

### [3<sup>rd</sup> year Mathematics Student Voice Group]

HELD ON Wednesday 13 November 2019.

ROOM 3.409

<b>Apologies</b>	<b>Attended</b>	
	Students Leyla Yaltiligil (co-chair)	Staff David Penman (co-chair), Jesus Martinez-Garcia.

No.	Item	
1	Starring items	Various items under Section B were starred, see the minutes below.
2	Approval of Draft Minutes	These were approved (none of those at this meeting had been to the earlier one).
3	Update on Actions	Dr. Penman noted, in response to the point raised by Ms. Armsby about desirable items, that there were now whiteboards available on the top floor of STEM and these had been used by e.g. Dr. Penman to explain points to a group of students on a 2 <sup>nd</sup> year module. It appears that there is still not a microwave available to students (there is one in the pass-controlled kitchen). All computers in the University now apparently have access to MATLAB and R, though there are said to be some issues about which version of these packages is available on some computers.
	Section A – Student Business	There was no business raised other than what will be come to naturally under the consideration of individual modules and standard items of the agenda.
	MA225-6-AU Quantum Mechanics (Murat Akman; George Papamikos to lecture later in term)	No specific feedback
	MA304 Exploratory Data Analysis (Fanlin Meng and Andrew Harrison)	It was stated that this module had had a number of room changes early in the term, but there did not seem to be any particular issues arising from this.
	MA305 Nonlinear Programming (Xinan Yang)	A lot of students (especially perhaps those who had not done a lab report since MA105 in the first year) found it was a little unclear what the marks for presentation on the lab report were being awarded for. The delicate balance between insufficient guidance and “spoon feeding” was noted, but it was felt that perhaps consideration should be given to giving slightly more guidance on what the lab report is “fishing for” in terms of presentation. Issues from some PGT students about lack of previous exposure to MATLAB need to go to the PGT SVG.
	MA312 Contingencies 2 (Spyros Vrontos)	No specific feedback
	MA317 Modelling Experimental Data (Berthold Lausen, Stella Hadjiantoni)	Quite a lot of this module appears to be going over Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and

No.	Item	
	and Joe Bailey).	regression again which has been covered in Economics modules (for students who have done these) and in MA200. However on the positive side all UG students had used R before (some PGT students had issues about this) and were reasonably confident with it. It was noted that a possible reason for the inclusion of the overlap might be to get postgraduate taught students doing a variant of the module up to speed.
	MA318 Statistical Methods (Yanchun Bao)	Little overall feedback – a single student reports finding this module difficult.
	MA319 Stochastic Processes (Junlei Hu and Joe Bailey)	Small point below about timetable but no substantial issues.
	MA323 Partial Differential Equations (Hadi Susanto, George Papamikos to take over shortly)	Apparently quite a lot of 3 <sup>rd</sup> year students who commute are somewhat frustrated about having to come in on Tuesdays for what is their only lecture in this module. However it was also noted that most of the students are coming in.
	MA830-AU and MA831-FY Capstone projects (various supervisors)	Apparently due to the existence of multiple coursework deadlines in week 6 some students had made less progress with their capstone during that week. The question of whether the current arrangement of coursework deadlines virtually all being in week 6 or 11, or the corresponding Spring term weeks, was discussed: there was no very clear feeling one way or the other about whether this was better or worse than some other arrangement. See also a comment below about library facilities and the comment about LEAP recording of capstone meetings.
	MA199 Employability (Chris Saker and others)	One student had expressed a desire for more frequent meetings. It was noted that attendance at some sessions had been poor (a very rough estimate of 10-15 out of about 85 final year students being at one recent meeting was suggested). It was noted that most students will need to work out what they are planning to do before too long.
	Modules in other Departments	Any requests for change need to be directed to the relevant SVG in the other department, but we like to check up if there are any issues on joint degrees. No such had been reported to the student representative.
	Attendance, punctuality, LEAP etc.	Many students do not appear to have heard of LEAP and it is not clear to what extent students study the information on LEAP about themselves. Dr. Penman noted that the University has asked this year that a note be put on LEAP after each meeting with a capstone project student and that there had been some disquiet expressed about how worthwhile a use of time this is when the meeting in question had gone acceptably well or better, though it may

