

University of Leeds
School of Mathematics

Staff Student Forum

The minutes of the Staff Student Forum which took place on Wednesday 30th March 2011 at 2pm in E.C. Stoner 7.73.

Present:

Student: Rosie Molton (1JH), Philippa Van Der Kooy (1MM), Fabian Osadebay (2MM), Mark Pierzchalski (2MM), Duncan Turner (2MM), Danny Wood (3MM), Rebecca Scopes (3MK), Sophie Paleschi (2MX) Luke Modiri (4MM).

Staff: Prof C. Taylor (Chair), Dr M. Messmer, Dr A. Baczkowski, Dr O. Harlen, Dr G. Aivaliotis, Dr S. Pugh, Miss H. Ugarte (Minutes).

1. Apologies for absences:

Alastair Kittsen, Daniel Harvey, James Dai, Laura Bown, Mrs Louise Feaviour.

2. Approval of Staff Student Forum Minutes from the 16th February 2011

A couple of amendments were made to the minutes from the last meeting, but overall they were accepted.

3. Matters arising from the last meeting

Item 4 – The School is looking into providing a printer for the new computers. This will either be within the School or the computers will be networked to the public ones in the clusters, but this would make the computers slower to load up.

Item 3 part 6 – The VLE organisation has now been set up and is running, however it has not been used much by students. The reps recommended that a mention in lectures may boost the usage as it is not very prominent on the VLE. It may be used more over the next couple of weeks as a revision tool in preparation for the exams.

4. Discussion on Partnership Agreement

This agreement is a document that the University produces so that both students and staff understand what their role is while here at the University. It describes the commitment by the students to the University and vice versa. At the moment students are not aware of the agreement and it was recommended that it should be highlighted in the personal tutoring meetings. The document has to be brief and maybe if students have to sign the document, they will pay more attention to it.

Suggestions:

Staff Will -	Students Will -
Be enthusiastic lecturers.	Commit to their studies but do not have to attend every activity if they do not wish.
Provide sufficient support outside of lectures.	
Reply promptly to e-mails.	
Use the VLE for modules, so that students know where to look for course materials.	
Respond to module surveys, so that students are aware that the comments have been read and the changes that were made as a result of them are highlighted.	

5. Mentor Recruitment

The Director of Learning & Teaching and Dr Samantha Pugh are looking at ways to encourage the current Undergraduates to become mentors in the peer assisted learning (PAL) scheme in 2011/12. The following ideas were raised by the representatives:

- To offer payments as a reward for being a mentor for the full year and doing it well.
- To point out what benefits the mentors as well as the mentees get from the scheme, e.g. skills to add to their CV, to make them stand out when applying for jobs.

6. Employability Skills

A survey has been produced to find out what skills students are lacking in order for them to be successful in their future career. From speaking to prospective companies and alumni a number of questions have been raised and it was felt that the best way to get answers would be through a survey. The student reps were asked how they thought it would be best to get students to complete this survey.

It was recommended that the organiser should do a shout out in lectures as this may grab students' attention. They felt that doing a prize draw would not really help, and doing the survey online would probably receive a poor response.

7. Improvements to Student Experience (ideas for uses of funds)

As the University will have to raise the student fees for 2012 entry, the University is looking into ways to improve the student experience. The ideas which staff have come up with are as follows: student lockers; facilities/equipment; teaching staff. The student reps felt that it was important to have more staff so that teaching groups could be made smaller. They also felt that training for Postgrads would make the workshops useful as some are not as good as other. The improvement of facilities/equipment and the purchase of lockers was felt to not be as important.

8. Items from Members

Some MATH1022 Group Theory tutorials are poor and some of them have received complaints.

It has been noted that the School of Computing gives out feedback on homework etc using standard forms. The student reps felt that this would be a good system to adopt within Maths. However, staff mentioned that a standard form is hard to use for marking Maths work, as it is easier to highlight the problem within the work than trying to put it on a front sheet.

MATH2210 Introduction to Discrete Mathematics is a good module however the size of lecture theatre 17 in Roger Stevens makes it hard to hear the lecturer.

The representatives reported that lecture notes from staff are generally good, but they would be more useful if they used the format of leaving gaps throughout the notes so as to keep students' attention in lectures.

MATH2750 Markov Processes module has both homeworks and practicals for the students to do. However, only the practicals count towards the module mark. Students wondered if it was possible to remove the practicals from the module and have the homework marked instead.

There was the continued query of whether it was possible for the school to provide a list/flowchart of pre-requisites that are needed for modules. This is because it is a long process to have to go into the module catalogue and try to work out what modules you can do with the modules you have already studied.

One of the year 3 representatives raised a problem they had with the Pure project's interim report and the feedback that was returned. The feedback just gave students an overall score but not points that they could make improvements on. Is there a standard procedure? It was also noted that the Applied project catalogue entry is incorrect. In the catalogue it states that presentation for the project will be made during the exam period, however it was done before the exams.

9. Any other business

There was no other business to be reported.