Minutes
School Meeting
19 February 2015, 12.00noon MLR3

Present: John Bamberg, Andrew Bassom, Chrianna Bharat, Tania Blackwell (minutes), Selynn Chan, Alice Devillers, Joanna Fawcett, Michael Giudici, Robert Kenny, Nazim Khan, Cai Heng Li, Miccal Matthews, Robin Milne, Luke Morgan, Kevin Murray, Gopal Nair, Irene Pivotto, Tomasz Popiel, Gordon Royle, Michael Small, Thomas Stemler, Lucho Stoyanov, Michelle Trevenen, Berwin Turlach, Matt Tuson

1. Apologies

Nev Fowkes, John Lau, Cheryl Praeger, Phil Schultz, Eric Swartz, Gabriel Verret

2. Confirmation of Minutes from 15 December 2014 and Business Arising

The minutes were accepted as a correct record.

No business arising from the Minutes.

3. HOS Report (Lyle Noakes)

• Thank you to Andrew Bassom for his work as HOS over the last 6 years.
• We will be sharing this building with CSSE. It is expected that CSSE will shift in sometime this year however a certain amount of rebuilding needs to be done in the main office area before this can happen. Following the rebuilding it is expected that all staff will be in similar sized offices. There will be no staff in larger offices.
• The Faculty and the University have both been focussing attention on teaching and service recently. As a result of this it is possible in the future that sabbatical will be denied for staff who don’t have a strong record of teaching and service. We will need to look at having all staff involved in first year teaching, perhaps in alternating years.
• There has been a lot of concern within the School about Faculty expectations of academic staff. Currently we have a set of expectations regarding publications, HDR supervision and grants which were essentially crafted with engineers in mind. Hardly anyone in maths meets these criteria which means that our best researchers would be deemed research inactive under these expectations. CSSE and Maths are currently working towards establishing a different set of criteria for the Faculty where Schools would be benchmarked against other departments in Australian Universities. This is currently being worked on but has yet to be approved.
• The Faculty recently asked for an assessment of our strengths, weaknesses, threats etc for our research, teaching and income generators. Some very good input was received from staff. Currently our only strength is the quality of our staff but this is a declining asset. There are weaknesses emerging in nearly every other aspect and unless something is done to achieve some kind of renewal within 3-4 years the School will cease to be a level 4 or 5 ERA. The School currently has poor standing
within the Faculty so there is no possibility of funds being made available to counter this. The Faculty are also not keen to replace staff at the moment although they have confirmed that Song’s position will be replaced by a Level B/C. To improve our position within the Faculty we need to build good will and start helping ourselves. There are two ways we can do this with the first being participating in the ERO and forging links with other staff within the Faculty. The second is to improve our teaching of the Mathematics and Statistics majors. Previously we have focussed our energy on delivering service courses and we do that reasonably well. This is woefully inadequate though for students who are interested in Mathematics and Statistics. Through our Outreach Programmes we get a lot of interest and some of those students follow through to our first year units, however by third year numbers drop and we are lucky to have 20-30 students. This happens for two reasons – we don’t offer these people appropriate level courses in first year and they are worried about their job prospects. It would be beneficial to have a staff member within the School who could provide good career advice and liaise with industry regarding jobs. If we improve the first year experience and can provide job prospects it wouldn’t be unreasonable for our students in the M&S majors to double within 3 years. Improving the first year experience could be done by offering another stream in our MATH1001/MATH1002 units which would be taught by a different lecturer, be a smaller stream (20-30 students) and assessed differently thereby providing a more satisfying and challenging experience for the stronger students. These ideas are open for discussion but please think about them and provide any feedback or suggestions to the HOS.

• The Statistics section doesn’t seem to be appreciated at the moment within the Faculty which is surprising as it should be a central discipline in this Faculty. We will need to work towards improving the image of statistics and this may involve changing the way we do some things.

• Historically we have averaged about 10-15 honours students per year. There is approximately 40 BPhil students coming through each year though. Half of these students do first year mathematics but by honours year they have chosen other areas so we need to look at how we can retain some of these students in Mathematics and Statistics.

4. Undergraduate Matters (Nazim Khan)

Enrolment numbers are good. MATH1001 and MATH1002 are a bit low but some of our other units are very high.

The review of undergraduate courses is happening this year with the review of postgraduate courses to happen next year or the following year.

Des has been working on the allocation of casual teaching staff but any queries regarding this can also be sent to Nazim or Tania.

5. Postgraduate Matters (Michael Giudici)

The Forrest Research Foundation Scholarships have been advertised for both
domestic and international students.

6. Outreach Committee Report (John Bamberg)

There have been two outreach events recently which have both gone well. We are looking for a postgraduate student to assist Penrhos with their enrichment program.

7. Any Other Business

None.

Meeting closed 12.50pm.