Current and Ongoing Activities

Update on Staffing

We are delighted to announce that two new members of staff have joined the Network to support and develop our range of activities. Chantal Jackson is our new Design & Print Officer who will be responsible for developing the visual profile of the Network, and will be based in Birmingham. Mitchum Bock has joined as a consultant in Statistics and will be based at the University of Glasgow. Mitchum will have a crucial role in supporting the development and cataloguing of statistical resources. We warmly welcome both Chantal and Mitchum to the Network.

CETL – MSOR Conference 2006

On the 11th and 12th September 2006, the Maths, Stats & OR Network will be hosting its first major conference in conjunction with the related Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) at Loughborough University.

The aim of this conference is to promote, explore and disseminate emerging good practice and research findings in Mathematics and Statistics support, teaching, learning and assessment. The conference will appeal to all those teaching Mathematics, Statistics or Numeracy, whether this is to specialist mathematics students or students studying components of mathematics within their degree programmes (such as bioscience, chemistry, computer science, economics, engineering, nursing, physics, psychology, social work, etc.).

The conference will explore not only the issues at the transition to university, but any issues throughout the entire student learning experience – from foundation year through to post-graduate level. This will be achieved by a combination of key-note speeches, plenary sessions, hands-on demonstrations, workshops, poster sessions and discipline-specific discussion sessions.

The closing date for abstracts has been extended until the 16th June 2006, and these may either be submitted online at: http://mathstore.ac.uk/conference2006 or by emailing to J.Nuttall@bham.ac.uk. Abstracts accepted for sessions within the conference programme will be entitled to one residential delegate place at a reduced rate.

Further details on this conference, including details of the conference themes and attendance fees can be found by on page 47 of this issue of MSOR Connections.

Survey of Departmental Key Contacts

The Maths, Stats & OR Network aims to have a main contact within every UK Higher Education Mathematics, Statistics and Operation Research department. This is a two-way role whereby the Network communicates information relevant to the staff within the department via this contact, but equally, we like to hear from them with regard to what is happening in relation to learning, teaching and assessment. In addition, we also like to hear from our main contacts ways in which the Network could potentially offer support to their department as a whole. Key Contacts receive mailings in addition to MSOR Connections.

In March 2006, we conducted a survey of all our Departmental Key Contacts. While we have received many replies from our Key Contacts across the UK, we are still awaiting for a number of responses. If you have received a survey, please complete it and return it to the Network as soon as possible so that we can ensure your department remains up-to-date with news from across the MSOR community.

If you are a Key Contact and haven’t received a copy of the survey, or you feel that you may be a more appropriate Key Contact within your department, then please contact J.Nuttall@bham.ac.uk who will update our database and arrange for a copy of the survey to be sent out to you.

Stats F&F Leaflet

In the February 2006 issue of MSOR Connections the Network launched a consultation exercise based upon the recently developed draft Statistics Facts, Formulae and Information Leaflet, in order to determine:

1. Is the content included appropriate for a first/second year Mathematics or Statistics programme?
2. Should any content be added or removed?
3. Should more than one leaflet be produced and targeted at different levels?
4. Should the leaflet be made dynamic on the Network website, with links to other resources?

While we have received a number of comments, there is still time for you to share you views on this resource. We have set up an online system for you to submit your comments, and this is available at:

http://mathstore.gla.ac.uk/fandf/

Please send any comments you may have by the 16th June.
Sharing Good Practice: Links Between HEIs and Local Schools

The HEFCE funded moremathsgrads project (www.moremathsgrads.org.uk), with which the Network is involved, has collected together details on how many mathematics departments are engaging in activity with local schools to promote mathematics, enhance achievement and encourage its further study. It is clear that there is a lot of good practice currently taking place in this area, and so we are keen to capture this as a series of case studies that will form one of our good practice guides. This guide will be useful in assisting departments to engage with local schools, as well as sharing good ideas amongst the MSOR community.

Each case study must address the following areas:

1. An overview of the particular activity (or series of activities) undertaken;
2. The history of its (their) development;
3. Evidence of success;
4. Challenges, issues or barriers encountered;
5. Recommendations for others within the sector to help them develop such provision.

Each case study should be between 1000 and 1500 words, and should contain photographs/images where possible. We are willing to pay £100 for each case study accepted for publication. Please promote this initiative to colleagues within your department, and if either you, or they, would like to produce a case study, please contact M.J.Grove@bham.ac.uk

Additional 2005/2006 Funding Opportunity

The Maths, Stats & OR Network is pleased to announce an additional call for mini-projects to commence in the autumn of 2006. The Network is keen to develop its support for the teaching and learning of single and joint-honours mathematics undergraduates particularly beyond their first year of study. Emerging research suggests that there is room for improving the experience and support of these students with a view to increasing motivation, engagement and levels of achievement (See Page 39).

