

Annual Report of the Teaching Committee 2016–2017

1. The Teaching Committee is required by its terms of reference to provide an annual report to the Faculty Board.

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

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| Nilanjana Datta | *Claudia Feng | Berry Groisman | Richard Jozsa |
| Henrik Latter (ML) | Peter O'Donnell | *George Robinson | Michael Tehranchi (E) |
| Henry Wilton | András Zsák | Jonathan Evans | John Lister (Chair) |

* Junior members

Junior members are nominated by the Chair and appointed by the Faculty Board. Expressions of interest were sought via an e-mail to all upcoming Part IB students before the start of the year, and the new representative was appointed on the basis of the applications and comments from Directors of Studies.

3. A new post of Director of Undergraduate Education was established to complement the role of the Chair of the Teaching Committee, strengthening oversight of the undergraduate Mathematical Tripos, and taking the lead for the Faculty in communications with students and with the wider University on teaching matters. The new DUE, Dr Evans, is *ex officio* a member of the Teaching and Curriculum Committees, Faculty Board and other bodies.

4. The Teaching Committee met a total of 6 times in the academic year 2016/17. As usual, the major item on the agenda was the review of the undergraduate Tripos examinations, but other items have also needed attention.

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 report is available online.

We reported on the National Student Survey findings¹ and in general on other forms of feedback.

We provided the Faculty response to a University consultation on overall degree classification, which argued unequivocally that the Part II result is the only sensible option for the Mathematical Tripos.

We provided the Faculty response to the Senior Tutors' Education Committee regarding the number and nature of College-based pre-sessional courses. We reported that they help students settle into College and form supportive relationships, but do not convey an unfair academic advantage and are not academically necessary.

5. A new Part II course on Analysis of Functions was introduced, and the revamped schedule for Part II Cosmology was lectured for the first time. The rubric for undergraduate examinations was revised to clarify the treatment of 'excess' questions and the allocation of quality marks. Examiners' comments on questions will now be published online.

6. 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.

¹The Guardian's league tables <https://www.theguardian.com/education/ng-interactive/2017/may/16/university-guide-2018-league-table-for-mathematics>, drawn from NSS results, show that Mathematics in Cambridge has much higher student satisfaction ratings than our major competitors in all three categories (for the course, for teaching and for feedback).

In this year's report we drew the attention of the Heads of Department to a total of 7 courses (out of 61): for 2 of these we recommended some action be taken by HoDs; for 3 we took action ourselves.

We also drew attention to 9 courses where the feedback was outstanding. One of the two Pilkington Prizes assigned to the School of Physical Sciences was awarded to Dr Ashton.

7. In addition, 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;
 - Email communication to students regarding course information;
 - The Pilkington Teaching Prize Committee;
 - A working group, led by Dr Goedecke, on improving supervisor training and feedback;
 - Induction session for first year students;
 - Induction sessions for second and third year students;
 - Examination briefing session for Part IA students;
 - Supervisor training sessions.

John Lister
May 17, 2017