



## MPhil/PhD SSLC Meeting Wednesday 19 November 2014 (SDR)

### Minutes of meeting

Attended: Angelos Dassios (chair) (AD) Doctoral Programme Director  
Phoenix Feng (PHF)  
Andy Ho (TYH)  
Haziq Jamil (HJ)  
Anna Louise Schröder (ALS)

Minutes: Ian Marshall (IMar)

### **01.Minutes of the last SSLC meeting (11/02/2013)**

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

### **02.Matters arising**

*Action point from last minutes: IMar to contact IMT (Information Management Technology) to ask if it is possible to set up a shared Outlook calendar for PHD students*

This has been done, although the calendar has not proved to be as useful as was hoped (see the minutes regarding the events pages for PhD students on the Statistics website).

*Action point from last minutes: TT (Tayfun Terzi) to notify Rafel Baranowski that ST205 includes weekly homework.*

The service level courses ST102 and ST107 now automatically include double homework time in GTA contracts. Other courses can be amended on request.

### **03.ASC review**

An ASC review (Academic and Student Affairs Committee Review of Educational Provision) takes place on 26 February 2015 in room LRB.R.505. The opinions of research students are very important as part of this review. The review panel may invite SSL student representatives to attend the review to share their thoughts and opinions of the educational provision within the department.

### **04.Communication with offer holders**

IMar stated that he plans to contact offer holders much earlier than in previous years, immediately following the issue of the official offer letter, and maintain contact with them on a regular basis up to registration. He is also considering whether or not a Facebook group for offer holders would be useful. It was agreed that this increased level of contact with the department would be beneficial to offer holders and could help to ease uncertainty regarding issues like accommodation. It was pointed out that offer holders with a conditional offer would always be in an uncertain situation until they knew whether or not they had met the condition of offer. Offer holders waiting for news about funding offered by the School were in a similar position.

*Action point: 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.*

### **05.Departmental orientation for new students**

AD asked whether the departmental orientation session had been useful. It was stated that it did cover much of the same information included in the School orientation session. It was agreed that a brief introduction to the department and a welcome lunch at which the new students could meet and network with staff and other research students in the department would be a good alternative.

## **06.Events calendar**

ALS asked if the department planned any time series theme events in the coming year following the “Nonlinear time series” conference in September 2014. There is nothing in the planning stage at this time, although the department is holding a one-day “Cross-national survey” workshop in December 2014 and a two-day “Risk and Stochastics” conference at the Royal Statistical Society in April 2015.

ALS asked if it would be possible to have an ongoing comprehensive list of annual events (seminars; workshops; conferences) split between the various research groups for ease of reference. The PhD Outlook calendar set up following the last SSLC meeting had been intended primarily for this purpose but has not proved to be particularly useful.

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

## **07.Department seminars**

AD reminded students that it is important to attend seminars in the department. It is also useful for students to attend seminars outside of their specific areas of research.

## **08.LSE Research Festival**

IMar mentioned the annual LSE Research Festival. The 2015 festival takes place in May 2015 and the deadline date for submissions is 28 February 2015. The department has not been particularly well represented at previously festivals and encourages students to get involved. The department will cover the cost of printing research posters, which will also be displayed in the department and can be submitted for presentation at conferences.

## 09.Department Twitter Feed

IMar asked if any of the student representatives present regularly checked the department's Twitter feed. It was acknowledged that this is not the case and Twitter is not considered to be a valuable medium of communication between the department and its research students.

## 10.Leverhulme Library

TYH asked if it was possible to have a list of the books available in the department's Leverhulme Library. AD explained that the library has existed in the department for many years and we are only able to offer it as a low-maintenance undertaking. A list of books is not available, but there is a catalogue system and PhD students are free to browse the shelves at their leisure. The department is sympathetic to requests for books to be added to the library collection, in particular books that are too expensive to be reasonably purchased by individual students.

## 11.PhD Student Area (Columbia House, second floor)

TYH mentioned that the open-plan PhD Study Area on the second floor was being used by other students. TYH and HF expressed some concerns about security and safety because the entrance door onto the second floor is open during the day, allowing access by anyone. IMar explained that a number of staff in Statistics and Mathematics hold office and feedback hours on the second floor, which must be accessible for this purpose. There are lockers in the open plan area for the use of PhD Statistics students, although some of them are labelled "Economics".

*Action point: 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.*

*Action point: 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.*

## **12.Department of Statistics – plans for future growth**

ALS asked if there were plans to expand the size of the Department of Statistics in the future. It was stated that two Assistant Professorship posts are currently advertised. These positions are in addition to the existing department faculty. The department has expanded in size in recent years, both in terms of staff numbers and student numbers, and will continue to do so. However, there are a number of factors that influence this, including the size of the LSE campus.

## **13.Collaboration with other colleges of the University of London**

ALS asked about the extent of the department with other colleges of the University of London. AS mentioned the close links between the Risk and Stochastics group with financial mathematics groups in Birkbeck, KCL and UCL, for example via the London Graduate School in Mathematical Finance and the London Mathematical Finance Seminar. There are also close links with Imperial College London and the Cass Business School (which are not colleges of the UoL). The other research groups (Social Statistics and Time Series) have research links to other colleges. For example, the London Taught Course Centre is a partnership that includes Birkbeck, KCL, Queen Mary and Royal Holloway, amongst others.

## **14.University of London International Programme**

AD informed the student representatives about marking opportunities for research students in the University of London International Programme. Details will be sent to students by the examiners in the department in due course. ALS mentioned that the payment can take quite a long time to be processed.

## **15.PhD Christmas Event**

IMar mentioned that this year's Christmas party for research students takes place at the Old Bank of England pub, Fleet Street, on Monday 8 December 2014. All research students are invited and IMar hopes for a good turnout.

## **16.PhD Progress reports and Presentation Event**

IMar mentioned the annual progress reporting process and presentation event, which takes place in May. This is a very important part of the department's annual PhD calendar.

## **17.Centre Buildings Redevelopment**

The School will replace four of its existing central buildings – East Building, Clare Market, the Anchorage and the eastern part of St Clements. Architects Rogers Stirk Harbour and Partners have been appointed to draw up plans for this development. The work is likely to result in considerable disruption and the noise levels will be felt particularly by occupants of Tower 1 and to some extent by occupants of Columbia House. The planning proposal is due to be submitted to Westminster City Council in December 2014.

The next PhD SSLC meeting will take place on a date in the Lent term of 2014-15 to be confirmed at a later time.