

Summary of Examiners' Reports for NST Maths 1A and 1B 2013

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This report provides a summary of some of the main points made in the Examiners' reports (attached) and provides some commentary following a meeting of the NST Mathematics Teaching Committee held on Wednesday 13 November 2013, at which the reports were discussed.

NST Mathematics 1A

There was a total of 509 students who took this examination, comprising 432 NST students and 77 CST students. Last year there were 489 students, comprising 429 NST and 60 CST. The previous year the figures were 506, 436 and 70 respectively. It is pleasing to note that there were no reports of misconduct or of any mistakes in the examination papers.

The median raw mark (out of 240) has been climbing steadily over the past several years

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
131	140	162	170	182	150

The examiners note that it was their intention to make the examination slightly more difficult than in previous years and to balance the difficulty of the two papers. The figures reported suggest that they were successful on both counts.

It is noted that, as usual, there are significantly fewer than average attempts at starred questions (which involve material taught in the B course but not in the A), with the exception of one of the questions on paper 2, attempted by 40% of the students and done well on average. This is not thought to be a concern: the B-course material is educational for those students who can cope with it but those same students can reasonably adopt an examination strategy that avoids it.

Assessors were again used to help with the marking of Sections A and some questions from Sections B, the latter being contrary to the advice from the Teaching Committee last year. We have discussed this further and have modified our view slightly to be content with the use of assessors for Section B questions. However, we are firmly of the view that each question should be marked consistently by one person, that assessors should not depart from the marking scheme without consultation with the responsible examiner and that all assessors should be approved in advance by the Faculty Board no later than the end of the Lent Term.

The examiners provide (paragraph 13) a list of recommendations. With respect to recommendation 11, the Teaching Committee recommends that any exchange of misdirected scripts must be reported to the Senior Examiner and to the Faculty Office.

NST Mathematics 1B

The examination was taken by 163 students (169 last year, 166 the year before). There were no incidents and no major questions from the students during the examination.

After the examination, three misprints came to light. Two of these were apparently of little consequence. The third is reported to have led to a possible loss of at most 7 marks. This seems significant to the Committee, who are interested to know whether any complaints were received in respect of this misprint.

Following more general discussion flowing from this last point, it was noted that the Examiners' report is written close to the completion of the examination and that it would be useful in future to receive a supplementary report giving a brief outline of any complaints or appeals, with their outcomes.

The Committee strongly endorsed the Examiners' recommendation that model answers should not be circulated at the initial checking stage, with the implication that both the checker and the lecturer should attempt the draft questions for themselves. The Committee also agreed with the recommendation that there should be at least one face-to-face meeting between the responsible examiner and the lecturer. The Committee was less convinced that assigning two checkers to each question would be effective in avoiding future errors.