Mathematics and Statistics Undergraduate/Graduate Student-Staff Exchange Meeting
4th December 2015

Andrew Bowler, Maura Paterson, Amarpreet Rattan, Sarah Hart, Isabella Gollini, Anthony Brooms
Cassie Fernandes (minutes)

Konstantinos Dakglis (Student rep, BSc Statistics & Economics Year 1)
Andrew Kelly (Student rep, BSc Maths & Statistics part-time Year 3)

AB: If there are any issues through the year, students are always welcome to come and see me during my office hours.
The attendance for Calculus 1 has been poor. Students may feel that they have seen this material before. However, even though Calculus 1 is largely a revision of A’level Maths material, the expectation is that student’s knowledge of Calculus 1 should be very good by the end of the academic year. You will be using these techniques in modules such as Calculus 2 & Calculus 3 and most other mathematics modules in the latter years of your programme of study.

I am also worried that some students have not handed in Assignment 1 for Calculus 1. This is the main method of feedback, and contributes 5% to your overall mark for the module.
There is some correlation between performance on assignments and on exams. Crucially students who have not done enough work through the year to consolidate their knowledge may struggle with exams.

KD: Could a pre-sessional Maths course be introduced, like the Economics programmes have. This would help in Calculus 1 where we spent quite a long time on the basics, and then other topics like differentiation seemed more rushed.

AB: The purpose of Calculus 1 is to make secure High School knowledge. It is not possible to introduce a pre-sessional Maths course as we are normally very busy at this time of the year and are still admitting new students. Also the mathematical ability of applicants is tested on entry, to ensure applicants are at the right level to handle Calculus 1.

KD: Can the Algebra 1 lectures be recorded?

AB: This is up to individual lecturers to decide on. However, I will feed this back.

KD: Room 421 is noisy at times, especially the end nearer the bar. Room B20 is noisy, and the desks are too high.

AB: We will feed back this information to the Estates department.
KD: Students don’t know that they can obtain Maths help from the study support staff.
The FX-83 series of calculators is allowed in Exams however a lot of students have the FX-85 series. There are some dead web links on the webpages.
Can there be more options for BSc Stats & Economics students in Year 2. If we choose UK Financial Institutions & Markets we will only be doing two modules in one of the terms.

AB: I would be concerned if students needed to obtain too much support from the learning co-ordinator, because it is only basic Maths support that is provided. I would expect students to already know this or obtain help from the appropriate lecturer.
The FX-85 series of calculators are fine for the exams. As long as calculators are not graphical or programmable, they should be okay.
UK Financial Institutions & Markets is delivered by the Economics department. We can’t offer any more Year 2 Economics options until more Year 3 modules have been taken.

CF: I will email students details about the student support co-ordinator.

KD: Economics have an on-line IT skills module. Could we have access to this?
AB: We could consider this, but if this is possible this won’t be immediate. I can’t promise anything, but I will look into it.

Year 3 students
AK: This comment is mostly about Economics and some Maths modules. Notes seem to take a long time to appear on Moodle after the lecture, and for corrections to get updated. We know that they will be corrected before the assignment is due. We are aware that hard copies of notes are available if you attend lectures, and that we can try and get these from fellow students, if we can’t make a lecture.

AB: We know that students sometimes may not be able to make lectures, but on the whole we expect students to attend lectures. These are not distance learning programmes, so there is an expectation from us that students will attend the majority of lectures.

Moodle is a back-up to the lectures. It is reasonable for lecture notes to go on-line a few days after the lecture.

AK: Students would like more worked examples in the notes/exercises. A normal part-time student doesn’t have the time to go through books, to find examples, like full-time students may have.
There have also been some room complaints about 532 being too hot.

Grad Cert Stats student: There are no issues. There were some mistakes in the notes, which have been corrected.
AB: It’s easy to make mistakes in lecture notes. Most Maths textbooks will have some mistakes in them. We are happy for students to email us any mistakes they find, for us to update the notes.

KD: Can students submit assignments on-line?

MP: No, for a few reasons. It is more efficient to write Mathematics. We don’t want students to spend too much time using the Equation editor in Word or LaTeX to type up assignments, as this is not an efficient use of their time. Another reason is that once the assignments are submitted in the assignment box, there can be no chance of server/computer issues affecting assignment submission.

AB: We don’t want work to be scanned in, as the quality of scanned work can be quite variable. Students should be coming in for lectures anyway, so dropping in assignments on one of the three days, shouldn’t be an arduous task.

AR: Printing assignments would be too time-consuming.

MP: Students need to know how to write Mathematics including Maths symbols as this is a useful skill to develop.

AB: I will be available during office hours for any students who want to see me in the coming weeks. I will email my availability shortly. Thanks for everyone for attending the meeting, and wishing you all a Happy Xmas.