

School of Mathematical Sciences
Undergraduate Student Staff Liaison Committee
17th March 2020, 13:00 – 14:30 via Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Staff members present:

Name	Role
Justin Ward (JW)	Chair
Alex Clark (AC)	Head of School
Mark Walters (MW)	Director of Education
Shabnam Beheshti (SB)	Deputy Director of Education
Robert Johnson (RJ)	Director of Undergraduate Operations
Steve Coad (SC)	Senior Tutor
Simon Rawstron (SR)	Education Services Manager
William NG (WN)	Student Support Officer
Nadia Hussain (NH)	Secretary
Maria Patsou (MP)	Secretary
James Soderman (JS)	Faculty Liaison Librarian: Science and Engineering

Student members present:

Name	Programme name and level
Victoria Tsaneva (VS)	Mathematical Sciences Single Honours Year 1 - Rep
Nirusiya Sriskantharajah (NS)	Mathematical Sciences Joint Honours Year 2 - Rep
Baldeep Sohal (BS)	Mathematical Sciences Joint Honours Year 2 - Rep
Romana Chowdhury (RC)	Mathematical Sciences Single Honours Year 2 - Rep
Jordan Marajh (JM)	BSc Mathematics – 3 rd Year (Single Honours)
Ashwini Poopalasingham (AP)	BSc Mathematics – 3 rd Year (Single Honours)

Apologies for absence:

Name	Programme name and level
Denis Mih (DM)	Mathematical Sciences Single Honours Year 2 - Rep

Part 1 – Preliminary Items	
1(a)	Welcome and introduction for new members
2020.104	JW welcomed everyone to the SSLC meeting and introduced AP as Co-Chair.
1(b)	Apologies for Absence
2020.105	NH noted apology from member as recorded above.
1(c)	Minutes of the previous meeting
2020.106	The committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27 th January 2021 with no amendments.
1(d)	Report on matters arising and actions taken
2020.107	<p>The committee received a report on matters arising and noted the following:</p> <p><u>Actions from 27.01.2021</u></p> <p>2020.055 JW and MW noted that discussions were held in TLC about the techniques that could be implemented to improve attendance in tutorials. However, he noted that while some methods may increase engagement, it may have a reverse effect on improving attendance.</p> <p>VT highlighted that Lecturers should remind students that there are upcoming tutorials which would cover topic 'x'; providing tutorial learning objectives may increase attendance. JW to contact lecturers.</p> <p>2020.055 SB noted that PGT students completed QM Academic training and are now troubleshooting the non-traditional teaching methods to boost interactivity in tutorials.</p> <p>2020.062 MW noted that some students completed the MTH4114 mid-term test in Week 7, are others are to complete the test during LSR.</p> <p>2020.070 MW noted that SMS could not return to campus on Monday 8 March, as Maths did not qualify as a practical subject. However, depending on Government guidelines and risk assessments completed by the school, the aim is to return to campus on Monday 12 April. Although teaching activities will not be scheduled, as it will be week 12, interactive sessions for first years can be arranged. As lockdown is easing, more areas of the campus would become available. Post meeting: Maths Building will be re-opening on Monday 12th April</p>

	<p>2020.084 VT confirmed that the IT issues experienced in MTH4104 Lectures have been solved and lecturer now delivers sessions via Black Board Collaborate (BBC).</p> <p>2020.084 VT noted that the audio issue for MTH4116 Lectures was resolved temporarily, however no further action is required as students have adjusted to the sound setting and no longer complain.</p> <p>2020.085 AP and JW confirmed that lecturers have been reminded to record teaching activities.</p> <p>2020.086 SB confirmed that MW sent an email reminding lecturers that the fourth hour of teaching (seminar) should be used for example questions. This advice was sent together with the email for minute 2020.085.</p> <p>2020.098 WN noted that NSS and UKES have been sent to students. NSS reminders were sent weekly and now going to be reduced to fortnightly. WN acknowledged course reps efforts in promoting NSS and highlighted that there will be centralised communications next week and a week before it closes.</p> <p>2020.098 AP noted that students requested guidance on Placements and this was delivered by a PASS session. WN appreciated that first and second year students found the PASS session on the Placement year useful and would like to receive feedback, as arrangements can be made in the future with Dr Gaik Ng, SMS Placement Co-ordinator</p> <p>2020.101 WN reported that student names can be hidden on QMplus Forums and this setting is commonly used at PGT level. However the same cannot be issued on BBC. MW added that all forums have been made private on QMplus module pages, and it is possible to anonymise forums further. WN advised students to contact lecturers, should they prefer forums to be anonymised. WN to produce a 'how to guide'.</p>
1(e)	Terms of reference and membership
2020.108	No comments were made about this item.
1(f)	Admissions, induction and enrolment
2020.109	WN noted that preparation is soon to start for induction 2020/22.
Part 2 – Programme Delivery and other matters	
2(a)	Programme/module developments and amendments
2020.110	MW noted the following:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ring Theory (MTH6158) will be introduced as a 3rd year module and will be included in BSc Mathematics, Pure pathway and BSc Pure Mathematics- to replace Number Computing with C and C++ (MTH6150). Number Theory (MTH5130) was previously a 3rd year module, but is now a 2nd year module, hence Ring Theory did not run in 2nd year, as current third year students would have studied it. - There is an aim to reduce the number of modules available to students in order to mitigate timetable clashes (e.g. restrictions to the number of non-Pathway modules, and level 4 modules cannot be taken up by 2nd or 3rd year students (unless there is an exceptional case for students in their 2nd year).
2(b)	Learning and teaching matters
	Representatives reported on learning and teaching matters and the following points were noted:
2020.111	<p>AP reported the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students studying Introduction to Machine Learning (MTH6101) are receiving different quizzes, which they deem to be unfair, as some may receive more challenging questions than others. - Adjustments have been made to the delivery of Mathematical Tools for Asset Management I(MTH6113) lectures and students would prefer if hints were shared about the content of the quiz during tutorials. JW highlighted that there may be a widespread issue, as he also received feedback from Advisees that some materials were unclear. AP added that there were issues with the previous quiz and an error has been found in the current quiz. - The Financial Mathematics II (MTH6155) lecturer publishes lecture notes at the end of each week. Student would appreciate if these were uploaded in advance of the lecture on QMplus, as it would allow students to follow through with lecture and refer to notes when the delivery of lectures are too fast. JW to email Lecturer.

