

The CMS Diary Autumn 2007

The Council for the Mathematical Sciences met in De Morgan House on 12 November.

Those who have followed the development of the CMS in recent years will know that the Council has for some time been considering how its membership can be enhanced to reflect better the mathematical sciences in the UK as a whole, both in terms of subject breadth and geographic representation. To this end, the CMS has welcomed representatives of the Operational Research Society (ORS) and the Edinburgh Mathematical Society (EMS) to its meetings in 2007, and has been working with them to develop a model for formalising their position.

The subject was considered in detail over the summer by each of the Founder Members, and with the approval of the IMA, LMS and RSS, the Council for the Mathematical Sciences agreed to offer Membership to the ORS and the EMS. The CMS looks forward to building on the societies' expertise in issues faced by the mathematical sciences in Scotland and in representing Operational Research.

Regular readers of this diary will recall that some of the more recent meetings have been dominated by education issues. The Council reaffirmed that its core remit is issues affecting the mathematical sciences in UK higher education, research, business, industry and the public sector. In matters of mathematics education in schools and colleges, its wish is to work as a complement to the Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education (ACME) supporting and enhancing ACME's stance from the perspective of CMS's core audiences. CMS reviewed its own plan of work and agreed that proactive engagement with Chief Scientists in various government departments was a key activity for 2008.

The meeting noted the results of the first annual CMS-HoDoMS survey of the health of mathematical sciences departments. The level of response to the survey was pleasing, and the Council is grateful to those who replied. The aim of the survey is, over several years, to monitor and respond to trends as they emerge and produce robust information to inform policy statements and activities. Departments' comments on their overall health were diverse, ranging from 'very healthy and expanding' and 'small but vibrant' to 'very hard pressed' and even 'critical'. The 2007 survey will be distributed shortly – all departments are encouraged to respond to help us create as full a picture as possible.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has recently launched consultations on proposals to withdraw funding for 'Equivalent or Lower Qualifications' and on the assessment and funding of higher education research post-2008 in the form of 'metrics'. The CMS has assembled working groups to engage with both of these issues – submissions will appear on the CMS website as they are made.

The CMS will meet with Professor David Delpy, the new Chief Executive of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, on 17 January 2008. Matters to be considered are likely to include the role of mathematics within EPSRC's focus on strategic themes and the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review and any resulting effects on the mathematical sciences programme budget.

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