

HoDoMS AGM: Chair's Report

This year has seen a number of important changes to the national landscape which have implications for mathematical sciences in HE. These include:

- REF2014 results published, and funding formula now released (for England at least). The impact of the measurement of 'Impact' is now being realised, and we need to digest what this means for mathematics and the picture it paints of our disciplines.
- Changes to school curriculum have been agreed, and a different method of funding A level study proposed. Both could have a major effect on the number of applicants to universities as well as the quality of applicants (eg if Further Maths is squeezed out). The Core Maths qualification is in development and is not a preparation for university study of mathematics so the market may be split, potentially decreasing the pool and limiting participation (eg if schools encourage certain groups of students to take the Core Maths route rather than A level Maths). There is a proposal to set up a body to oversee quality of A Level qualifications from CMS which has some traction in Government, with OfQual convening a meeting of former ALCAB members very shortly.
- The revised QAA Benchmark Statement for Mathematics has been issued for consultation. It seems relatively uncontroversial for Departments.
- The implications of removal of student number cap are working through – will some Departments be pressured to increase numbers because mathematics is comparatively cheap to deliver?
- The demise of MSOR specialism within the Higher Education Academy has taken full effect – the most valued part of the HEA's work from our point of view. There has been confusion over whether New Lecturers' Induction course would be run and the loss of PG workshops for MSOR.
- Uncertainly over upcoming election results.

There are also a number of ongoing issues affecting Departments:

- National research funding policy continues to prioritise size. CDTs are facing challenges of recruitment, non-CDT Departments struggling to gain funding for PhD studentships. The issue of potential 'maths deserts' raises its head again.
- Move to open plan offices popular with some senior management groups and seems to be direction of travel. This is not a 'maths' issue per se but affects us. We need to find ways to make the point that open plan can be very detrimental for staff and students, without implying that mathematics is special.
- Equality and diversity – significant drop off from UG to PG for women was documented in LMS Advancing Women report in 2013. We support the LMS Good Practice Scheme proposal to run workshops for second year students to encourage them to consider taking PhDs.
- Engagement with Athena SWAN good – 12 Departments now have awards, and 49 Departments registered as LMS Good Practice Supporters

What has HoDoMS been doing during the year?

In the year from Easter 2014 to present, HoDoMS has been involved in the following:

- Circulating information re A level reform
- Collating information about refused visas
- Providing feedback to the HEA about services valued by the community (in particular, requesting information about whether the New Lecturers' Induction Course and Postgraduate workshops would continue to run).
- Gathering evidence for the viability of HoDoMS running a New Lecturers' Induction Course – strong support from community for the kind of course we propose (2 days, strong maths content).
- Committee members attending meetings of other committees/groups to represent the views of HoDoMS: Joint Mathematical Council, LMS Education and Research Committees, IMA Higher Education Subject Area Committee, ACME Round table on curriculum reform.
- Organising HoDoMS conference 2015.

It is hoped that fellow HoDs find the activities of HoDoMS useful, from the circulating of information via the email list to the opportunity to meet, discuss and hear about the national agenda at Conference. Feedback and suggestions are always welcome as to what would be useful eg suggestions for topics to cover at Conference.

Dr Cathy Hobbs, 13 April 2015