

University of Leeds
School of Mathematics

Staff Student Forum

The minutes of the Staff Student Forum this took place on Wednesday 10th November at 2pm in the Magic Room, School of Mathematics.

Present:

Student: Rosie Molton (1JH), Laura Bown (1MM), Philippa Van Der Kooy (1MM), Fabian Osadebay (2MM), Mark Pierzchalski (2MM), Duncan Turner (2MM), Wenyi Xu (2MK), Mbongeni Zwangobani (2MK), Nadya De Villiers (3JH), Lauren Westmoreland (3MM), Danny Wood (3MM), Xuebin Lu (3MK), Xuan Zhu (3MK), Luke Modiri (4MM).

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

1. Apologies for Absence

Dr O. Harlen, Mrs L. Feaviour, Daniel Harvey and Rebecca Scopes.

2. Introduction:

The Staff Student Forum is where a committee of student representatives and staff members get together to discuss good and bad points about the School. It's a place for students to feedback information on how to improve the School, Modules or Programmes through their representatives. The School takes any points raised from this meeting seriously.

At the start of every Academic Year we offer the chance to Chair this forum to any of the Student Representatives if they wish to do so. Or if the reps' are happy, Prof C. Taylor will continue to chair the meeting.

At the moment there are no library issues to raise.

3. Approval of Staff Student Forum Minutes from the 24th February 2010

Item 4 of the minutes was brought up on whether there had been any volunteers for the website project. Nobody had volunteered as the feedback from the Staff Student Forum in February showed that students were happy with the website, however if they felt that anything need changing or improving they should inform Dr M. Messmer.

It was reported to the meeting that the School of Mathematics will no longer be getting a coffee machine. They had planned to have one fitted for the students but due to competition with the café upstairs they were not allowed.

Bright Sparks Careers Fair – it was reported to the meeting that the career's fair was going on the day of this committee and that only companies recruiting attended the event. It was noted that the attendance of the event was not great and the committee was asked their opinion on why they thought this was. Students reported that they find it a bit scary to approach employers. They would value a brief overview of career pathways ahead of the fair. The JH representatives told the meeting that they were not aware of the event as they had not received any information. All the representatives felt that they were bombarded with e-mails and that the best way to get information across was to do shout out's in lectures. Students suggested having the fair earlier in the semester before they are too busy.

Item 6 – Blog feature on the VLE. As of yet no blog or forum has been set up, Increasing Staff-Student/School-Student dialogue: Students suggested having a forum on the VLE as an organisation. It is difficult to organise this by year-group/programme/module.

Item 6 – PAL. At the last forum the School was thinking about introducing a new mentoring scheme called Peer Assisted Learning. The scheme has received good feedback and seems to be doing well, with both the mentors and mentees being happy. Higher year students (Year 2) would also benefit from Peer Mentoring, and Year 3 and 4 students could pass on valuable information, also concerning module choices.

4. Items from Members

MATH1050, MATH2365, MATH2600, MATH2640, MATH2715 and MATH2735 modules received good feedback from the Student Rep's, they felt that the courses were going well and deserved a mention.

MATH1035: Too much jumping between topics in lectures and in notes. Students with no Further Maths struggle.

MATH1715: Some tutorials not linked well with lectures. Tutor made up own problems.

MATH2015: Some concerns about organisation regarding different versions of homework and change of deadlines.

MATH2051: Homework is perceived as too long. Good lectures notes; marking and comments on homework are useful.

MATH2510: Handwriting is not clear. Homework is not related to lectures. There is no communication between lecturer and students. Consider lecture notes with gaps to be filled in by students for next year.

Further feedback from student rep:

- Problems on worksheets are vague. Necessary info is difficult to find in the textbooks.
- Workshops are difficult to follow and confusing, do not help with homework.
- The module does not seem to be a continuation of Fin. Maths 1, and uses different notation.

Suggestions:

- Do more worked examples in the lecture.
- For homework - Break down problems into parts, to make them accessible.
- Provide a mock exam.
- Give info about what will be examined in the final exam.
- Schedule a revision class.
- Give some chapter summaries on slides.
- Put additional books on reading list.

MATH2650: Difficult & time consuming. Homework is hard, students are struggling, lecturer is aware of issue.

MATH3071 & MATH3565: Notes ahead of time. Do more examples in class.

MATH3565: Module has no Stats prerequisite even though some stats is needed. Power Point lectures are more difficult to follow, notes with gaps to fill in would be better. Good lecturer.

Some of the 1st year students were unsure of the marking system used for homework's. They were aware that the work was marked out of 5 however they were not sure how this correlated with the mistakes that were made. It seemed that a small mistake would result in the loss of 20% from the marks.

A number of the rep's felt that some of the workshops for modules were poorly organised with what information was covered in them. Most of the rep's felt that covering $\frac{1}{2}$ of the homework and then the rest of the $\frac{1}{2}$ on individual problems would benefit students.

Maths with Finance international students felt that they needed more support in writing essays for LUBS modules, as essays was a main part of the LUBS modules. They also would like to know whether it is possible for Maths with Finance students to receive some copies of the Financial Times newspapers within Maths. It is supplied by the Business school for their students.

5. NSS and Programme Survey results

The National Student Survey is taken by final year students. They are asked core question's on how they feel studying within the School of Mathematics has gone; the percentages are then put into the League tables. Every year the School reviews the questions we have received poor marks for and looks at how we can improve them.

Question 19 and 21 were looked at, these questions were closely linked with employability. It was recommended that there should be a better system between the School and the Career Centre in the first year of studying. So that the students would have a better understanding of what careers are out there and what skills they should be aiming to leave University with. It was noted that the questions seemed more relevant to different subjects, that use more group interaction and presentations in the courses.

Question 5 and 9, regarding feedback, were also reviewed. It was explained that feedback would be hard to standardise, ticks and crosses next to answers do not help and model solutions do not always have enough information. The representatives felt that the feedback given in the first year was what was needed; they did recommend that maybe summary feedback could be given out if a lot of students had struggled on the same question.

6. Code of Practise on Assessment 2010/11

The members of the meeting reviewed the Code of Practise and were happy to accept it.

7. New policy on Resits

The School is looking at bringing in a new policy in regards to 3rd and 4th year module resits for special circumstances cases and students progressing from 3rd to 4th year. The University rule is that finalists should only resit modules in the next academic year. So as a result students who have special circumstances or problems with progressing they will only be able to take resits in the next academic year instead of in August.

8. Any other business

Mandelbrot Event – it is an hour long film on the history of Mandelbrot and fractals. Every student year would be able to attend if they were interested. The School Representatives thought that this would be a good event and of interest to maths students, so will be run in semester 2.