

# Minutes of APTS Advisory Committee meeting (AC7) on 12th September, 2013

**Present:** Jeremy Bradley (GCHQ), Chris Brignell (Nottingham), Jochen Einbeck (Durham), David Elston (BioSS, over Skype), Barbel Finkenstadt (Warwick), Adam Johansen (APTS), Wilfrid Kendall (APTS), Jonathan Marchini (Oxford), Robin Mitra (Southampton), Kanchan Mukherjee (Lancaster), Brendan Murphy (UCD), Pantelis Samartsidis (Warwick, Student Representative), Zhe Sha (Oxford, Student Representative),

**Apologies:** Natalia Bochkina (Edinburgh), Leonid Bogachev (Leeds), Lothar Breuer (Kent), Carl Donovan (St Andrews), Chris Ferro (Exeter), Colin Gillespie (Newcastle), Hannah Maytum (EPSRC), Kevin McConway (Open), Nick Monk (Sheffield), Susan Pitts (Cambridge) Jonty Rougier (Bristol), Simon Wood (Bath)

**In Attendance:** Benjamin Graham (APTS Programme Manager)

**Meeting held at:** A1.01, Zeeman Building, University of Warwick

**Meeting Began:** 14:00

**Meeting Ended:** 15:15

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## 1 Minutes of Advisory Committee meeting on 13th September 2012

The previously circulated minutes were agreed.

## 2 Matters arising

### 2.1 From Advisory Committee Meeting AC6

#### 2.1.1 AC6-2.2.3: LinkedIn Group

WILFRID KENDALL reports the creation of a LinkedIn group:

APTS: Academy for PhD Training in Statistics – Alumni  
<http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4819679>

and asks how it should be used. ADAM JOHANSEN notes that the group now has 58 members. BRENDAN MURPHY suggests its use as a tool for keeping track of alumni.

#### 2.1.2 AC6-4.1: Questions on core material in the preliminary material

WILFRID KENDALL: It was decided that the preliminary material should contain questions testing knowledge of core material. This year's preliminary material does have such questions. Member Institution representatives invited to consider whether they might be able to suggest any specific useful changes.

#### 2.1.3 AC6-6: Sponsorship

WILFRID KENDALL: Sponsorship has been found for two academy dinners during 2013/14: JMP will be sponsoring the Cambridge week and ATASS will be sponsoring the Oxford week. Thanks to Southampton for making contact with JMP. Each Underwriting institutions should please find an additional source of APTS sponsorship. The goal is to reach financial sustainability while keeping the registration fee as low as possible.

JONATHAN MARCHINI asked for the cost of sponsoring an academy dinner. WILFRID KENDALL estimates £1600. ADAM JOHANSEN says that with the increase in attendance, the cost of the academy dinners is higher.

KANCHAN MUKHERJEE remarked that he would explore the possibility of obtaining sponsorship via industrial contacts known to Lancaster.

### 2.2 From Executive Committee Meeting EC7

#### 2.2.1 EC7-4: Dividing attendance between two years / attending in second year

Seven students were registered for APTS weeks during both 2011/12 and 2012/13.

WILFRID KENDALL: It is possible so split students registration over two years, subject to the usual rules regarding the allocation of APTS week places.

#### 2.2.2 EC7-4: Changes to Constitution

WILFRID KENDALL: The constitution was changed in response to concerns that not all first year PhD students were ready for APTS. The constitution, *Member Institutions*, second paragraph, now reads:

The *minimum* level of commitment expected of a member institution is to make use of at least  $\min(8, 2n)$  units of participation during the membership year, where  $n$  is the number of first-year research students—as declared to APTS by the institutions in October of the membership year—who could reasonably benefit from APTS courses, and to which individuals in which of years one or two of their degrees those students are likely to be ready to undertake APTS. There are two conditions for this a) the student has an IELTS average below 6.5 or has less than 5.5 in any

component or b) that the student has insufficient background in the core statistical material as identified by the APTS team.

JOCHEN EINBECK asked for clarification of the meaning of the paragraph. Similar concerns were expressed by JONTY ROUGIER via email. ADAM JOHANSEN: It will be revised by the EC.

