

## The CMS Diary - Spring 2008

The Council for the Mathematical Sciences met in De Morgan House on 20 February, meeting for the first time as an enhanced CMS with five Members (the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications, the London Mathematical Society, the Royal Statistical Society, the Edinburgh Mathematical Society and the Operational Research Society).

As part of an annual planning exercise, the meeting reflected on achievements during 2007 and gave thought to its priorities for 2008. Regular readers will recall that the CMS met with David Eastwood (Chief Executive, HEFCE) in June 2007 to discuss Nigel Steele's report on provision of mathematics courses on a regional level. This looks set to become an annual liaison between CMS and HEFCE, and a second meeting has scheduled for later June this year. The meeting gave thought to the agenda for this occasion and will be developing suggestions for topics to discuss.

Alongside the expanding regular business of engaging with the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), it is hoped that the CMS will be able begin its planned engagement with the Scottish and Welsh Funding Councils (SFC and HEFCW).

With the success of Nigel Steele's report in mind, it was suggested that the 2008 Business Plan might include another proactive project or study on an emerging issue affecting mathematical sciences. Having already given some thought to matters arising from HEFCE's 'Research Excellence Framework' consultation during 2007, it was suggested that such a project might focus on 'Measuring Excellence in Mathematics', including giving thought to suitable 'measures of esteem' and other aspects – the CMS will be developing its ideas over the coming months as to what the report might encompass.

The CMS held its annual meeting with the EPSRC Chief Executive (David Delpy) and members of the Mathematical Sciences Programme team on 17 January 2008. The focus of this meeting was EPSRC's strategic priorities for 2008/09 to 2010/11; David Delpy explained that EPSRC intended to place a greater emphasis on the multidisciplinary themes of Energy, The Digital Economy, Nanoscience and Next Generation Healthcare and 'signpost' this emphasis via an increase in calls for proposals which relate to these. Whilst the overall allocation to EPSRC had increased following the Comprehensive Spending Review, much of the extra money went towards meeting Full Economic Costs – EPSRC Council's decision to allocate more money for the multidisciplinary themes would entail shifting funding away from Programme budgets. As a result, the CMS learnt that the Mathematical Sciences programme budget would decrease to £16M in April, from £18.5M in the current (2007/08) year and more than £20M in previous years. The CMS agreed to write to David Delpy to express its concerns that there will be less responsive mode funding available, in particular to support true 'blue-skies' research, but pledging to work with EPSRC to ensure that Mathematical Sciences is well-prepared to take advantage of funding available through the cross-cutting themes.

The CMS was pleased to note that the Chair, Sir David Wallace, had been invited to join the DCSF/DIUS STEM High Level Strategy Group. This group was created as a result of the 2004 'Science and Innovation Next Steps' review. The meeting was pleased at the recognition that the CMS is a key player and will be looking at how it can make the most of this opportunity.

Policy submissions noted included responses to HEFCE's 'Research Excellence Framework' consultation and an earlier consultation on the withdrawal of funding for students studying Equivalent or Lower Qualifications (ELQs) (and the subsequent Select Committee inquiry). These are now available to view on the CMS website at [www.cms.ac.uk](http://www.cms.ac.uk).

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