

Minutes of APTS Advisory Committee meeting (AC5) on 15th September, 2011

Present: Jeremy Bradley (GCHQ), Chris Brignell (Nottingham), Li Chen (Bristol; representing Jonty Rougier), Carl Donovan (St. Andrews), Jochen Einbeck (Durham), David Firth (APTS), Wilfrid Kendall (APTS), Daria Gromyko (Student Representative), David Hobson (Warwick), Kanchan Mukherjee (Lancaster), Brendan Murphy (UC Dublin; teleconferencing), Dave Woods (Southampton)

Apologies: Leonid Bogachev (Leeds), Adrian Bowman (Glasgow), Caitlin Buck (Sheffield), Peter Diggle (Lancaster), Thinh Doan (Student Representative), David Elston (BioSS), Chris Ferro (Exeter), Richard Samworth (Cambridge), Biman Chakraborty (Birmingham), Jian Qing Shi (Newcastle), Jonty Rougier (Bristol; represented by Li Chen), Julian Stander (Plymouth) and Simon Wilson (Trinity College Dublin)

In Attendance: Adam Johansen (APTS Programme Manager)

Meeting held at: B1.01, Zeeman Building, University of Warwick

Meeting Began: 14:00

Meeting Ended: 15:30

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1 Minutes of Advisory Committee meeting on 16th September 2010

The previously circulated minutes were agreed.

2 Matters arising

2.1 From Advisory Committee Meeting AC4

AC4-3 The agreed modification to preference ordering has been made.

AC4-3 A formal mechanism by which academic representatives are informed of the availability of material (the `apts-academic-contacts` mailing list) has been established.

AC4-3 Feedback has been sent to module leaders.

AC4-5 WILLIAM DEAN inquired about the possibility of providing protected places. The possibility of external sponsorship is being investigated.

AC4-5 LOTHAR BREUER inquired about the possibility of continuing travel subsidies for EPSRC-funded students. At the time it was felt that it was unlikely that they would be available. In fact, after the success of the continuation-funding grant, we expect to subsidize travel (but not accommodation) at about half the previous level.

2.2 From Executive Committee Meeting EC5

EC5-6 The questionnaire has not yet been sent, but is underway. A draft has been prepared. This will be sent to the 2007/08 cohort shortly (approximately four years after their registration). This information is also required by EPSRC and so this is especially timely.

EC5-10.3 The extraordinary meeting of the EC intended to discuss strategic issues has not yet been held due to time constraints. This issue will be pursued over the next two years.

3 Report of APTS 2010–2011 and the conclusion of the first phase of APTS (2007-2011)

3.1 Conclusion of First Phase

DAVID FIRTH presented the previously circulated report.

3.2 Report on 2010-11

DAVID FIRTH thanked the local organisers from 2010/11 and their institutions and presented the previously circulated report.

CARL DONOVAN how many students have been turned away in previous years? DF The first year was the worst as a significant number of second and third year students wished to come and had to be turned away. In the second and third year of APTS operation, each week was oversubscribed to the extent of around ten students.

JOCHEN EINBECK asked exactly what EPSRC's new requirements are. WILFRID KENDALL gave an informal summary and noted that heads of appropriate departments have been contacted by EPSRC and can provide a more authoritative answer.

3.3 Student Feedback

DAVID FIRTH The feedback has not changed substantially since last year.

KANCHAN MUKHERJEE There is a clear trend that the number of respondents decreases as the weeks progress.

DARIA GROMYKO presented a summary of student feedback and will forward a report to be circulated in due course.

JEREMY BRADLEY Did you specifically ask about other potential module topics? DG No; this was spontaneous feedback.

4 Programme for APTS 2011–2012 and summary of arrangements for the second phase of APTS (2012 onwards)

WILFRID KENDALL presented the paper attached to item 4 of the agenda. Key points expressed by EPSRC:

1. endorses APTS marketing success;
2. endorses focus on core methodology of statistics;
3. concern about sustainability;
4. wondered about making first week self-contained for non-mainstream statistics students;
5. suggestion that we consider use of Access Grid;
6. complementarity with other TCCs.

In response to these it was noted that there would be difficulties scaling the first week to this sort of size. A parallel variant of the first week for a more heterogeneous audience would be a more practical option, but would need to be run independently of the current APTS programme. The APTS Directors have responded direct to EPSRC. Stating, in particular: that we are exploring options for external support via one of the CIs (WOODS, Southampton); over-subscription of APTS weeks makes it less desirable to adjust the first week to be self-contained; we will continue to watch out for possibilities of using Access Grid; and we will participate in an annual meeting of all TCC directors as well as continuing to flag up other TCCs in our publicity.

APTS module weeks 2010-2011, registration fee levels at £120 per week with usual discount if all 4 weeks attended (due to continuing EPSRC support for administrative costs). It is unclear what demand will be for the coming year due to change in The EPSRC policy on formal training of PhD students. Key dates:

Cambridge 9-13 January 2012
Nottingham 16-20 April 2012
Warwick 2-6 July 2012
Glasgow 3-7 September 2012 (Note: the recommended arrival day is Sunday)

Some changes to lecturers: Wilfrid Kendall → Christina Goldschmidt (Oxford), Alastair Young → Andy Wood (Nottingham), Dave Woods (Southampton) to co-present with Jon Forster.

