For several years now, the Undergraduate Mathematics Teaching Conference (UMTC) has been reflecting upon its future. UMTC 2005 was a very successful meeting for those present, but the small number of participants attending the Conference was an indication that change is now necessary. The UMTC Committee met immediately following the September 2005 Conference to discuss options for the future, and following the meeting, a ballot of the ideas discussed was conducted amongst Committee members. The proposals for UMTC 2006 are as follows:

1. UMTC will remain as a separate and dedicated event, with promotional and administrative support provided by the Maths, Stats & OR Network. The Committee feels that any attempt to incorporate UMTC within another major national meeting would inevitably dilute or lose the unique experience that the Working Briefs can offer.

2. For many years, UMTC has been traditionally hosted in early September. Around this time there are an increasing number of major national mathematics meetings and events being held that have inevitably contributed to the decline in numbers of those attending UMTC. The increasing pressures of a new academic term being only a few weeks away, and university admissions processes following A-level results, are also undoubtedly contributing factors. The Committee therefore proposes to return UMTC to its former time, which was just before Christmas, and this year it will start on 18th December 2006.

3. For the last few years, UMTC has run over a three-day period. The costs of hosting a three-day/two-night event have been high (around £300), and this is also likely to have been a contributing factor to the decline in numbers, particularly as ‘competing’ events run for around half this fee. Additionally, academic pressures are making it increasingly difficult for people to attend events that are longer than two days, not to mention the pressure from family commitments. The Committee proposes that UMTC will now become a two-day meeting, although see point 5 below. The actual working time will, however, remain virtually unchanged by making an earlier start on the first day, and by finishing later on the second. This change should ensure that UMTC can be offered for a fee of no more than £150 while still offering the same academic value as before.

4. The unanimous decision of the Committee was that Working Briefs will remain the core UMTC activity at every conference, thus preserving its unique nature as an academic ‘working conference’. This year’s proposed briefs include: What makes a Master’s degree in mathematics?; Linking research and teaching; Increasing the numbers of students, and retaining them; Teaching logic; and Preparing undergraduates for the workplace.

5. A significant change to the structure of UMTC will be the introduction of a second, follow-up meeting in the summer which follows the Conference. This one-day event will be free of charge and will allow presentations from all of the Working Groups and also a significant opportunity for discussion on the outcomes from each Working Brief. An additional intention of this day is to formulate opportunities to build upon the work conducted by the Working Groups to seek further funding, possibly via the Maths, Stats & OR Network mini-project scheme, or to develop the outcomes from each Brief into a paper for publication in an appropriate journal.

The Committee feels all of the above changes are necessary in order to safeguard UMTC as a valued event within the Maths, Stats & OR Community. Whether or not you are a previous delegate from UMTC, we would like to hear your comments on the above proposals, and we hope you will watch for detailed publicity about registration, and consider participating in the work of the conference in its new format. Please email any comments to committee@umtc.ac.uk.