



# MPhil/PhD SSLC Meeting

## Tuesday 10 February 2015 (SDR)

### Minutes of meeting

Attended: Pauline Barrieu (chair) (PB) Deputy Head of Department  
Reinhard Fellmann (RF)  
Ali Habibnia (AH)  
Tayfun Terzi (TT)  
Georgios Vichos (GV)  
Yajing Zhu (YZ)

Minutes: Ian Marshall (IMar)

### 01.Welcome

PB explained that she was standing in for Dr Angelos Dassios, the Doctoral Programme Director in the Department of Statistics, who was unable to attend due to illness.

### 02.Minutes of the last SSLC meeting (19/11/2014)

Only IMar was present at the last meeting, but it was agreed that these minutes should be formally accepted as an accurate record of that meeting.

### 03.Matters arising

*Action point from last minutes: IMar will contact offer holders earlier and more frequently from this year onwards and look at the possible issue of an “offer holders handbook” from next year. The introduction of a Facebook group will also be explored.*

IMar now writes to offer holders as soon as the official Graduate Admissions Office offer letter and pack has been issued. IMar has also set up a Facebook group for MPhil/PhD students. An “offer holder pack” is still under consideration, but the department already issues a PhD Student Handbook to new students each year.

Action point from last minutes: IMar will explore the possibility of setting up a password-protected PhD section on the Statistics website.

The department now has an extensive PhD section on the website, including an events calendar.

Action point from last minutes: IMar to put up signs in the second floor PhD study area stating that this area is for the exclusive use of PhD students and each desk and computer is assigned to an individual student.

Done

Action point from last minutes: IMar to contact the department managers in Mathematics and Methodology to check if it is possible to have the entrance onto the second floor locked at all times.

The Department of Mathematics has asked for the second floor entrance door to remain unlocked during the daytime.

New action point: AH requested a mailing list for PhD students with details of forthcoming events. IMar will instigate this.

New action point: IMar to send an email to PhD students on the second floor of Columbia House to ask them to notify him if any students from other programmes are seen using the PhD study area.

New action point: IMar to report the faulty printer on the second floor to the IT service desk.

#### **04.ASC review**

The Academic and Student Affairs Committee (ASC) review of the department takes place on 26 February 2015. These reviews normally take place approximately one every five years, but this is the department's first ASC review in eight years. A detailed self-assessment review document has been prepared by the department and submitted to the committee, which is chaired by Professor Paul Kelly, the Pro-Director for Teaching. PB explained that this review is very important for the department and the active involvement of students from all programmes is an essential part of the process. Our PhD students are encouraged to attend the session set aside for them (3pm to 3.45pm in Room LRB.R.505).

Discussion followed about one of the most fundamental requirements of the Department of Statistics, to provide a dedicated work space and computer in a quiet PhD study room or area to each of its MPhil/PhD students. It was explained that the department has emphasised the importance of this requirement, which is not a School standard, in its submission to the ASC.

## **05.Bloomberg and Abacus**

AH reported a problem accessing the Bloomberg software because there is only one terminal available in the School's library. RF reported the same problem. AH also expressed similar concerns about Abacus.

*New action point: IMar will investigate possible solutions to this issue within the department.*

## **06.Links with PhD students and staff in other London colleges**

YZ expressed a desire to see closer links forged with PhD students and staff in similar research fields in other London colleges, for example UCL and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). PB briefly talked about the background of the partnerships forged by the Risk and Stochastics group in the department with financial mathematics groups in a number of London colleges, resulting in the London Graduate School in Mathematical Finance and the London Mathematical Finance Seminar Series, explaining that such links can start at an individual level and quickly develop from there.

*New action point: IMar will discuss ideas with members of the Social Statistics group.*

## **07.Sports facilities in the School**

YZ reported that it is extremely difficult to book the sports facilities on campus; for example, the badminton court in the Old Building. This is a matter that should be reported to the LSE Students' Union.

*New action point: IMar will report the concerns to the LSESU.*

## **08.Funding for PhD students**

RF asked if there was specific guidance regarding School or department funding for travel/conferences for PhD students. PB and IMar explained that departments are not given specific funding for PhD students but the Financial Support Office offers a Postgraduate Travel Fund for students who have a paper/poster accepted for presentation at a conference or workshop. The Department of Statistics does offer its research students some financial assistance. Requests for local events (e.g. within the UK) can normally be dealt with by the research administrator. Requests for funding for conferences in Europe or overseas would normally require the approval of the department's Research Committee, subject to support from the first supervisor. In the first instance, students should speak to the research administrator.

## **09. Summer party**

IMar asked if PhD students might like a summer party, in addition to the annual Christmas event. It was agreed that this would be nice idea and Somerset House was suggested as a possible venue. It was suggested that the party should take place after the PhD presentation event on 19 and 20 May 2015.

*New action point: IMar will explore possible ideas for a summer event/party.*

## **10. Miscellaneous**

A number of individual questions were asked at the end of the meeting and are summarised here:

Does the School or department provide any financial support for students who wish to spend time at an overseas institution as a Visiting Research Student? How would such a visit affect the studentship or scholarship of a student?

*New action point: IMar will collate some information to send out to students.*

What is the minimum period of registration before the thesis can be submitted (full-time four year programme)?

*This is two years.*

Where and when will information regarding teaching opportunities for the Summer School be available?

*New action point: IMar will send out some information to students.*

A whiteboard is required for the PhD study room LCH 1.05.

*New action point: IMar to arrange this with Estates.*

The next PhD SSLC meeting will take place on a date to be confirmed in the Michaelmas term of 2015-16, unless there is a request from the student cohort for an additional meeting in the summer term of 2014-15.