

**University of Leeds
School of Mathematics**

Staff Student Forum

**The minutes of the Staff Student Forum which took place on Wednesday
4th March 2009 at 2pm in Leonard Rogers room 8.22d.**

Present:

Students: Bernadette Snell (1MM), Annie Aveyard (2MK), Fatima Dadhiwala (1JH).

Staff: Prof C. Taylor (Chair), Dr M. Messmer, Dr O, Harlen, Dr M. Speight, Miss L. Smith, Miss H. Ugarte

1. Apologies for Absence

John Power
Peter Jameson
Caroline Swanson
Yue Yang
Sana Bhatti

2. Minutes from the meeting of November 2008

Point 6f of the minutes were queried due to confusion, this has now be corrected.

3. Inspiring and Innovative Teachers Competition

A talk was given from Samantha Pugh (Learning & Teaching Enhancement Officer) about a new competition that was starting. The University would like to know what a good teaching practice is. The competition is called 'searching for a teaching star', and it is where students can nominate who they believe are there best tutors. This will help the University to understand what students like in lectures and modules. The deadline for the competition is the 1st of May.

4. Discussion on Programme & Module Catalogues Web Page Designs

It was explained that there is a big project taking place at the moment to try to organise the catalogues so that they are student user friendly, as at the moment they are aimed at admin' staff. The students explained that they use the catalogues more for planning ahead, in regards to making sure they have the pre-requisites for modules they wish to take the next year. This is because the School of Mathematics only give out module handbooks for the actual year the student is taking. Dr Messmer had to explain to the students that there is a programme catalogue and a module catalogue. The students said that it is hard to tell the difference between both as they both look very similar on the search page. The students would like the links to be more prominent on the portal.

5. Complaints made:

Level 3 Modules Exam Complaints

This part of the meeting was skipped as none of the level 3 students were present.

Access to Coursework Marks

Dr Messmer explained to the meeting that a student had made a complaint in regards to coursework marks. The student had noticed that his mark had been missed off the blackboard. The student is concerned that this could happen on other modules. The student reps' were asked if they were concerned about this. The students said that when they are given a mark with the piece of homework they only take note of that. It doesn't worry the students that much as they trust the lecturer.

The tutors present in the meeting noted that there are only a few tutors that put marks onto VLE Blackboard, felt that this is because it is not an easy process. It was also noted that when students look for marks and work they seem to be dotted about in either blackboard or staff webpages etc. They asked if it would be possible to have easy links on one page that will take you to every mark you want.

6. Mentoring of International Students

Dr Messmer explained that the School of Mathematics has a large amount of international students. It is understood that international students struggle with the English language especially in the statistics and probability modules. The meeting suggested that a special event should be held in Introduction week, to introduce the students to mentors that have international backgrounds. Student reps' commented on the fact that Mathematics mentors are not that useful, because mentors are given to every first year. She asked whether the mentors can just be optional, as not all first years actually want them. Maybe a form to complete in the Introduction pack would work. It would also be useful if you were to pair up mentors who are friends and let them mentor a group of five first year students. This would make it a more comfortable and less awkward environment. All the student reps' don't think that the first mentor meeting was successful.

7. New policy on providing short exam solutions

As a result of the last Staff Student Forum, the School of Mathematics has decided to allow final parts of answers from past exam papers to be published online. This will enable students to know that they have come to the right answer at the end of the working out. From this year onwards tutors will be asked to provide these short answers, so historical papers will not have answers but future papers will have.

8. Feedback from student representatives on:

8.1. Personal Tutoring week

A student rep' explained that the tutoring week didn't work for her. The whole of her group was asked by the tutor if they would like a meeting and the whole class said no. However most of the level 2 students who were asked went to their meeting and felt that it went well. During the meeting they talked about a variety of items but they were all linked towards the exam results. It was felt that overall the transcripts were helpful. A comment was made in regards to students not always wanting to go see their personal tutor, it is sometimes preferable to see a tutor that you know better.

8.2. Information Event for Finalists

The Event for Finalists was held in February, it was an afternoon set up to explain to final year students how their degree would be classified and what sort of careers they could expect to have. All of final year Mathematics and Joint Honours students were invited with lunch included however not many turned up. The student reps' explained that it might be good to also have year 1 and 2 students invited, as they like to be organised and plan ahead.

8.3. Planned Year Group Meetings

The student reps were consulted on the year group meetings that are in the planning stages. The year group meetings will be used to give out information in regards module choice information, junior year abroad and career choices. This meeting is going to take place after Easter and the student rep's recommended that it be organised for the second week of the teaching term.

9. Items from Members

Students would like to have more lecture notes online as they don't feel they get enough.

It was also raised that tutorials differ greatly with the information that is given out to students. Some of the students have found this frustrating. Some tutorials go directly through the homework questions, while others do different questions altogether. This is not fair for the students who are not given direct help.

It was noted that some of the students felt that the way that homework is marked is not consistent. Students like to have their homework annotated over the top, so that they can see where they are going wrong. They also feel some students will be less inclined to work hard on assessed homework that is not worth much of the overall module mark. They feel if they were a bigger percentage of the module for homeworks then it would be done better.

It was explained to the meeting that students are not handing in all of the homework required for module MATH2750. The student's reps' suspects that this is happening because no feedback is given on work. They are also worried about not passing this module. Students are confused with how the lectures are organised, they do not know how the board notes are linked with the lecture and the paper notes. Students are worried so much they would like to be informed of a book that can be used to help them or a different tutor to hold the examples class for the module.

MATH1915 – 1916 students have been given their mark back but have not received the work. It was also felt that there was not enough help given in regards to the software and during classes only post grad's seemed to be there to help. This made it hard for the students as the post grads couldn't answer every question, which delayed the students learning.

10. Any other Business

Announcements

18th March – Inaugural lectures from 3 recently appointed Professors.

18th March – Representatives will be coming in from Deloitte's to speak to third years.