Minutes
School Meeting
12.00noon, 14 February 2014, Blakers Lecture Theatre


1. Apologies

Michael Giudici, John Lau, Robin Milne, Phill Schultz, Thomas Stemler, Berwin Turlach

2. HOS Report

Welcome to Miccal Matthews who joined the School in January. Tomasz Popiel will now be working fulltime on a new contract as a Research Associate with Cheryl Praeger.

The Senior Leadership Day was held on Tuesday, 11 February 2014. The title for the day was ‘Leading organisation change’ and the guest of honour was Ian Young, the Vice-Chancellor from ANU. ANU are currently undergoing organisational change and UWA will be following suit in 2014. The organisational change is likely to start with administration staff. Across the G08 Universities the average number of professional staff is 54% whereas UWA currently stands at 58% so the VC would like to reduce this number. In order to do that a new unit – the Office of Operational Excellence – has been established, which will undertake organisational reviews of every aspect of university life. This new unit will be headed up by Ian McArthur the HoS of Physics. The main reason put forward for this organisational change is that UWA expects to fall out of the top 100 Universities in the world in the next couple of years and if we continue to function in the same manner will remain out of the top 100.

The Vice-Chancellor is also concerned about the standard of teaching in the University. A survey of all staff was taken and feedback received was that UWA only valued staff who undertake research while teaching staff were not valued. They also surveyed the students and they felt that UWA is only concerned about research and don’t place as much emphasis on teaching. Based on this feedback there will be changes in the future to place more emphasis on teaching.

Some of the other concerns raised by the Vice-Chancellor included budget problems, undergraduate numbers being approximately 5% below projected figures, the role of women in the University and the lack of women at level E.
Three weeks ago the Faculty published on its website the ‘ECM Research Performance Minimum Targets’. This was presented at the last School meeting as an item for discussion. Feedback had been provided to the Dean that these targets weren’t reasonable for mathematicians and after another meeting last week the Dean did state that these expectations are too high for pure and applied mathematicians. The School has two options for going forward, either put forward a proposal specifically for Mathematics and Statistics or continue as we have been. After discussion it was agreed that the School would continue as is. If issues do arise because staff aren’t meeting the minimum targets the mathematical societies have information available regarding publication rates which could be used if necessary. Cheryl reported that the Executive Committee of the IMU is also in the process of preparing documentation about research which may also prove useful. Cheryl will let the HoS know when this is available.

Study leave – if you are thinking of taking study leave in 2015 please remember to submit your ‘notification of intent to apply for sabbatical’ by April this year.

PDR – the PDR cycle is underway again. If staff are available to perform PDR’s please let the HoS know. Staff on probation or intending to apply for promotion need to have their PDR done by the HoS but otherwise senior staff members can perform PDR’s.

The HoS PG will be receiving funds again shortly from the Faculty. If you do require some financial assistance with a project please submit a request to the HoS.

Tea room – we received an update from the Dean’s office. They have put a submission in for funds to convert G.02 into a tea room extending out into the courtyard. G.02 is a central teaching venue so there are strong concerns that this submission will not be successful.

The HoS and Des had a meeting with the Dean and Cara MacNish recently regarding Honours for 2014. An agreement was reached that there will be an Honours program for Mathematics and Statistics but not Quantitative Methods at this point. The Faculty will allow us to run three units each in Pure, Applied and Statistics each year. In New Courses the University stipulates that the project has to be half of the course which then leaves students 3 units of specialisation plus another unit. This unit could be an AMSI unit, AGR unit or a reading unit. The names of the units need to be decided and the Faculty have requested names that are fairly wide-ranging but structured in such a way that one topic of mathematics could only fit in one unit. Sections will need to provide unit names. Quantitative Methods students will be permitted to do Mathematics and Statistics honours but the units will need to be set up accordingly.

Melissa Lee approached the HoS requesting support for the Mathematical Union. This is an undergraduate mathematics group which has been recognised by the UWA Guild. Melissa has requested exclusive use of a room. We are unable to grant exclusive use as the School doesn’t have a lot of general purpose rooms available however it was proposed that the Union be allowed to use room G.01 on a shared basis with the School still being able to use it.
for honours classes, tests or presentations. There were no objections to this so the Mathematical Union would be advised they could commence using room G.01.

3. Undergraduate teaching related matters

Des reported that the year is starting off well with numbers about the same as last year in service courses. The numbers are a little bit down in the bridging courses but still healthy. MATH1001/MATH1002 numbers are similar to last year.

Second year enrolments are healthy with applied maths having over 100 students and pure and statistics having about 60 each.

We will be introducing 6 new level 3 units and removing the old level 3 units, however we will be keeping the special third year unit codes to cater for those students in transition.

We expect 7-8 new honours students this year. The new students are either pure maths students or they are joint with Physics and we also have some statistics honours students carrying over from 2013.

At this stage it looks like approximately 30 students are intending to major in Mathematics and Statistics. Many students do this as a second major, pairing it with either physics or engineering. There are not many students majoring in Quantitative Methods. The Faculty will more than likely wait until the end of the year to see how many students graduate in the QM major before making any decisions about this major. There are 6 units specific to the QM major. These units are important for Science students so it would be good if these units could be picked up by them at Diploma level.

There will be a formal review of all new courses in 2015. Any changes from this review will probably come into effect in 2017.

The new courses are at level 3 now. The BPhil students do require a 4th or honours year. Michael Giudici is currently putting forward a proposal for these students.

4. Outreach Committee report

A report of the Outreach Committee meeting held on 5 February 2014 was provided.

The Outreach Committee were involved in a lot of activities towards the end of 2013 and early 2014. Their next activity is with Shenton College next week.

5. Any Other Business

PSB Singapore –the units the School ran for PSB Singapore generated quite a lot of money. Now that these units will no longer be running we will be looking at making use of that
money in other areas. Please provide any suggestions on how this money could be used to Andrew.

School Review – the School Review was originally scheduled for 2014 but has now been pushed back to 2015. Andrew has officially been extended as Head of School for Maths until 30 June 2014 however there has been no indication from the Faculty on the plans for a HoS beyond that date. The incoming HoS will have responsibility for the School Review in 2015 but many of the tasks associated with a Review are now done at Faculty level so the preparation is not so heavy as it used to be in the past.

Meeting closed 1.08pm.