It is anticipated that successful proposals will align with one of the following themes:

- The use of pedagogic research to inform, develop or enhance change in practice;
- Extension of current transitional support mechanisms;
- Development of support resources;
- The professional development of academic staff;
- Developing independent learners.

A Call for Proposals can be found on Page 44, and the closing date for proposals is the 30th June 2006.

Employability

The Maths, Stats & OR Network, in conjunction with the Centre for Integrative Learning at the University of Nottingham is currently developing a programme of support focussing upon graduate employability skills (see Page 5 for further details).

We are looking for members of the Maths, Stats & OR Community to join a working group to develop our programme of support in this area. The first meeting will be held on 23rd June 2006, and if you are interested in joining this working group, please email: stephen.hibberd@nottingham.ac.uk.

Forthcoming Events

Disciplines in dialogue II: interdisciplinary teaching and learning (13/14 July 2006, Birmingham): Organised by the UK Higher Education Academy Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning Group, this conference will provide a unique opportunity for discussion about this important, though long neglected, issue in higher education. It is open to practitioners in all disciplines.

Life is interdisciplinary. A single disciplinary approach cannot resolve social problems such as AIDS, environmental problems such as climate change and rising sea levels and crime. On graduation students will enter the multidisciplinary environment of the workplace. Yet in UK higher education disciplines are the building blocks of departments, journals, degree programmes, conferences and quality assurance mechanisms.

How, therefore can students and their teachers have a coherent and integrated interdisciplinary experience of higher educations? How can we ensure that students gain credit for interdisciplinary insights in their work on both single-discipline and interdisciplinary courses? Do optional course units in other subjects make for a better overall student experience or are they are distraction from the necessary outcomes of the programme?

The cost of this two-day conference (fully inclusive) at the University of Birmingham is £199, although individual day rates are available. A full conference programme is now online. For details on this conference, including how to register, please follow the links at:

http://www.mathstore.ac.uk/workshops

With a scheduled start at lunchtime on the 14 September, the Induction Course is aimed at people who have started teaching either Mathematics or Statistics with UK Higher Education institutions within the last three years, whether they are new graduates, from industry, or from outside of the UK. Its focus is upon the specific details and issues that arise when teaching either Mathematics or Statistics within HE, and as such, is the perfect complement to generic institutional teaching programmes. Topics to be covered include:

- Teaching and supporting learning;
- Design and planning of learning activities;
- Assessment and feedback;
- Systems to support learning;
- The computer environment;
- Sharing experience.

A provisional programme will be made available online shortly. For further details, including how to register for this event, please visit:

http://mathstore.ac.uk/workshops/induction2006

Supporting Postgraduates who teach Mathematics & Statistics (September/October, Various Locations): The Maths, Stats & OR Network will once again be offering a series of events to support postgraduate students within Mathematics and Statistics who teach as part of their programmes of study. We are currently finalising locations for these events which will be offered in both September and October, at the request of the MSOR Community, but there will be six events within the following regions: West Midlands; East Midlands; London; South-West England; the North of England; and, Scotland.

The one-day workshops will be hosted by academics who have significant experience of teaching and learning within HE, and will cover issues such as planning and preparing for teaching, facilitating problem solving classes, encouraging participation and providing support, and assessing student work and providing feedback.

The Network will be writing to all Heads of Department shortly with exact details of the dates and locations of the workshops, but for further details please visit :

http://mathstore.ac.uk/postgrads2006

3rd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON “TEACHING OF MATHEMATICS” at the Undergraduate Level

June 30 – July 5, 2006
Istanbul, Turkey

http://www.tmd.org.tr/ictm3

SCOPE: Following two very successful International Conferences (ICTM-98, Samos Greece, ICTM02, Crete Greece), the 3rd International Conference on the Teaching of Mathematics will address new ways of teaching undergraduate mathematics. It will provide a unique international and centralized forum and bring together faculty members from countries with different educational and pedagogical systems around the world who are committed to introducing and using innovative teaching methods. The conference will be of great interest to mathematics faculty as well as anyone involved in the teaching and learning process of undergraduate mathematics.

CONFERENCE THEMES: The conference presentations will be centered around the following themes:

Technology/ Technology based Educational Systems: Effective integration of computer technology (Calculators, Computer Algebra Systems, WWW resources) into the undergraduate curriculum.
Specific Courses: Reform efforts in specific mathematics courses and assessment results.
Other Disciplines: The effects of changes in the teaching of mathematics courses in other disciplines (needs of client disciplines; interdisciplinary courses)

Please mark the conference web site

http://www.tmd.org.tr/ictm3

for submission guidelines, updates and announcements.

Please announce the global conference to colleagues around the world.