

## Consultative Committee for Mathematics in the Natural Sciences

*DRAFT Minutes of a meeting held on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2009 at 1.00 p.m.,  
in Meeting Room 4, Centre for Mathematical Sciences, Clarkson Road*

Present: Dr Ben Allanach, Dr Robert Best, Dr Sue Colwell (Convenor), Prof Steve Gull, Miss Amy Johnson, Miss Theresa Kreiger, Miss Lindsey Tate.

Apologies: Dr Harvey Reall, Dr Mark Spivack.

### 1. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

### 2. Part IA, A course: Miss Johnson reported.

*Lecture Course: Prof Peake.*

Most of the feedback on this course had been really positive; the lecturer is very good and clear and he has handed out complete notes. In general the pace is fine, but there is little difference between the pace of lectures on topics covered at A level and lectures on new topics. For example he went slowly through both basic calculus which was familiar material and reduction formulae which was not. Some students feel they could be pushed a bit harder, especially those wanting to do Physics next year. Quite a few students feel they should be taking the B course but they have been advised to take the A course by their Directors of Studies. The examples sheers were good, but the students felt that the coverage of material was rather uneven, for example there are a lot of questions on calculus, but not as many as they would like on vector area.

The attendance at the course has been steady with the large Chemistry lecture theatre being about half full. Saturday lectures are not noticeably less well attended than the others. Quite a few students come in up to ten minutes late.

### 3. Part IA, B course: Miss Tate reported.

*Lecture Course: Dr Challinor*

The feedback on this course has been mixed. Some students find it rather hard and fast paced, some have not yet met any new material and so don't want any slackening of the pace. The lecture notes are generally very good, but the students feel that the worked examples don't include enough steps. The lecturer spends a lot of time going through non-examinable proofs, and then doesn't have time to go through the worked examples in detail, although he did give one lecture dedicated to examples at the end of the last section. There have been some complaints that the lectures don't add very much to the notes. There followed a discussion on the various models adopted for lecture notes, and the dangers/advantages of the lecturer not sticking to his/her notes. It was noted that one good model was for the lecturer to lecture from complete notes but not to hand out the completed notes until after the lectures. It was reported that some people had got hold of copies of the A course notes as they preferred the style. There was a request for answers to the examples sheet questions to be printed on the sheets themselves rather than handed out later.

The attendance at the course had suffered a big drop at first and quite a few people had moved to the A course, but the attendance was is now stable (including Saturday attendance). The Arts School room A was over full to begin with but there are now a couple of empty rows. The room is very hot at 9.00 and there was a request for the heating to be turned down.

#### **4. Part IA, Computer Techniques and Applications:** Miss Tate and Miss Johnson reported.

*Lecture Course: Dr King.*

There had been a lot of comments about this course. The lecturer was very enthusiastic and engaging, but the students found the material to be a curious mixture of advanced theory and basic practical use of Excel. The lecture notes were quite useful, especially the way the basic theory was collected in the appendices, but the lectures didn't seem to have much to do with the notes. There was quite a lot of nervousness about the assessed exercise and some students were expecting it to be done under examination conditions. The Convenor explained that the exercise was done in the students' own time but there was a short interview at the time of submission, the point of which was largely to check that the work was the students' own. She agreed to ask the lecturer to make an announcement clarifying the procedure. She also commented that the course was being revised and this was the last year it would be given in its current form.

#### **5. Part IB course:** Miss Kreiger reported.

*Lecture course: Dr Wingate*

The feedback on this course has been very positive. The lecturer is audible and legible, he explains things clearly and the pace is appropriate. He hands out notes with gaps and adds additional material in the lectures. The students request that he puts the completed notes up on CamTools. In the sections where some material is a recap of IA B course material, some people find the pace a bit slow, but those who did the A course find it helpful. The examples sheets are at an appropriate level. The examples classes were very intense as they were two hours long with only a short break, but they were found very helpful.

People doing Physics find the course very relevant, and they find that seeing material (e.g. Fourier Transforms) in both courses helps to reinforce the concepts. A small number of students are doing the Maths with Education option, and they find the course very difficult and not relevant to their needs.

The attendance at lectures has been good. Those doing physics have a gap of one hour between Physics and Maths lectures, and it would be helpful if there was some space near the lecture rooms where they could work.

Room A of the Arts School has cooled down a bit by the time of the Maths lectures (11.00 am), but the second OHP is useless.

#### **6. Any other business**

The book by Riley, Hobson and Bence was found very useful for IB, and the Mathematics book in the OUP Chemistry Primer series was found helpful for IA but the students reported that they tended not to use books much, finding their lecture notes to be very good.

In response to a question from Dr Allanach, the student representatives confirmed that they had not noticed any significant absence due to illness. The threatened autumn Swine Flu epidemic has luckily not yet had much effect.

Next term's meeting will take place as early as practical in the term, (ideally in the third week of lectures,) and will be arranged by birdcage.