

Centre for Mathematical Sciences
Wilberforce Road
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**MINUTES OF THE MATHEMATICS UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE
(MUAC)**

**Wednesday 13 January 2016, 2:00pm
CMS MR10 (B1.37)**

Present: Julia Gog (JRG, chair), Orsola Rath-Spivack (ORS), Ross Lawther (RIL), Stuart Martin (SM), Julia Hawkins (JEMH), Margaret Duff (MD), Tom Harris (TEAH), Chris Warner (CDW), Stephen Cowley (SJC)

1. Welcome

- i. Apologies received from Nigel Peake (JRG to chair in his absence) and Stephen Siklos.
- ii. The new members appointed by the Directors of Studies were welcomed: Stephen Cowley (vice Paul Russell), and Chris Warner (vice Julia Gog, as a DoS).
- iii. Current membership is available online:
<https://www.maths.cam.ac.uk/facultyboard/admissionscommittee>
- iv. It was agreed to have a further meeting this term, timed to be several days before the intercollege DoS meeting (in case of anything for MUAC to report). Subsequent meetings could be in May and November (similarly before DoS meetings, in time to report) and on in late January.

ACTION: JRG

2. STEP matters

- i. The document entitled "Outline proposal for STEP preparation support for Cambridge applicants" was presented by JEMH and discussed.

ii. The online self-study programme is estimated to reach 1500 students each year, and we might expect this to include many who are considering applying to Cambridge. A more targeted part of the scheme (post-offer support) might have capacity for around 250 students, who should be among those receiving Cambridge maths offers.

It was discussed that a slightly higher figure would mean having capacity for ALL home state school students offered (plus perhaps other special cases including mature students). We estimate this to be between 250 and 300, but precise numbers for recent years would be helpful.

ACTION: SJC/JRG

In terms of funding, the entire proposal is costed at around £90k per annum. The current Easter STEP school costs around £45k p.a. The shortfall might be considered by colleges, particularly from WP (widening participation) funds. SJC noted that considering the spend per applicant, this proposal looks fundable. We agreed that the DoS should be updated on this proposal, and if they are keen, to encourage their Colleges to support it.

Action: JEMH

ii. If the above proposal goes ahead, then 2016 might be the last Easter STEP school. It was noted that the University's and Faculty's prospectuses need to be accurate, so wording should be thought through and quickly updated (perhaps that STEP support will be available for those with need, or similar).

Action: ORS

3. Reports from the Faculty Admissions Officer (ORS)

i. Updates to documents including "Undergraduate Courses in Mathematics", the reading list and the Admissions Guide were noted. Further edits may be needed to the table in the Admissions Guide, and JRG noted that the statements by colleges on their interview arrangements either needed to be carefully checked for accuracy, or suggestion from previous MUAC meeting in August was to replace it with a more general statement should be implemented.

Action: ORS

ii. Faculty open days will be on 30th April and 7th May this year. The Babbage and Cockcroft Lecture Theatres are booked for the first one, and the Lady Mitchell Hall and Little Halls have been booked for the second. Discussions are ongoing as to whether we could host these in the CMS in future, but this would also require some online booking to ensure a balance of numbers between sessions. It was noted that live streaming from MR2 to MR3 is unlikely to be available for these (but should be ready for July University Open Days).

University Open Days in July. Maths will again have a stall. A discussion of the competition between Oxford and Cambridge at open days at this point highlighted the importance of first impressions. Three action points were identified:

- Consider purchase of materials for stands for this and other open days;
- Note to the May DoS meeting reminding that we are represented at these open days, and perhaps asking for student and DoS volunteers;
- Request to CAO for more space for the maths stall.

Action: ORS

For both the Maths and the University open days, SJC observed that student helpers should be armed with accurate information. A short preparation document would help (such as is sent to the DoS for the maths open days), but a briefing meeting in addition would be better still.

Action: ORS

The importance of first impressions online was also raised, particularly considering what a student or parent at an open day might be viewing during the day on their handheld devices. SJC & ORS agreed to run the test of seeing what they would land first on, and considering if it needed tweaked, e.g. regarding navigation.

Action: ORS & SJC

iii. Updates were given on the Oxbridge Conferences, where Cambridge will be represented by ORS in some, and Julia Goedecke in others. Cambridge will be represented in Edinburgh for the first time.

CDW mentioned he would be attending UCAS Conventions in Bournemouth, University of Sussex and Birmingham.

There will be two separate Sutton Trust weeks this summer, with about 35-40 students at each. As demand is much greater than the number of places that can be offered, there will also be a STEP preparation day in July (around 120 places).

The importance of following up summer school participants to track university entrance was noted. JEMH reported that 40 participants in a STEP preparation workshop in 2014 converted into 6 of our current Part IA cohort. This is a very good conversion rate, considering the participants were selected from groups that are less likely to have success with HE entry.

iv. item on Part Ia intake was taken with 4i below.

4. Reports from Subject Convenor (JRG)

i. The report on the summer pool was presented.

Entry in 2015 comes out with slightly different figures, depending on which database is used. The differences are small and perhaps accounted for by intermitting students returning. However, ORS and JRG will attempt to reconcile these sources.

Action: ORS & JRG

ii. The data on current (2015-6) round of applications was noted, including that the proportion of females applying had gone up this year (23.8%, 24.3%, 26.0% in previous three years). It was noted that this was still down compared with the years covered by the Athena SWAN submission.

iii. The recently completed winter pool stats were presented. Of note:

- More sharing of information between colleges before the pool (done via Moodle, which worked well for most);
- Dropping reading of names speeded up the meeting and allowed time for some extras to be picked up after the meeting, including two from LPN quintiles 1 and 2;

- There was an initial discussion over information on interview report forms, but further discussion postponed until item at next meeting;
- Discussion about “N”. General reluctance to use a Baxter-like metric, and no proposals better than “N”, which is at least fast to calculate. Observation that it really only matters for the first round, and as maths has high activity for several rounds, it is not as critical as it might be for other subjects.

iv. Testing update postponed to next meeting.

5. Other matters

i. The minutes of the extraordinary DoS meeting were noted, and particularly the action needed to draft the Faculty guidelines document. It was agreed that preliminary work should start outside of this meeting, and that a dedicated time at a further meeting of MUAC was required.

Action: JRG & MUAC

ii. There appears to be confusion across universities about the UCAS code to use for maths for 3 and 4 year courses, with G100, G102 and G103 all in common and inconsistent usage. This needs further investigation.

Regarding Unistats, it is more than unfortunate that we cannot include Part III (neither MMath nor MAst) as the University is at present not willing simply translate pass/merit/distinction to classes. Further investigation needed to determine what must be done to count them as classes.

Action: ORS & SJC

iii. JRG noted she will be attending the “It all adds up 2016” meeting for women in mathematics, and giving the lecture at the end of the day for years 12-13:

<https://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/study-here/undergraduate-study/outreach/it-all-adds-2016>

Next meeting: to be arranged (before 26th Feb DoS meeting)