

# MPhil/PhD SSLC Meeting

## Monday 22 February 2016 (COL 6.15)

### Minutes of meeting

Attended: Victory Idowu (VI)  
Hyeyoung Maeng (HM)  
Yan Qu (YQ)  
Alexandra Tsimbalyuk (AT)  
Diego Zabaljauregui (DG)  
Xiaolin Zhu (XZ)

Chair: Angelos Dassios (AD) Doctoral Programme Director

Minutes: Penny Montague (PM)

#### **01.Minutes of the last SSLC meeting (20/11/2015)**

It was agreed that the minutes should be formally accepted as an accurate record of that meeting.

#### **02.Matters arising**

*New action point: The printer in LCH 1.04 is often printing black streaks across the printouts. PM to report to IMT and investigate a replacement if necessary.*

*New action point: The students in LCH 1.04 would like access to a fridge for their refreshments. PM to contact Social Policy to investigate the possibility of gaining access to their fridge.*

Further to previous requests for a summer event/party, a second departmental badminton competition was held on 12 February.

The students in LCH 1.04 thanked the Department for providing them with a new coffee machine for their use.

### **03.PhD Presentation Days**

AD stated that the PhD Presentation Days were due to take place in May. They were open to first, second and third years, with first years presenting for 20 minutes, and second and third years presenting for thirty minutes. First years were advised to present their research problem concisely and to explain their plans for their ongoing research; for second years these presentations were particularly important to the upgrade process (although the required paper had more bearing on the upgrade decision). He also noted that they were a good opportunity for students to practice their presentation skills in a supportive environment; students would not be 'grilled'. The presence of supervisors was not a given but could be requested by students.

*Action Point: PM to investigate possible dates for the PhD Presentation Events with academic staff.*

AD also noted that the London Graduate School in Mathematical Finance PhD Day would be held on 22 March, which would provide a further opportunity for Risk and Stochastics students to present their work.

### **04.Construction noise**

It was noted that the construction taking place beside Houghton Street was especially disruptive for students who had desks in COL 2.0. As the PhD study area in COL 7.0 was at the front of the building, they were not as affected by the construction noise. The second floor students felt that the noise was intolerable and that the School was not taking their complaints into consideration. They also noted that the emergency exit on the second floor was often left open, exacerbating the noise. AD noted that there were quiet periods arranged during the daytime, but the contractor had an increased noise allowance between 7:30am - 10am, 12pm – 2pm and 4:30pm – 6pm. The students suggested that the quiet periods should vary as some students were always affected by the noise due to their schedules. They were also concerned about the ongoing nature of the disruption, which could last for up to three years.

### **05.Miscellaneous**

A number of individual issues were raised at the end of the meeting and are summarised as follows.

- XL proposed an information session on jobs in academia.

*Action Point: AD to discuss with colleagues (especially research fellows and younger members of staff) to discover if they would be able to give presentations.*

- AD noted that timing was crucial for applications to countries such as USA as academic vacancies may only be advertised at certain times of year, whilst in the UK new jobs can arise at any time of year.
- AD was asked for the attributes commonly required for academic posts; he responded that published papers and teaching experience were generally needed. He also noted that the potential of candidates were assessed during the recruitment process, so that working papers and unpublished thesis chapters might also be assessed). He stated that single name publications were helpful but collaborations were expected and joint papers written with supervisors were expected, but it was also a positive to have written with other authors other than your supervisor.
- XL asked about the usual length of a PhD. AD clarified that it was officially 4 years from commencement to submission, but on average most students took around 3.5 years to complete and the majority do complete on time. As some students had visa issues it might be necessary for them to submit on the last possible date.
- AD confirmed that the supervisor would not be present at their student's viva unless requested by the student. However, he noted that it is not usually a good idea for the supervisor to be present, and that they had to remain silent throughout the proceedings.
- It was noted that the students were keen to participate in networking opportunities across relevant departments such as Mathematics, Economics, Finance, Accounting and Methodology. AD noted that there were very few PhD students in Mathematics, whilst there were many in Finance.

*Action Point: AD to explore ways in which to provide more collaborative opportunities with other departments.*

*Action Point: PM to ask Methodology for their event updates for dissemination to Statistics PhD students.*

The next PhD SSLC meeting will take place on a date to be confirmed in the Michaelmas term of 2016-17.