Conference Leave; Minutes

School Meeting

24th July 2014, 1.00pm MLR3

Present: Andrew Bassom, Des Hill, Tony Pakes, Neville Fowkes, Gordon Royle, Gopal Nair, Nazim Khan, Michael Small, Joanna Fawcett, Lucho Stoyanov, Lyle Noakes, Tomasz Popiel, Cheryl Praeger, Alice Neimeyer, John Bamberg, Miccal Matthews, Annie Walker (Minutes)

Apologies: Michael Giudici, Luke Morgan, Gabriel Verett, Alice Devillers, Phil Schulz, Irene Pivotto, Berwin Turlach, John Lau, Stephen Glasby, Thomas Stemler, Martin Firth, Kevin Murray

Confirmation of Minutes 14th February: Minutes were confirmed, no business had arisen that was not dealt with elsewhere.

HOS Report:

Andrew welcomed 2 new staff members Chrianna Bharat and Matthew Tuson who joined the Centre of Applied Statistics early in June.

The HoS advised that his contract will finish 1st January 2015 and the Dean has confirmed he is actively engaged in securing a new HoS for 2015. The Dean intends to hold a School meeting to discuss this in approximately 4 weeks time.

The new Maths and Stats Honours proposal has been passed by the Board of Studies.

Song Wang has commenced his new appointment at Curtin University, Andrew is waiting for the rest of the academic staff to return from overseas to sign a card for him.

A replacement for Song is still in progress as the Dean requires evidence of the need for replacement. There are several people either taking Sabbatical or Long Service Leave next year which should provide sufficient motivation for appointing a replacement for Song.

SURF. There was a vast improvement in the overall SURF scores for semester 1, 2014. There was only 1 unit that was even mildly unsatisfactory compared with the relatively numerous problems in 2013. Special mention was made of Miccal, Gordon and Nazim Khan for particularly good scores.

Exams Processes. There needs to a tightening in the overall exam processes particularly with the checking (several papers had been found with errors in solutions). It was suggested by the HoS that a new checking form be designed which both the examiner and the checker sign when they both satisfied with the proposed paper. When the setter gives the paper to the checker, the last 12 months of papers in the same unit (if applicable) should be submitted to ensure consistency of standards over time.

HDRs. The University is cutting available scholarships for Higher Degree Research students. The intention is that individual supervisors be responsible for supplying more top-up grants as scholarships funded from their own research grants. The university is
also investigating a central admissions process whereby the assessment of a HDR application is done centrally.

Conference Leave; During the mid-year break there was a very high percentage of academic staff that took conference leave and annual leave. This left the school extremely short staffed with necessary administrative tasks left to just a few. In order to avoid this shortage in the future it was proposed that no member of staff should necessarily expect to be granted more than half the break time for conference/study leave. Only T&R staff would be affected by this policy; moreover staff on study leave, recreation leave or sick leave would not subject to this restriction. The intention is solely to try to ensure that a skeleton of academic staff are present at most times to cope with any unexpected problems.

HoS reminded all staff of Terry Speed’s AMSI Lecture Tour; Terry will talk in UWA on 8th and 9th October.

Units and Majors; All units and majors across the University will be reviewed in Semester 2, 2014. At this stage it is unclear how much work this will entail for unit lecturers.

Undergraduate Report (Des Hill)
1. There are three new 3rd year units this semester
2. Enrolments are looking very promising with good numbers in each unit.
3. Funds allocated for casual teaching has been generous therefore the tutoring of the large units will be mainly Postgrad and Honours students with not many academics tutoring at all this semester.

Outreach Committee Report
Outreach Committee report 24/07/2014
Members: John Bamberg (co-chair), Nazim Khan (co-chair), Alice Devillers, Joanna Fawcett, Michael Giudici, Michael Small.

The last report mentioned a visit to Shenton College, but this had to be cancelled and was to be moved to later in the semester. It did not eventuate, but perhaps we will be asked to do something this semester. We hope that we will be able to run a large maths activity again, and this is a more efficient way of having schools involved. Shenton College has told us that they find it difficult to visit UWA as they need to organise for students to leave their school for a day (e.g., letter’s to parents etc), and that it is easier if we visit them. Of course, this then places a burden on our outreach committee but hopefully we will come to a compromise.
The only outreach event that we have been involved in happened this week. Aspire UWA had a camp whereby 75 students from Aspire metropolitan schools came to the campus for two days to participate in three hours of activities run by UWA staff. Of these, 30 were interested in the mathematics session which was conducted by Michael S (two sessions), John, and Joanna for a total of four 1.5-hour sessions. We have told Aspire that we would like to see the student numbers increased for our efforts to come into proportion with our objectives.

We have no plans for future outreach activities at this stage, and we still have not heard from the Faculty if they will be supporting us (financially) for another large maths-day activity such as the one we had last November. John will follow this up.

Any Other Business:

While attending to the appeals from students after results were released HoS was told on more than one occasion of very variable quality of the unit tutors. As a consequence of this, there was evidence that students were moving between tutorials to find better tutors. This makes it difficult to track attendance and is unsettling for the students. Some suggestions were put forward;

a. Keep a monitor on tutors with unit coordinators sitting in on tutorial every few weeks.

b. Evaluation sheets be handed to the students after the 1st 4 weeks to give an assessment of the tutor’s performance.

c. Teaching development courses.

The lecturers of MATH1001 and 1002 were asked to liaise and suggest a (non-labour-intensive) way of trying to ensure tutor quality during Semester 2, 2014.

John Bamberg mentioned that the Access Grid room in the Science Library will be decommissioned later in the year as IT will no longer support it.

Lyle reminded all of the upcoming Open day. It will be held in the MCL this year. The posters usually used for display are going to be vetted as some of them are looking a little tired. He asked staff to contribute some more modern computerised output which could be used on the day.

Meeting closed at 2.20pm