do to run this for all colleges, which would be more feasible than one or two colleges doing this at a circus level. Dr Cowley asked if the DoS Committee should ask the Faculty to provide support.

Action: The Chair (Dr Ross) to raise this at the next Faculty Board meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> May.

d) Supervision arrangements for Part II

There followed a lengthy discussion on procedure and the use of a central 'list' as a shared resource. Professor Caulfield said he is trying to pull together capacity for teaching in his Part III Committee role.

The Chair (Dr Ross) read out a contribution from Dr Jonathan Evans with his ideas and message for the group. Discussion continued regarding how PHD's / post Doc's are deployed. Dr Cowley spoke of his preference that all colleges wait until October and deploy supervision resources collectively, rather than organising their own college supervisors in June, leaving a smaller resource for others. Dr Cowley further proposed that there be a joint committee set up between the Faculty Board and Director of Studies to look into this.

Action: The Chair (Dr Ross) will raise this with the Faculty Board, with the recommendation that there be two members from the Faculty Board and two DoS's to look into this proposal.

## 6. Intercollege DoS Meeting

a) Senior Tutor's Terms of reference

The paper from the STC was discussed.

b) Membership

The Faculty Board have asked if we wish to have any further ex officio members on the DoS Committee. It was agreed by the Committee that the Chair of the Faculty Board should attend DoS meetings, with a deputy to attend if the Chair is unavailable. In addition the Chair of Part III and Chair of Teaching Committee should be ex-officio members.

Action: The Chair (Dr Ross) to report this at the next Faculty Board meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> May

c) Guide for Convenors

Small changes were proposed, but this will have to be resolved outside of the meeting as there was not enough time to discuss this at the meeting.

## 7. Any other business

There was no other business and the meeting was concluded at 1:00 PM.