

**University of Leeds
School of Mathematics**

Staff Student Forum

**The minutes of the Staff Student Forum this took place on Wednesday 2nd December 2009 at 2pm
in Mall 2.**

Present:

Students: Mark Pierzchaki (1MM), Ammar Khan (2MM), Samantha Coates (3MM), Luke Reger (4MM), Laura Reid (3MX), Mbongeni Zwangobani (1MK), Wenyi Xu (1MK), Rostane Benarous (2MK), Lucy Cross (3MK), Rachel Mckay (JH)

Staff: Prof C. Taylor (Chair), Dr M. Messmer, Dr A. Baczkowski, Dr M. Speight, Dr O. Harlen, Mrs L. Feaviour, Miss H. Ugarte (minutes)

1. Apologies for Absence

Gina Bernhoeft

2. Approval of Staff Student Forum Minutes from the 4th November 2009

The minutes from the last meeting were accepted

The Teaching and Learning committee made a slight amendment to the 4th of November minutes. Item 5, paragraph 5 was changed from 'it would not count as "not satisfied" ' to 'would not count as satisfied'.

3. Matters arising from the last meeting

The year 1MK student who explained in the last meeting how difficult it was for MATH1050 to get the homework ready for classes, due to the tutorial being the day before the lecture. Has reported that the solutions are now placed on the VLE earlier so that they can be read through and learnt before the tutorials.

LUBS1950 lecture problems the students were encountering have now been resolved.

The forum reported that the Graph Theory's module description was incorrect and the lecturer will not be giving any example classes. He has however set aside more time so that students can be supported through office hours.

4. School's action plan in response to feedback on the students experience

The chair explained that the action plan is used to improve the students experience and in the end improve our National Student Survey results. In this meeting the chair will highlight

the low marks we have received and ask the representatives of the year to explain why they think the result is so low.

Academic Support

The rep's noted that the year 1 MK students joined the year 1 MM workshop and felt that this benefitted them. However it was noted that the postgrad taking the workshop would struggle to have such a wide knowledge of maths especially if Joint Honours students also attended.

One of the rep's explained that she enjoyed the homework drop-in sessions provided once a week as these made up for no workshops in year 2. However she has noted that they are no longer running this year. Dr Messmer explained that this was due to the poor attendance, and sometimes no students turning up at all. The student noted that it was useful and that it shouldn't be cancelled because of the poor students who did not use the resources.

The meeting highlighted 200809 achievements from the results and asked for feedback on how to promote items to students.

Leeds for Life is a new system aimed to help students academic time at Leeds. How could the School promote this system to the students so that they get the best out of it? The rep's noted that Leeds for Life is already well advertised, however doesn't sound like there is much for students to do on it so they just don't bother looking.

Dr Messmer explained that the Leeds for Life has an online CV and help on how to put together the best CV. Also has the ability for personal tutees to input notes on a specific student. The student rep's felt that more help was needed in personal development and they feel that they could use more time with their personal tutor. Some of the students explained that they did not gain anything from their meetings with personal tutees and they would prefer it if they could be restructured. In the end they would not be happy to ask tutors for a reference as they feel they do not know them enough.

Dr Messmer asked what the students would want to discuss with personal tutors. Especially for final year students they would like to talk about future careers. Leeds for Life should have prompts for students so that they know what to expect from their meeting. In the end it also depends on the personality of both attendees.

Dr Messmer questioned the reps on how they felt with the programme meeting and finalist event. The reps' felt that the finalist event was held too late in the year as the majority of students will have already applied for jobs. It would be better there was two meetings one that was held in the middle of September based on jobs and one in the second semester to explain about degree classifications etc.

Overall Satisfaction

Create History of Maths Module - The student rep's felt that a coursework based module would be good for students who struggle with certain aspects of Maths. A module on History of Mathematics would be really useful.

Refocus the Role of Student Mentors – One of the representatives notes that when she was in her first year she didn't know her mentor. Now she is a student mentor she feels she can comment on the system. As a mentor she saw mentees for a couple of weeks into term, from then on she has tried to contact them via e-mail with no reply.

New Intro Week Event – One of the students notes that this seems a good event to run, as she is in her third year and still feels unsure of how to use the library resources. It was noted that MATH3000 is a good module as it shows you how to use library and referencing but some students feel that this is a bit late in University life.

Academic Support

'Divert some resources from Year 1 to Year 2, and provide consistent module-based support in Year 2 with a team-teaching approach' – the rep's said that this is a good thing to do. They also explained that it would be nice if staff could put office hours on their doors, as your allocated tutors sometimes don't have the knowledge you need. Office hours would give students a chance to ask correct staff information.

5. Items from Members

Year 1 –

It was felt that tutorials were too inconsistent between departments. One representative explained that they would like a reading week in semester 2. This was discussed and both tutors and students felt that it was not a good idea. Students would not actually use it to benefit them and it would also push the semester finishing date back a week. It was brought up again that not all of the lecturers are using the VLE but it is good that there is either a VLE or a link to website for modules. However not many lecture notes are there only a few examples.

Year 2 –

The MK students feel that they have no involvement with the Business school. They have plenty of tutors in maths they can talk to about problems but not made aware of any in Business school. The students would like more inclusion in the school and more academic support. One suggestion was to have a mathematics rep attend the Business schools staff student forum.

Rep's felt that the feedback on homework's could be improved. They explained that some lecturers give good feedback on work. It was suggested that staff correlate all the mistakes students have made on work and compile the corrections to these to be given out to students. Or Skeleton notes that have been completed would be good if they were given out at the end of the module, in case students miss classes.

It was also explained that students would like a set guideline written up for markers to follow. They understand that work is marked but different people but they feel there is an inconsistency between strictness of markers. This is unfair.

Year 3 –

It was highlighted the MATH3880 has no past papers. But it was explained to the Student Rep's that as it is a new module this is why. The students would like MATH3071 example class to be before the homework hand in date. MATH3713 – students feel that 2 practical's due in for the module is too much work. MATH3000 – coursework marks are published at the end of the module (end of semester 2), however the students would like to know how they are doing halfway through.

Students felt that the careers fairs provided were not great. A lot of the companies spoken to advise students to look on their website for information but most students would prefer to speak face to face, as that is why they attended. One explained that it would be great if students could be given pointers on how to approach companies.

6. Code of Conduct and Behaviour

The student reps did not like the point that students being late to a module may result in them not being allowed to attend the rest for the lecture. Some students struggle to get there at the right time as their previous modules can be the opposite side of campus. One of the students explained that the Analysis tutor leaves back two rows empty in his lecture so that if anyone is late they do not disrupt the class.

As a result of students concerns the late point has been made less severe. Instead of 'you may not be allowed to enter the room' it now is 'you might be asked to give an explanation'. In the end staff definitely need to have set procedures.