2020.112	<p>NS noted that the delivery of Statistical Modelling II (MTH6134) lectures are too fast and students are finding it difficult to follow. Students addressed their concerns to the lecturer but no improvements have been made.</p> <p>JW to email Lecturer</p>
2(c)	Assessment and feedback
	<p>Representatives reported on assessment and feedback processes and the following points were noted:</p>
2020.113	<p>RJ noted that, together with Module Organisers, they have been investigating assessment offences and passing any scripts of concern to the Appeals, Complaints and Misconduct Office. It was also acknowledged that the majority of students are doing great work on exams during difficult circumstances, but due to administering exams online there are avenues for students to cheat.</p> <p>VT noted that she had informed Dr Fink that an MTH4104 coursework was uploaded online. Dr Fink subsequently raised concerns in the following lecture and highlighted that similar offences have taken place and the school are able to identify students who leak a paper. VT questioned what is being done.</p> <p>RJ noted that one of the steps they follow is that lecturers check whether their assessments have been uploaded to contract cheating websites and compare how identical the questions are and, if there is reasonable doubt, the Misconduct Team will be made aware to investigate further. Relationships have been formed with contract cheating sites; contact details/IP addresses can be obtained.</p> <p>As courseworks have a relatively small weighting, offences are dealt within the school and do not need to be passed onto the Misconduct Team. This approach was led by the Exam Board Chair.</p> <p>Penalties include a stern warning for the first offence and, for repeated offences, sanctions are issued.</p> <p>JW noted that both Linear Programming and Games (MTH5114) Semester 2 and LSR exam scripts were published on contract cheating sites. The University were successfully able to have students confess to this as there</p>

	<p>was overwhelming evidence that it was these students. RJ confirmed that a lot of these websites are willing to give up data.</p>
2020.114	<p>VT questioned whether there has been a case where a student was incorrectly accused of committing an academic offence.</p> <p>RJ noted the initial investigation process and reassured reps that only if there is substantial evidence to suggest that there is suspicious activity, will a script be forwarded to the Appeal and Misconduct Department, who will then determine the outcome.</p> <p>JW added that for MTH5114 exam he had flagged, a number of scripts that appeared to be suspicious were subsequently sent to the Misconduct Team. Although, all students were eventually cleared, before any formal actions were taken, students were invited to an interview and in this case students referred to the same online resources, so no sanctions were imposed.</p> <p>SB mentioned that the Academic Misconduct Panel includes members from outside of the faculty (e.g. Science and Engineering), to ensure there are no conflicts of interest and objectivity is maintained throughout. As a case progresses from being dealt by the home school to a higher panel, the student always has the opportunity to come before the panel and speak about the situation and raise any concerns.</p>
2020.115	<p>AP asked whether the students that were suspected of cheating aware that the scripts have been pulled.</p> <p>RJ noted that all students they were suspicious of have been contacted and for those where there was no buildable case, no contact was made.</p> <p>JW reassured reps that the intention is to catch students; while we cannot catch all, we are able to catch some. This ensures a culture of dishonesty and cheating is not established.</p> <p>MW added that some of the answers provided by the contract cheating sites were completely wrong and expected them to be better. JW echoed the same</p>

