

Annual Report of the Teaching Committee 2018–2019

1. The members of the Teaching Committee this academic year have been

Sergio Ballacado	Oscar Donlan*	Alexei Kovalev	Berry Groisman
Julia Gog	Xiao Ma*	George Robinson*	Mike Tehranchi
Richard Jozsa	András Zsák	Jonathan Evans (Chair L)	John Lister (Chair ME)

* Student members

Expressions of interest for the vacant student position were sought via an e-mail to all upcoming Part IB students before the start of the year, and the new representative was appointed from a field of 5 on the basis of their applications and comments from Directors of Studies.

2. The Teaching Committee met a total of 6 times in the academic year 2018/19, and dealt with some items by circulation. As usual, the major item on the agenda was the review of the undergraduate Tripos examinations.

We provided a detailed report on the undergraduate examinations to the Faculty Board based on reports of the Examiners and the External Examiners, on examination statistics and the actual questions, and on the information from the e-mail questionnaires. This report was considered by the Board at its November meeting, having previously been received by the meeting of Directors of Studies, and was used as the basis of the Faculty Board's response to the General Board's Education Committee. Agreed recommendations were transmitted to this year's Examiners. The full report on examinations is available online.

3. This year's NSS response rate (22%) was well below the 50% threshold response and we were not asked to comment. In previous years the Teaching Committee has anyway found our own system of second-week questionnaires, end-of-term questionnaires and end-of-year questionnaires, more informative and useful to us since they focus on the teaching of mathematics on a course-by-course basis.
4. We provided a report to Heads of Department (and to the Director of the Statslab) on the teaching of their departments, based on the paper and on-line questionnaires. A small number of courses/lecturers were referred to the Heads of Department for possible action. In general, the feedback from students was very positive and we drew attention to 13 courses where the feedback was outstanding.

In this year's report we drew the attention of the Heads of Department to a total of 8 courses (out of 62) where the feedback was negative: in some cases the lecturer is no longer lecturing and no action was necessary; in others we took action ourselves as well as alerting the HoDs.

5. Part IA lectures moved from the Cockcroft to the Babbage Lecture Theatre in 2018/19. Use of two visualizers, each projecting 2 sheets of paper, appears to be working quite well as a means of laying out a mathematical exposition (though not perhaps as dynamically as on a set of blackboards). Severe constraints were placed on the IA timetabling by both the limited availability of timeslots in the Babbage and the scheduling of IA Physics. As a result, students of Mathematics with Physics were unable to get to the (non-examinable) lectures in Numbers & Sets and Dynamics & Relativity. The Faculty introduced 8 "lecture classes" for each course, to provide these students with enough of a catch-up to follow the main ideas of the course should they wish to proceed into IB Mathematics.
6. The University has replaced the old Regulations 5–7 governing appeals against examination results with a new system, overseen by OSCCA, which has more limited grounds for appeal. The Faculty has thus formalised a procedure by which a candidate may request, via their Director of Studies, a mark check on particular questions if there are good reasons to believe an error has occurred.
7. It was disappointing that a nomination for a Pilkington Teaching Prize, originating from a special committee of all our student representatives, was unsuccessful, perhaps because 'excellence in teaching' is now low on the University's stated prize criteria. The Faculty does

believe in rewarding excellence in teaching, and in listening to the student voice on such matters, and hopes to institute a Faculty prize.

8. The Teaching Committee advised the Faculty Board regarding the appropriate way to advertise non-examinable courses, such as the History of Mathematics and Ethics in Mathematics, for which the Faculty is not responsible for the content.
9. Members of the Teaching Committee were involved in various miscellaneous activities (for some of which the Board has received an independent report), including:
 - Attending early lectures of all new lecturers and some other lecturers, and discussing their lecturing;
 - Monitoring electronic student feedback on the Feedback line and in second-week questionnaires;
 - Advising on the choice of lecturers;
 - Advising on the timetable for lectures;
 - Responding to the report of the Learning and Teaching Review
 - Email communication to students regarding course information;
 - An extensive and ongoing statistical analysis of Tripos performance in relation to a number of factors relevant to admissions and widening participation;
 - An induction session for first year students;
 - Induction sessions for second and third year students;
 - An examination briefing session for Part IA students;
 - Supervisor training sessions.

John Lister
May 11, 2019