**Action:** Add to the agenda for the next EC meeting. (Ben Graham)

### 3 Report of APTS 2012–2013

ADAM JOHANSEN: Attendance has increased in recent years as host Universities have been willing to accept more than 60 students. The need to find a computer per student when arranging computer labs could limit the number of students that can be accommodated. For the last two years, all students were accommodated. The student feedback is broadly encouraging. Welcome to Ludger Evers, Finn Lindgren and himself, as new APTS lecturers. Leeds is a host institution for the first time in 2013/14.

ROBIN MITRA: Southampton use the assessment material. The times given for how long the assessments should take are sometimes rather optimistic.

WILFRID KENDALL: Due to a clash with the RSS conference, the week's two lectures had to be run one after the other, rather than interspersed; students views on this were varied.

KANCHAN MUKHERJEE: Are there any rules relating to finding replacements when a student cancels a place. ADAM JOHANSEN said it is often possible, subject to the priority rules for allocating places.

### 4 Programme for APTS 2013–2014

1. Cambridge 16-20 December, 2013  
Statistical Computing (Finn Lindgren & Simon Wood)  
Statistical Inference (Jonty Rougier)
2. Warwick 7-11 April, 2014 Statistical Asymptotics (Andy Wood)  
Statistical Modelling (Dave Woods)
3. Leeds 4-8 August, 2014 Applied Stochastic Processes (Stephen Connor & Christina Goldschmidt)  
Computer Intensive Statistics (Adam Johansen)
4. Oxford 1-5 September, 2014  
Nonparametric Smoothing (Adrian Bowman & Ludger Evers)  
Spatial and Longitudinal Data Analysis (Peter Diggle)

The registration fee for each week will be £130. Students attending all four weeks will receive a 20% discount on the total registration fee, accounted for on the final invoice.

The charges for *accommodation and food* (AF) and *food only* (F) will be:

	AF	F
Cambridge	265	100
Warwick	315	120
Leeds	290	110
Oxford	340	155

### 5 Dates and Locations for APTS 2014–2015

1. Cambridge 15–19 December, 2014
2. Southampton 23–27 March, 2015
3. Warwick 6–11 July, 2015
4. Glasgow 31 August -- 4 September, 2015.

WILFRID KENDALL: Please bid to host APTS weeks in 2015/16.

## 6 Arrangement for Computer Laboratories

Might it be possible to move to a system in which participants are expected to bring laptops, perhaps in small groups?

WILFRID KENDALL: Computer labs are expensive hire and their size is often limiting. More and more students bring their own laptops. BRIAN RIPLEY and SIMON WOOD are supportive of this change. Considering this for 2015/16.

ROBIN MITRA: Southampton students are allocated a desktop computer, so they may not have personal laptops.

BARBEL FINKENSTADT: Warwick students are also only given desktops.

ADAM JOHANSEN: Laptops can be shared, so not everyone needs one.

JOCHEN EINBECK: It will put pressure on sending institutions to provide their students with laptops.

KANCHAN MUKHERJEE: Lancaster gives 1st year students laptops on loan.

WILFRID KENDALL: Money saved hiring computer labs could be used to hire a few laptops for students without.

ROBIN MITRA: Sharing might lead to one person taking a back seat.

ADAM JOHANSEN: APTS lecturers such as Dave Woods report group task work well in practice.

ZHE SHA: Oxford students work in a group to finish the exercises. Students are motivated so there is no free-rider problem.

KANCHAN MUKHERJEE: Lots of plugs will be needed.

BRENDAN MURPHY: Internet access for students using their laptops can be erratic, but eduroam is generally robust for these purposes.

ROBIN MITRA: Ask for feedback from students next APTS week.

**Action:** Table EC agendum noting (i) some students don't have laptops and (ii) there are some reservations with regards to group work. (Ben Graham)

**Action:** Add to Cambridge week questionnaire: Did you bring your own laptop? Could you have done? (Ben Graham)

## 7 Elections

### 7.1 AC Representative on EC for 2013-2015, replacing Carl Donovan.

ADAM JOHANSEN: Email me by noon on Friday 19th September, 2014 if you want to stand for election.

