

# Committee of Professors of Statistics, UK and Ireland

Annual Meeting, 7 June 2010

University College London

Present: A Young (in the chair), W Kendall, V Isham, T Sweeting, R Henderson, R Bailey, C Skinner, W Browne, B Silverman, D Spiegelhalter, C Andrieu, C Goldie, Q Yao, B Gilchrist, F Coolen, J Kent, A Wood, J Forster, C Buck, K Mukherjee, J Stander, B Morgan, N Davies

Apologies: C Jones, P Dawid, M Goldstein, P Diggle, G Dunn, M Gilthorpe, P Green, B Francis, D Hand, S Lauritzen, P Farrington, A Walden, S Jacka, T Fearn, S Gilmour, P Smith

1. Alastair Young, chairing his first COPS meeting, welcomed members and presented the apologies he had received.
2. Rob Henderson was appointed minutes secretary.
3. The minutes of the 2009 meeting were approved.
4. There were no matters arising not otherwise part of the agenda for the meeting.

## 5. Domestic Matters

1. *Membership.* This has remained stable, with 191 at present compared with 190 last year. Colleagues were asked to inform AY if they are aware of anyone who should be added to the membership.
2. *Financial report.* A paper prepared by treasurer Julian Stander was presented by AY. Expenditure has been slight and the account balance is healthy. The meeting therefore accepted the treasurer's proposal that 2011 subscription should be set at £0.00.
3. *Annual data collection.* A draft paper prepared by Jon Forster was presented. The meeting noted an apparent decline in the number of professors in participating groups, but noted Jon's point that further checking was required. The meeting was content with the format of the data collection pro-forma.
4. *COPS Executive.* Jon Forster will replace Peter Diggle as past chair on Executive. Peter was thanked for his contributions. AY will consult the constitution to determine expected terms for Executive members.

## 6. Publications

1. *Web*. AY has updated part of the COPS web site. The membership are requested to look at the site and email AY with any suggestions for updates or changes.
2. *Directory of Academic Statisticians*. Alan Mayer was to develop a fully electronic version. AY will investigate progress.

## 7. RSS Centre for Statistical Education

Neville Davies gave a presentation on the activities of RSSCSE, almost one year after its move from Nottingham Trent to Plymouth. The Centre is now established at Plymouth and functioning well, though there are concerns about future funding streams if the expected national cutbacks materialise. Activities include:

1. A variety of schools programmes, notably the continuing Census at School project, which has been successfully run for 10 years, will continue to the 2011 census, and which has been taken up in several other countries.
2. Several continuing professional development programmes for teachers.
3. A number of higher education projects, some in collaboration with the Mathematics, Statistics and OR network.
4. Collaborations with RSS and other national statistical societies.

Neville reported on a successful workshop held in Plymouth to discuss a problem solving approach to teaching statistics in higher education, with participants from across the University. He offered to hold a similar workshop at other institutions if requested.

## 8. Links with RSS

Valerie Isham, president-elect of RSS, spoke of her wish to make sure that academic affairs are given a higher profile within RSS. In this she follows Bernard Silverman, who appointed her as Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Valerie is keen to receive the views of COPS members on a) the RSS annual conference, b) other RSS meetings, c) the read paper submission system. A consultation on the latter is underway and has been announced in the June RSS News. Members are requested to send their views on read papers to Martin Owen, and on any RSS issue to Valerie.

## 9. Mathematical Sciences International Review

Peter Green, the RSS representative on the steering committee, was unable to attend COPS but sent a paper on the forthcoming EPSRC MSIR. The panel membership has been announced and includes Peter Hall, Anthony Davison and Stephen Fienberg. A landscape preparatory document is to be written and RSS/COPS input is likely to be requested. The

meeting suggested that the CMS representatives AY, Valerie Isham and John Kent liaise with Peter Green.

#### 10. **REF**

No further (post-election) developments were known to members present at the meeting, The expectation therefore is that REF will go ahead as planned.

#### 11. **Research and Postgraduate Matters**

1. Wilfrid Kendall gave a presentation on the planning of the APTS Taught Course Centre for continuation after 2011. Funding from EPSRC is secure until that time, but uncertain thereafter, despite suggestions that EPSRC are content with the management of APTS. The intention is that Member Institutions will be invited to become *Underwriting Institutions*, who would pay an annual subscription of £2000. This would be used to cover deposits for accommodation or other purposes, with the intention of being repaid the following year through rebates on amounts invoiced for their students' participation. This would provide APTS with financial stability.

The other Taught Course Centres providing statistics training are still reflecting on their provisions for post-2011 continuation.

2. EPSRC funding for MSc courses in statistics and OR was discussed. A top-slice from Doctoral Training Accounts was taken this year to provide support, albeit through a less than transparent process. EPSRC have requested that the mathematics community, through CMS, should recommend process and amount for any continuation. RSS/COPS will combine to provide input to the CMS response.

Generally the meeting recognised the importance of MSc funding but expressed some concerns as to whether reducing DTA was the best means of releasing funds.

#### 12. **Other teaching matters**

There were none. (This seems to have become a standing agenda item).

#### 13. **AOB**

Concern was expressed about the apparently low success rate of statistical applications for EPSRC responsive mode funding.

#### 14. **Date of next meeting**

TBA.