No.	Item	
		well be understandable that there should be a note if there is concern about a student's progress.
	Coherence and Organisation of degrees.	Tests for MA323 and MA319 had taken place on the same day which some students seemed not to have been entirely happy about. Some lack of clarity about the deadline for PGT students on Data Science with Professional Placement to get placements need to be referred to the PGT SVG.
	Lecture rooms.	There had been quite a few changes from lecture rooms in the Essex Business School (EBS) building to LTB, but by and large this was not a problem as LTB rooms are felt to be more suitable for a mathematics lecture, though there was some initial confusion. A number of whiteboards in EBS are concave limiting the area of the board which can reasonably be used (Dr. Penman reported he had had this issue in a module he was teaching). Also desks or other "leaning-on" spaces in some EBS rooms are very small: this is an issue e.g. for those who like to use laptops.
	Timetable	Only issue is the one about MA323 Partial Differential Equations being the only lecture on Tuesday for a number of students (see above).
	Resources (including Handbook, Moodle, Library etc. etc.)	The 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor of the Library has been closed for some time and books have to be ordered. Sometimes this happens very quickly e.g. within a few hours, but sometimes it is reported to take 3-4 days: this can feel a bit slow if students need a book in a hurry. It is scheduled to re-open before the end of term.
	Personal Tutors	The informal impression is that many 3 <sup>rd</sup> year students are not seeing their Personal Tutors much. One incident of the tutorial group of one Personal tutor containing one Mathematics student and all the others being Actuarial Science students was reported: it was noted that the single Mathematics student may have felt "left out".
	New and revised programme developments	Dr Penman reported that the department had started the process of thinking about revising and strengthening the curriculum. This would be ongoing over the next while and students would be involved when particular ideas started to firm up. It was noted this process would be likely to take some time.
	Welcome activities	The most relevant thing to 3 <sup>rd</sup> years here was the Welcome Back meeting, which was not felt to have been well attended. It was noted that one student had received on the morning of the SVG a notification about the Moodle course on academic offences which Dr Harrison had referred to at the Welcome Back

No.	Item	
		meeting.
	Careers	Nothing to report beyond what is said about MA199.
	Section B – Department Business	
	External Examiners Reports	Reports had been received from Dr Clare Dunning (Kent) and Dr Dimitrina Dimitrova (Cass Business School) which were circulated. Both reports were largely positive and there were not felt to be any substantial issues.
	ARC	The ARC (Annual Review of Courses report) was currently being drafted. Students would be involved in it at an appropriate stage later.
	Library Update	Dr Martinez-Garcia reported that the Department is hoping soon to have at least a trial period of access to MathSciNet, a powerful tool for finding, and finding out about, relevant mathematics papers. The potential usefulness of this to capstone project students (and PG students) was noted, though it was also noted that the extent of the use of published papers versus other sources of information varies non-trivially from project to project.
	AOB	<p><b>SAMT results</b> Dr Penman had circulated the most recent feedback on Student Assessment of Modules and Teaching (SAMT). Unfortunately, the very detailed breakdown module by module prepared by Mrs. Anne Owen (Computer Officer) in the past was no longer available. However the summary which was available did not seem worrying, with good scores in SAMT being the norm. It was noted that the University will be working further on SAMT or some new version thereof over the coming year.</p> <p><b>NSS results.</b> The committee discussed this virtually, having forgotten to discuss it at the meeting. The basic picture was not worrying, with most departmental scores being okay or better relative to the rest of the University in 2019, though overall satisfaction was slightly low relative to the University. Further most headings were better than last year, though small fall-offs on the questions about "the course is intellectually stimulating", "I have been able to access course specific resources when I needed to" and the question on satisfaction with the Students Union. In relation to the decreased score for access to learning resources, it was noted by the student representative that the department had not had access to Floor 2 of the STEM building and</p>

No.	Item	
		<p>that this may have been a contributing factor.</p> <p>There were not felt to be any specific actions required in relation to these data other than awareness by staff of the areas which had gone down noticeably since last year and continuing vigilance. It was noted that a convenient summary of departmental data for Student Voice Groups, enabling them to see the data without confidentiality or access issues, might be desirable and it was suggested this should be fed back to the Students' Union.</p> <p>There was no additional other business.</p>
	Date and time of next meetings	26 February at 13.00 – venue TBC.

### SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Who</i>
Update on Actions	Remind students of the availability of the common room and the kitchen next door which has a microwave.	SM/VC
MA305 Nonlinear Programming (Xinan Yang)	<p>Consideration should be given to giving slightly more guidance on the requirements for the lab report in terms of presentation.</p> <p>Issues from some PGT students about lack of previous exposure to MATLAB need to go to the PGT SVG.</p>	<p>XY</p> <p>GH</p>
Coherence and Organisation of degrees.	Some lack of clarity about the deadline for PGT students on Data Science with Professional Placement to get placements need to be referred to the PGT SVG.	XY/GH
Lecture rooms.	Request to be made to Timetabling Office next year to avoid EBS and seats with tablets rather than desks. This was requested this year but not actioned. Student feedback would be mentioned next year to support the request.	JP