

Minutes of the APTS Advisory Committee meeting 17th September 2008

Meeting held at University of Warwick.

Present: Wilfrid Kendall (chair: APTS co-Director), David Firth (APTS co-Director), Kanchan Mukherjee (Lancaster), Mark Steel (Warwick), Richard Samworth (Cambridge), Vanessa Didelez (Bristol), Stephen Burgess (Student Representative), David Miller (Student Representative), Phil O'Neill (Nottingham), Adrian Bowman (Glasgow), Biman Chakraborty (Birmingham), Jochen Voss (Leeds), Neil Laws (Oxford), Jon Forster (Southampton), Paul Blackwell (Sheffield), Jian Shi (Newcastle), Simon Wood (Bath), Cathal Walsh (Dublin), Lothar Breuer (Kent).

In attendance: Ioannis Kosmidis (APTS Programme Manager).

Meeting commenced at 14.00.

Apologies for absence: William Deans (co-opted external adviser: GCHQ), David Elston (co-opted external adviser: BioSS), Julian Stander (Plymouth), Peter Diggle (Lancaster), Trevor Bailey (Exeter), Carl Donovan (St Andrews), Gilbert MacKenzie (Limerick), Brendan Murphy (Dublin), Paul Garthwaite (Open), Janet Godolphin (Surrey), John Newell (Galway).

All members of the Advisory Committee (AC) were formally welcomed by Wilfrid Kendall.

1. Discussion on the minutes of the Advisory Committee meeting on 11 September 2008.

No comments.

2. Matters arising.

No matters arising other than those to be covered later in the meeting.

3. Report on APTS 2008-2009.

● *Member Institutions, overview of the APTS 2008-2009 programme and registrations.*

David Firth presented a summary report for the second year of APTS (2008–2009). A short overview of the four APTS weeks in 2008-2009 was given and David Firth commented on the increased number of registrations for APTS 2008-2009. It was agreed to recommend continuation of the current registration system.

● *Student feedback.*

The presentation continued with the feedback obtained from the students during the four APTS weeks (Warwick, Southampton, Bath, Glasgow).

In the feedback on the level of module lectures, the *Statistical Asymptotics* module improved with more students finding the level of the lectures right than at APTS 2007-2008, whereas a change was noted for the *Spatial and Longitudinal Data Analysis* module with more students finding the level of lectures hard than at APTS 2007-2008.

- *Student costs.*

A summary of student costs for the first APTS year was presented.

- *Registration, billing and cancellation policies.*

David Firth presented the current APTS registration, billing and cancellation policies. After discussion, the AC recommended that the policies should remain unaltered for the 2009-2010 APTS year.

- *Discussion*

The AC discussed the student feedback summaries which show that the students do not generally spend the suggested preparation time of one-week-per-module before each APTS week with more time being spent in preparation for modules related to computational Statistics and R-programming. To the latter Simon Wood proposed as possible explanation the fact that R-programming is a skill that most students need for their PhDs. Wilfrid Kendall mentioned that the APTS academic contacts should inform students on properly preparing before each APTS week.

The AC also discussed how the assessments are used by the Sending Institutions and what would happen if the students fail to do them, concluding that it is up to the Sending Institutions how the APTS assessments are used.

The matter of the definition of a “first-year PhD student” was also discussed in relation to the registration policy. The directors commented that Sending Institutions are trusted to interpret these definitions in a sensible and honest manner.

4. Programme for APTS 2009-2010.

- *APTS module weeks 2009-2010, key dates and registration fee levels.*

David Firth presented the programme and the key dates for the 2009-2010 APTS year, and a preview of the 2010-2011 APTS dates. The presentation continued with the registration fee levels for 2009-2010. There was no discussion.

- *Oxford's R programming web-lectures for APTS students.*

David Firth mentioned that the Oxford University's R programming web-lectures were well-received by the students of APTS 2008-2009 and thanked Brian Ripley and Ruth Ripley for developing and making the web-lectures available to APTS students. David Firth announced that the Oxford University, Department of Statistics will continue their introductory course on R programming, which will again be available in web-lecture form to the APTS students.

5. Long-term future of APTS.

Wilfrid Kendall presented a proposal for the long-term future of APTS, after the end of the current EPSRC grant in 2011 (see “A proposal for the future of APTS beyond its initial 5-year funding period” by David Firth and Wilfrid Kendall, appended in the meeting's Agenda). The presentation focused on a) the introduction of *Subscribing Departments* which effectively will replace the APTS Executive Committee with the commitment of paying an annual subscription which will be rebated from accommodation and subsistence costs of those departments' students in the following APTS year, b) the possibility of reducing the

APTS programme from 4 weeks to either 3 or even 2, in the event of undersubscription, and c) increasing of the registration fees to cover the administrative expenses of running APTS.

Further discussion focused on the benefits of the current residential model of APTS but the AC members also discussed the possibility of offering some modules through web-based lectures, possibly collaborating with MAGIC. David Firth commented that, due to the lower costs that would be involved for the Sending Institutions, such a hybrid solution might create pressure to completely move APTS to a web-delivery system. Another possibility which was discussed by the AC members is the expansion of APTS to admit overseas students and statisticians working in the industry. The Student representatives commented that an expansion into industry might change the dynamics of the group of APTS participants, possibly also creating pressure for changing the focus of the modules.

The AC members approved the proposal.

Action: DF and WSK to prepare a detailed and explicitly costed plan, together with a revised constitution for approval by the APTS Executive Committee at its next meeting in January 2010.

6. Election of AC representative to Executive Committee.

There were no candidates at the time of the meeting. It was agreed to allow a few days for self-nominations by AC members. If there is only one candidate then she/he automatically is elected as the AC representative to Executive Committee, if there are more than two candidates then an email election will be carried out and in the case of no candidates, Robin Henderson would continue to act as AC representative to Executive Committee for APTS 2009-2010.

Note added after the meeting: David Miller was subsequently elected to be the AC representative to Executive Committee.

7. Any other business.

- The student representatives expressed their satisfaction with the APTS programme, emphasizing on its value for research and networking.
- Wilfrid Kendall thanked the AC members.

Meeting ended at 16.30.