CARL DONOVAN What is needed for sustainability? WILFRID KENDALL this depends on factors including industrial sponsorship and possible reductions of administrative costs. Without EPSRC support, we would have been considering registration fees of around £240 per week. DAVID FIRTH additional sponsorship of between £40k and £50k per annum (depending on student numbers) would allow APTS to continue at the current price point beyond the period of EPSRC support.

Preview of dates for 2012-13 year presented:

Cambridge 10-14 December 2012
Nottingham 15-19 April 2013
Warwick 29 July to 2 August 2013
Glasgow September 2013

5 Elections

5.1 Election of APTS AC representative to APTS Executive Committee

To replace David Miller (Bath). WILFRID KENDALL invited nominations. This will be followed up by email.

5.2 Election of EC Representatives from amongst UIs

WILFRID KENDALL summarised the concept of underwriting institutions.

The current constitution notes that the Executive Committee membership will include "one nominated representative from up to eight Underwriting Institutions, elected by email by the totality of Underwriting Institutions from among their number, in elections run by the APTS Director(s). The term of an elected UI

will normally be three years conditional on UI status being maintained. Elected UIs are expected to play their part in running APTS weeks”

PROGRAMME MANAGER will be contacting academic representatives of underwriting institutions seeking nominations and coordinating the election on behalf of the directors.

KANCHAN MUKHERJEE is it still £2,000? APTS DIRECTORS confirmed that this was the current level of subscription.

6 Any other business and general feedback

6.1 Date of Next Meeting

DAVID FIRTH proposed Thursday, September 13th, 2012.

Agreed: To hold the next meeting on this date.

6.2 Menu of Modules

DAVID FIRTH Thus far, nothing has caused us to change the diet of modules but this doesn't mean that it is never going to change.

PETER DIGGLE: (by email) “I think the programme would benefit from the inclusion of a module on modern methodology for handling high-dimensional data. This could include, but should not be restricted to, methods oriented towards the analysis of high-throughput ‘omics technologies. This could perhaps be accommodated by dropping the asymptotic methods module, or perhaps incorporating a reduced version of this in the inference module? It would be nice to include something somewhere about design, but I struggle to see how this could be accommodated as a complete module. Maybe a guest lecture?”

DARIA GROMYKO: expressed the view that this would be approved of by students.

DAVID HOBSON: there is a new lecturer for the Statistical Asymptotics module this year.

DAVID FIRTH: yes, which will change the level of difficulty and content of the module but probably not to the extent suggested here. The original intent behind this module was equipping students to read the literature on asymptotics, not to produce experts.

LI CHEN: High-dimensional data and asymptotics are very much related: could the two be incorporated in a common module?

CARL DONOVAN: Would there be an appetite for this course amongst students?

JOCHEN EINBECK: Having done these eight modules, one should be able to deal with high dimensional data. Making that it's own module seems to go against the spirit of APTS.

A view was expressed that this would “sound a bit biotech” and this might be a *disincentive* to sending students.

DAVID FIRTH: It would have to be a general methodological module.

JEREMY BRADLEY: There would be interest in this, and in high volume methodology, outwith academia.

DAVID FIRTH: It would be possible to invite ANDY WOOD to consider moving the Statistical Asymptotics module in that direction as an intermediate position.

Agreed: This might be desirable, if Andy Wood is agreeable.

DAVE WOODS: I'd like to follow up on the end of that comment: the absence of anything related to design of experiments seems an obvious hole. The courses at the end of APTS are not obviously more fundamental than this.

DAVID FIRTH: I agree. It was planned from the outset to include a course on design but there wasn't room for it. It's still not clear how we fit it in. The RSS/EPSRC Graduate Training Programme (GTP; Chairman: Richard Boys, Newcastle) has been re-funded for a few years and they are planning to include a module on design. It wouldn't be desirable to duplicate material.

CHRIS BRIGNELL: The GTP is aimed at a slightly different audience (2nd–3rd year PhD students).

DAVID HOBSON: How many weeks will the GTP be running?

DAVID FIRTH: Probably one in the first year, at least, but I can't speak authoritatively.

DAVE WOODS: Might it be possible to include an element of choice by covering more than two modules in each week or having modules in the final week(s) alternate from one year to the next, allowing second year students to return to modules which they missed.

WILFRID KENDALL: This will substantially complicate local organisation. There is also a question about how the lecturers will feel about this. Nevertheless, this is an interesting idea.

DAVID FIRTH: We should consider this at the EC.

BRENDAN MURPHY: I wouldn't agree with holding three modules in one week and there are definitely issues with alternating weeks.

DAVID FIRTH: Effective coordination with the GTP might be the most effective solution to this.

JEREMY BRADLEY: How about involving industrial statisticians in evening sessions. DAVE WOODS: such events have been organised in previous APTS weeks at Southampton. DARIA GROMYKO: this would have been appreciated this year — we need some variety in what goes on in the evenings. DAVE WOODS: I was under the impression that evening sessions were more or less required in previous years; there appear to have been very few this year. DAVID FIRTH: It should be an expectation that at least one evening activity other than the RSS reception be made available during every week.