## 8 Any other business and general feedback

### 8.1 Making a Life

WILFRID KENDALL: SUSAN PITTS plans to run an evening session called *Making a Life* during the Cambridge APTS week. The focus of the event will be on academic work-life balance. Some senior female statisticians will be invited to talk to the students.

### 8.2 Financial sustainability

DAVID ELSTON: Is the registration fee set at a level to make APTS financially sustainable?

WILFRID KENDALL: The registration fee pays for lecturers and some organization and admin costs. The registration fee shows a small excess. The fee is being increased gradually to replace EPSRC funding that expires in 2016. The aim is for a steady state by 2018. Sponsorship will allow APTS to limit the rise in the registration fee.

DAVID ELSTON: APTS could keep track of alumni and their subsequent employers, as potential sponsors.

WILFRID KENDALL: Alumni surveys are carried out. However, name of employer is not specifically asked for.

### 8.3 Links with industry

JEREMY BRADLEY: Are there evening sessions promoting jobs in industry during the APTS weeks.

WILFRID KENDALL: Companies sponsoring an academy dinner are invited to give a talk to the students. JMP gave such a talk at the 2012/13 Cambridge APTS week.

### 8.4 PhD students starting in January

PANTELIS SAMARTSIDIS: Students starting in January miss the first APTS week.

WILFRID KENDALL: Students can book the next year subject to normal rules.

ADAM JOHANSEN: Students starting in January are treated as first year when APTS places are allocated the next November, so they have high priority.

### 8.5 Availability of lectures online

NATALIA BOCHKINA: By email: Please discuss the possibility of making APTS courses available online.

ADAM JOHANSEN: There are considerable technical difficulties with regards to filming and streaming the videos.

WILFRID KENDALL: Actual contact with lecturers is important, so putting videos of the lectures online may not add much. The written lecture notes are already put online.

KANCHAN MUKHERJEE: Lecturers may not be happy to be filmed.

JEREMY BRADLEY: The social aspect of the APTS program is important.

WILFRID KENDALL: Bearing in mind the significant technical issues, we would be happy for someone to take this on as a project if they were prepared to give time to generating effective and implementable solutions to the practical difficulties.

### 8.6 How long is an APTS week?

KEVIN MCCONWAY: By email: EPSRC funded PhD students should receive 100 hours of training in their first year. How many hours of training does an APTS week provide?

WILFRID KENDALL: An APTS week consists of two modules. Each module has 10.5 contact hours. In addition, there is preparation time (6 hours/module) and follow-up assessment (4h/module). Depending on what you include, the APTS programme corresponds to between 64 hours and 164 hours. EPSRC assert that it is the responsibility of a head of department to defend their department's interpretation of the requirement.

JONATHAN MARCHINI: Oxford consider three APTS week to satisfy the 100 hour requirement.

**Action:** Add to the EC agenda an item to consider adding a specific item on this to the FAQ. (Ben Graham)

### 8.7 Capacity building

WILFRID KENDALL: The buzz-words at the Hong Kong ISI were *capacity building*, with reference to statistics training in the developing world. People are invited to put their name forward to give the equivalent of an APTS course overseas. Wilfrid Kendall is happy to collect names for this.

### 8.8 Sharing of module lecturing

DAVID ELSTON: In 2013/14 there will be three modules with two lecturers and five modules with a single lecturer. Having two lecturers provides security in terms of illness, and continuity in terms of replacing lecturers. Facilitates interaction with students.

WILFRID KENDALL: Lecturers starting as co-presenters can take over from the original lecturer, for example Dave Woods. From personal experience, giving a week of lectures is much easier if you are sharing. When giving the lecture course for the first time, people may find it easier to do it on their own. The onus is then on lecturers to find a co-presenter they are happy to work with.

ADAM JOHANSEN: Having a co-presenter is less important for modules involving computer labs, as there are fewer hours of lecturing.

## **8.9 Enthusiasm for APTS**

CARL DONOVAN: By email: Please express our continued enthusiasm & support for the APTS scheme, it is a great thing to have.

## **8.10 Date of Next Meeting**

Planned date 11th September 2014.