	<p>and highlighted that the answers received often do not receive any higher than 80%.</p> <p>RJ noted that while some students are reasonable and fairly well prepared, sometimes they experience a moment of stress that leads to a lapse in judgement.</p>
2020.116	<p>JM noted that there is an overlap with Financial Mathematics (MTH6154) exam and Actuarial Mathematics (MTH5125) exam. MW commented that exams are allowed to overlap as they are 24 hours and students may have chosen off diet modules, hence an overlap. SR to check which students have been effected. Post meeting: SR identified that the four 3rd-year students that have two exams clashing within 24 hours, selected level 5 modules.</p>
2(d)	Academic support
	<p>Representatives reported on academic support matters and the following points were noted:</p>
2020.117	<p>No comments were made on this item.</p>
2(e)	Organisation and Communication
2020.118	<p>BS noted that she does not receive all emails from shared maths, as she is a non-SMS joint programmes student.</p> <p>SR highlighted that emails are typically sent to home school students and there is an expectation that other home schools send general information to their students, however will add all joint-honours programme students to distribution list. VT echoed the same for first 1st year non-SMS joint programme students. WN commented that often mail-merged emails are sent directly to the junk inbox and advised reps to check their junk inbox.</p>
2020.119	<p>VT reported that there is a lot of information outside of the student handbook that is difficult to find and would appreciate if the student hand book captured everything, such as regulations on ECs, self-certifications and the breakdown of degree classifications.</p> <p>WN mentioned that while there are guidelines to follow a specific structure, he welcomes any feedback/ideas to make the hand book more student-friendly and improve the structure. He advised that the aim is to create a new student handbook on QMplus module or QMplus book.</p>

	<p>WN also noted that there are some protocols that cannot be added as they are discussed during meetings, and it is only standard practices that are noted in the hand book.</p> <p>SR highlighted that regulations concerning EC could not have been added as the policy changed in response to the effects of COVID. However, suggested that a single document can be created for any regulations that are updated.</p>
	<p>AP queried whether the delay in releasing results from Mysis was due to the assessment offence investigation. Many students were concerned, it effected them mentally and they would have appreciated an update that results are going to be delayed.</p> <p>RJ noted that the assessment offences were not the primary reason to the delay; he touched upon the organisation of communication and that we should under promise and over deliver.</p> <p>SR noted that there wasn't a delay as SMS did not commit to a date and agreed with Registry that results were going to be released during Week 7. Due to the changes in regulation a lot of work had to be done with results, and work is still ongoing, particularly with ECs; 600 claims were received and marks have to be adjusted individually.</p> <p>AP and VT highlighted that there may have been miscommunication between the school reps and relaying information to students and that there was expectation for marks to be released on Monday 8 March, as non-SMS joint honour students received results then.</p> <p>SR mentioned that MTH module marks were released on 8 March for students completing joint honours degree from another school (e.g. Economics, Statistics and Mathematics) and SMS had not realised that although Registry were told not to release marks for all maths modules, this could not have been stopped for non-SMS joint-honours students.</p> <p>MW also commented that the original error stemmed from central services having not included SMS in an email and not knowing the deadline beforehand like other schools, SMS could not work towards it.</p>

2(f)	<p>Learning resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library facilities / materials (books, journals etc.) • QMplus • QReview • Updates from faculty E-learning forums • IT
	Representatives reported on learning resources matters and the following points were noted:
2020.120	<p>JS noted that the Academic Skills Enhancement Team are offering sessions online which can be found below; https://www.qmul.ac.uk/library/academic-skills/workshops/</p> <p>JS also reminded students that the library now offers immediate room bookings https://qmul.libcal.com/spaces.</p>
2(g)	Consideration of External Examiner reports
2020.121	SR noted that External Examiner Reports are not going to be received till the summer term.
2(h)	Student feedback (NSS/PTES/QMSS/Module evaluations)
	The committee discussed responses to NSS/PTES and QMSS and noted the following:
2020.122	MW noted that module evaluations are going to be sent to students in Week 9 and asked reps to encourage students to complete them.
2(i)	Student Experience Action Plans (SEAP)
2020.123	<p>SB noted that at faculty level there is a reporting mechanism called SEAP and it has been used to drive some of the changes made at school level. The aim is to have more points of contacts with other schools to see what actions they are taking in this year. SMS do have action plans but they are not comparable to other schools quite yet.</p> <p>MW noted that SEAP is about the strategy on how to improve the educational offering going forward. For this year, the focus has been to get through the year as well as we can. Discussions are to be held for forthcoming years on how we can combine the benefits of online teaching and on campus activities.</p>
2(j)	Periodic Review

	The committee received the self-evaluation document for the upcoming Periodic Review and noted the following:
2020.124	No comments were made about this item.
Part 3 – Any Other Business	
	The following items were raised under Any Other Business:
2020.125	Reps are welcomed to request for another SSLC.
Part 4 – Date of the next meeting	
2020.126	Dates to be finalised for next academic year.

Action Sheet: Student-Staff Liaison Committee

Minute	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Action status	Completed?
2020.107	To contact lecturers about reminding students of attending tutorials and what the session will cover	JW	ASAP		Complete
2020.101	To produce a 'how to guide' on anonymising forums on QMplus	WN	ASAP		
2020.111	To contact MTH6154 lecturer to upload notes before lecture	JW	ASAP		
2020.112	Contact MTH6134 Lecturer about reducing the delivery speed of lecture	JW	ASAP		
2020.116	Identify students that have overlapping exams	SR	ASAP		Complete
2020.118	Include all joint-honours programme students to student list	SR	ASAP		Complete