



**MINUTES OF THE MATHEMATICS UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE  
(MUAC)**

**Monday 22 February 2016, 9:00am  
CMS MR10 (B1.37)**

**Present:** Nigel Peake (NP, Chair), Orsola Rath-Spivack (ORS), Julia Gog (JRG),  
Chris Warner (CDW), Ross Lawther (RIL), Julia Hawkins (JEMH),  
Stephen Siklos (STCS), \*Stuart Martin (SM), \*Stephen Cowley (SJC)

**1. Welcome**

i. Apologies received from Margaret Duff and Tom Harris (lectures to go to), and \*Stuart Martin to leave early (to lecture), and Stephen Cowley to arrive late (from lecture)

ii. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved, and action points reviewed:

- 1 iv – this meeting arranged to be a few days before inter-college DoS meeting (Friday)
- 2 i – numbers had been communicated between meetings, and paper on STEP support proposal going to DoS committee this week.
- 2 ii – Prospectus accuracy regarding STEP Easter School has been checked. Wording on STEP support to be checked (under item 3ii this meeting)
- 3 i – updates on admissions documentation on agenda for this meeting.
- 3 ii – open day items are in progress
- 3 ii – Faculty website for substantially updated with respect to admissions, and works nicely on handheld devices (phones/tablets).
- 4 i – figures reconciled, was very small number who did not take up their offer, plus some late subject changes
- 5 i – first draft of guidance doc to this meeting, and discussion this meeting
- 5 ii – UCAS codes and unistats on agenda for this meeting.

iii. Date of May meeting to be arranged by Doodle poll

## 2. Follow up to DoS extraordinary meeting

i. The action points were discussed, and in particular we identified following up on the “riskiness” or otherwise of taking those who missed STEP, perhaps measuring by Part II outcome, and sharing this information with DoS and Admissions Tutors by July (in time to be considered before this year’s admissions decisions following STEP results).

**ACTION: JRG**

ii. The purpose and content of the guidance document was discussed extensively and a first draft agreed. Key discussion points include:

- Trickiness of words like “potential” and “teachable”.
- Ideas to make it possible for students to actively self-assess whether they might be the sort of candidate that fits the qualities we seek, for example pointing to STEP-style problems with the question of whether you enjoy it (as opposed to just whether or not you can do it)
- JEMH drew attention to an NRich project on mathematical creativity which might also be a useful connection to make
- Wish to be transparent on our admissions processes
- Clarity that being ready to do our course should mean ready when they arrive, hence on track at time of application

A draft version of the guidance document will be submitted to the intercollege DoS committee as a work in progress, with request for any comments or suggested edits to be sent to JRG.

**ACTION: JRG**

*Note post-meeting: JRG was grateful to meet with Margaret Duff and Tom Harris later the same day. We made further edits to the document for emphasis and flow.*

Further edits and suggestions from MUAC are also very welcome, and we should continue to edit this together, with view to having a shareable version by the end of the May meeting.

**ACTION: JRG & MUAC**

## 3. STEP matters

i. A brief update on the funding for the STEP preparation course was given by JEMH. A paper will be going to the DoS committee. We hope that if DoS support these proposals, they will communicate this to their College Bursars.

**ACTION: JEMH**

Item added regarding the “Siklos Booklets”. These have been a valuable resource for those preparing for STEP for some years, and we are keen that they remain available for potential applicants. STCS updated us on a new improved version available which merges the two booklets and many other small improvements, published via Open Book Publishers:

<http://www.openbookpublishers.com/product/342/advanced-problems-in-mathematics--preparing-for-university/>

The existing versions of the booklets will continue to be available on the Faculty website, together with a link to this book.

**ACTION: STCS**

#### **4. Reports from the Faculty Admissions Officer (ORS)**

i. The Faculty website has been substantially updated and restyled with respect to admissions:

<https://www.maths.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate-admissions>

This was met with enthusiasm, and ORS highlighted the contributions from both JEMH and Owen Smith in suggestions, implementation and testing of the website in record time.

Edits to the website will be ongoing so further comments are very welcome.

A new draft of the "Guide to Admissions" was also circulated. This too was very welcome. SM drew attention (by email) to international students are among the readership, and the overseas interviews should be mentioned. Further discussions were on how much detail should be included on STEP or just linked or appendix, and that this document should be included in print literature that goes into the folders handed out on open days. Accuracy of information regarding STEP support should be checked (given plans are at proposal stage for next year).

**ACTION: ORS and JEMH**

The table of colleges was discussed, including whether the number of places should be past rolling average, or the intended number of admissions next year, and it was agreed it should be the latter, so wording needs tweaked. Colleges should also be asked to check their entry regarding this target number and attitude to gap year.

**ACTION: ORS**

Applicants to places should be checked from previous years.

**ACTION: ORS & JRG**

It was agreed that MUAC should scrutinise the difference between actual number admitted each year and the target numbers. The next agreed set of target numbers and recent actual numbers will therefore be compared and discussed at next MUAC meeting.

**ACTION: JRG**

ii. ORS presented an update on this year's arrangements. The ideal venue for future years was discussed. It would be very appealing to get all visitors over to the CMS for talks. However, the sheer number of visitors make this prohibitive without running many sessions. ORS will continue to explore suitable venues which can hold large numbers, but might mean we could run some part of the day at the CMS.

**ACTION: ORS**

**5. Reports from Subject Convenor (JRG)**

i. A verbal report was given that the University had now communicated the updated regime with respect to pre- and at- interview testing. There has been much reaction to this, but perhaps not noticing the position of mathematics (no new testing). Our website should make this clear and remind about STEP, in particular its timing and resources available. This should be done as soon as possible.

**ACTION: JRG, JEMH, ORS**

**6. Other matters**

i. UCAS and Unistats – updates were given by SJC and ORS. There remains serious problem: according to Unistats, only 5.88% of our students gain a 1<sup>st</sup> class degree. This is clearly a nonsense derived from a combination of Unistats working in a particular way to how it measures G100, and the more serious problem of Part III results not being regarded as classified (so 46% of our students are listed as “Degree that is not subject to classification”, and their Part II results are not counted either, when a large majority of these would in fact have a first). *This gives a false impression to potential applicants, so action here is a priority.*

We recommend that the Faculty seek to update our regulations so that Part III results are associated with classes.

**ACTION: NP**

There remains a subsequent question of how G100 is associated with four different degrees (all permutations of BA/MMath and with and without physics), and which should be the first listed. MUAC should return to this point.

**ACTION: MUAC**

ii. JRG reported ongoing discussions with Rebecca Cotton-Barratt (Admissions Coordinator and Schools Liaison Officer, Oxford Maths) about shared admissions interest, and particularly with respect to attracting women into mathematics. Further discussions will take place soon, and other members of MUAC are very welcome to join in.

iii. Note for next meeting to discuss whether or not we should now make Further Maths should be a requirement for those taking A-level.

**ACTION: MUAC**

**Next meeting: to be arranged (before 10<sup>th</sup> May intercollege DoS meeting)**