# Committee of Professors of Statistics, UK and Ireland 

Annual Meeting, Thursday 6th June 2013

University College London

Present: Michael Goldstein (MG, in the chair), C Berzuini, J Biggins, P Fearnhead, V Isham, W Kendall, J Kent, D Lievesley, K McConway, G Nicholls, P Patil, L Pettit, C Skinner, D Stasinopoulos, S Todd, A Wood, A Young.

Apologies: C Aitkin, S Bird, A Bowman, C Buck, S Buckland, S Coad, P Dawid, G Dunn, G Gibson, R Henderson, A Mayer, J Norris, N Shlomo, J Stander.

1. Welcome and Apologies. MG, chairing the Committee of Professors of Statistics (COPS) meeting for the first time, welcomed members and noted apologies.
2. Appointment of Minutes Secretary. A Wood was appointed Minutes Secretary.
3. Minutes of the Annual Meeting 2012. The Minutes of the Annual Meeting 2012 were accepted without any issues being raised.
4. Matters Arising. None.
5. The International Year of Statistics (discussion led by Denise Lievesley). DL is the RSS representative on the IYS committee. There are 2021 members across 123 countries and 812 universities. The ASA is playing a key role. The purpose of the IYS is to increase public awareness of the power and impact of Statistics across all aspects of society. Major themes are: (i) impact; (ii) nurturing Statistics as a profession; and (iii) promoting research. There have been a number of IYS-related meetings in London and elsewhere in the UK. There is potential for RSS local groups to participate in the IYS in the remainder of the year.

## 6. Domestic Matters.

(a) Membership. MG reported that COPS membership has increased by 2 to 196.
(b) Financial Report. MG reported that the total expenditure in 2012-2013 was $£ 130$ and the current balance is $£ 3460$. It was agreed that, due to the healthy state of the COPS finances, 2013-2014 should be another subscription-free year.
(c) Annual Data collection. Alastair Young (AY) presented a summary of COPS data collection in 2013. Returns were received from 47 groups across 36 institutions, compared with 45 from 33 institutions last year. This year new questions relating to the fees status of postgraduate students were introduced. About a third of the returns did not show the consistency required between breaking figures down by 'Female or Male' and 'Home/EU or Overseas'; the majority were detected by AY and queried, but some (slight) inconsistency remains. The meeting thanked AY for his efforts.
(d) COPS executive. At present this comprises MG (Chair), AY (Past Chair), $\mathbf{S}$ Buckland, R Henderson, J Stander (Treasurer) and A Wood.

## 7. Publications.

(a) COPS Website. The question of finding a future host for the web site is still unresolved.
(b) Directory of Academic Statisticians. A Meyer, who reported by email, is planning a full revision of the Directory and will move it to a new location. He will be happy to receive any suggestions COPS members may have regarding content and presentation.
8. EPSRC Mathematics Programme. Philippa Hemmings from EPSRC gave a presentation on EPSRC, covering (i) general information about EPSRC; (ii) the maths programme; and (iii) more specific information about Statistics.

- EPSRC aims to reduce administration costs by $30 \%$
- Key goals: shaping capability, developing leaders, developing impact.
- "Impact of Mathematical Sciences extends across all aspects of the UK economy"; see the Deloitte report.
- A significant future opportunity for maths/statistics is Big Data.
- EPSRC support for Statistics includes Fellowships; 2013 CDT exercise; Programme Grants (i-Like and EQUIP); additional funding for CRISM and SUSTAIN.

There were a number of questions and further discussion and Philippa was thanked for her presentation.
9. Report from the RSS Academic Affairs Advisory Group and related matters (Kevin McConway). KM reported that the Group has a vacancy and invited COPS members to volunteer. There are various issues currently under consideration including the SAVI ("Science Across Virtual Institutes") programme, which is supported by NSF and "is a mechanism to foster and strengthen interaction among scientists, engineers and educators around the globe". Should the UK provide support and if so how, e,g, through EPSRC or RCUK? A second issue under consideration is Open Access Publishing which is a difficult one for the RSS.
10. Research and postgraduate matters. WS Kendall reported that numbers at the 4 APTS weeks in 2012-13 were 82 (Cambridge), 83 (Nottingham), 89 (Warwick) and 74 (Glasgow), and that the APTS programme for next year is on the web site, and that the meeting for the Advisory Group in on 12 September 2013. AY reported that the LTCC continues to have healthy statistics participation and views itself as having a national rather than just a London focus. Ideas for visitors and/or topics for intensive courses are welcome and funding is available. A Bowman provided the following report by email which was read to the meeting by MG. The SMSTC programme continues to run very well. There are 8 streams, of which two are in

Statistics and Probability. These are delivered across Scotland (and with some participants from further afield) in 20 weekly 2 -hour videoconference sessions. The aim is to provide broad background coverage of standard ideas, both to fill in gaps for students with varying backgrounds and to provide some breadth for students studying other topics. The whole programme has recently been reviewed. Although the report is not officially available yet, some helpful changes to the structure of the streams have been suggested. I should emphasise that we see the Statistics and Probability SMSTC activity as complementary to APTS, in which we are also heavily involved and to which we also send our students.
11. Any other teaching matters. None.

## 12. Open discussion on topics of general interest.

(a) European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC). D Livesley (DL) is a member of ESAC and gave some background. It was established 4 years ago and reports to the European Parliament. It has 20 members including 12 members at large. It meets 4 times a year to review Eurostat programmes, strategies and documents. Comparability of data across countries can be an issue. It also holds meetings/workshops on specialist topics, e.g. measuring well-being. A possible future topic is statistical literacy.
(b) REF and Impact. There was some brief discussion of the REF and Impact. MG asked whether most mathematical sciences impact cases were produced by statisticians. Responses suggested that this was the case in at least some departments.
(c) Open Access. WSK expects RCUK to push very hard for all sponsored outputs to be in open access, which may be good in principle but in practice there is a danger of a complex legal framework developing which may provide a difficult and unfavourable environment for some of our most prominent and important journals. WSK suggested that COPS members find out via google about sherpa, which currently has beta-testing status, and complain if favourite journals are not represented.
13. Any other business. DL pointed out two activities in which statisticians have the potential to be more visible than they are at present:
(i) Famelab holds national and international competitions in which people working in science (defined broadly) have 3 minutes to present a scientific idea. National finals were held at UCL in April 2013 but no statisticians were in the final.
(ii) L'Oreal has Women in Science prizes for both early-career and senior female scientists. The definition of science is broad and includes Statistics, but DL has no recollection of a statistician ever winning this.

