**The First Academic Representatives Forum**

**Wednesday 11th January 2017**

**Event Write Up**

All PowerPoint presentations are available in the Academic Representatives dropbox folder.

David Youdan opened the event and clarified possible concerns regarding the sharing of details of IMA Members and e-Students at individual institutions. Advice from the Data Commissioner’s office confirmed that Academic Representatives were deemed to be part of the IMA’s structure and as such sharing of data regarding their specific institutions was not in breach of data protection legislation. This IMA data should not be passed outside the IMA Academic Representatives network.

**Setting the Scene – Chris Linton IMA President**

Chris welcomed those attending and thanked all the Academic Representatives for agreeing to take on this new role stressing that this provided an ongoing opportunity for engagement and discussion.

The last IMA Strategy Review recognised the need to grow IMA membership in order to be able to deliver the services that we want to for our Members. Thanks to Erica Tyson we have made great strides in signing up e-Students but the challenge is to convert these to paying members. He felt that it is not unreasonable to expect that graduates who go into mathematical roles join the IMA as the **only** Professional body for mathematics. Academics play an important role in developing and passing on a culture of membership - just look at Physics. Within mathematics we need to generate a culture of maintaining links with the professional body providing benefits to individuals through IMA activities and to support the mathematical professional community. He hoped that Academic Representatives will play a key role in this.

The primary goal of Academic Representatives is to help promote IMA membership within the academic and student body. We do have ideas and suggestions of how to do this but would also ask you to generate any ideas. In conclusion he emphasised that this was not just us using you but it provides an opportunity for you to provide feedback and to and to suggest actions and mechanisms.

**Information for Academic Representatives – Chris Linton President**

The most important reason for joining the IMA is that you are supporting mathematics. He reiterated the importance of the Deloitte Report - Measuring the Economic Benefits of Mathematical Science Research in the UK which was commissioned as a direct result of IMA activity. (Introduction and link to report is in the dropbox folder). Chris recognised the growth of the importance of mathematics outside of Mathematics Departments so how can we engage with colleagues in other departments?

He asked that Academic Representatives should engage their colleagues to help share the message with students. If you wanted him, or anyone else from the IMA to come a give a talk please contact us. He then outlined how the information and materials could be used to support membership growth stressing that we welcomed feedback about if the material was useful and if anything else was required.

The IMA has removed barriers to make an application for membership as easy as possible for example with references no longer being required for academics. We recognise it is difficult to convert free e-Students to paying Student or Associate Members and Erica Tyson will be happy to help. We would also be interested to hear why people don’t want to join so we can tailor messages.

Chris explained that the IMA was planning to offer University Mathematics Departments the opportunity to provide departmental profiles for inclusion on the very popular Maths Careers website (over 400,000 hits during 2016).

**Questions/Discussions re Role of and Support for Academic Representatives**

Could Academic Representatives receive some indication of their position within the general distribution of numbers of members across all Institutions?

* Erica Tyson will provide some general data

Should Institutions sign up e-Students?

* Could automatically sign up all students as they can then chose to unsubscribe. This proposal was warmly welcomed.
* What email address should be used? Institutions have the university email but IMA would prefer personal emails as these will remain after graduation
* Could require students to sign up as part of the induction activity
* Could ask students to opt out at induction then provide a list of new e-Students to the IMA to enter
* Academic Representatives are to be added to the e-Student list to receive the newsletter and other materials sent to e-Students

How could Academic Representatives share information about what they are doing?

* IMA to create a basecamp group – Academic Representatives will get an email requesting they sign up and then will receive email notification of any postings [Action Gemma Reeves]
* Facebook – there are a number of IMA Facebook groups we need to do some work on this. The IMA’s social media presence will form part of the Strategy Review being held in July 2017.
* Provide an initial single point of contact within the IMA for Academic Representatives

Why don’t more people join the IMA?

* Some just want to join one organisation
* Can’t see benefits of membership
* Cost in comparison to other bodies
* We need to make sure people know about the good work the IMA is doing to support mathematics
* No-one on the department had IMA membership so didn’t encourage new members of staff to join
* Difficult to enthuse colleagues
* Timing of request for renewal of membership – all bodies ask for this on 1st January

What could be done to encourage more people to join?

* Is there a possibility of paying monthly vis direct debit (c.f. OR Society)
* Share details of members on website so prospective members can see who is a member at their institution
* Share member details within institutions

If we got more members what would the IMA spend the additional income on? Chris Linton replied:

* Extension of current activity e.g. more grants
* New activities e.g. possible Scholarships – Members can put forward ideas
* Increase staff levels to support new activities
* Political clout from being able to display resources/attend meetings etc.
* Current level of activities is not sustainable but the argument is that increased membership will pay for these. The July Strategy Review will consider if the IMA should invest from the reserves or reduce services to balance the budget

What could/should the IMA deliver to support becoming a professional mathematician amongst academic colleagues?

* IMA Newsletter for Academic Representatives – already planned
* Consider having a student representative from Institutions
* Departmental membership or paid for by department for students/academics?
* Encourage existing members e.g. Associates to upgrade – IMA should be proactive by contacting members after the expected period
* Could information re membership provided include when people joined in order for Academic Representatives to be aware when membership should be upgraded e.g. from AMIMA to MIMA?

**Employability**

Presentations were given

* The Industrial Perspective (GCHQ) – Richard Pinch
* The Industrial Perspective (Engineering) – Nira Chamberlain
* Mathematics Teacher Training Scholarships – Sophie Carr
* An Academic Perspective – Noel-Ann Bradshaw

Table Discussions- Key Issues for Mathematics Departments in delivering Employability

* Some students don’t think they need it but older ones wished they had had it – helpful to get graduates in to tell them
* Some staff don’t think it’s needed
* On transcript but doesn’t affect degree
* Students find it easier to take on board if reasonably coherent and explicit
* Needs to be relevant
* Students not prepared for work
* Improve programming skills and understanding of why…
* How to assess?
* Taking subject out of the curriculum – staff and student hostility – ‘I’m here to do maths’
* Embed ‘employability’ in assessed coursework?
* Within Personal tutorials
* External speakers?
* How can and how do maths departments address professionalism within employability? (i.e. projects to project input)?
* How to counter negative influences in employability activities - variability in staff?
* How can the IMA support these non-comfort zone activities?
* How to measure, incentivise and facilitate?
* IMA contribution to networking/industrial liaison
* IMA Maths Careers website as showcase for university courses
* Easy/early access to students for employers and vice versa
* Buy-in from academic staff – some staff just want to teach maths
* Staff expertise
* DLHE – metrics
* Space in curriculum
* Role of IMA programme accreditation

Discussion/Questions to Panel made up of Speakers

Noel-Ann Bradshaw commented that students don’t seem to listen to her re employability but do to external speakers saying the same thing!

* Erica Tyson happy to speak about employability
* Arrange mutual visits between universities in the same region
* Academic Representatives could do mutual visits

IMA could broker organisational contacts

* Send details through IMA branch – but be clear as to what you are looking for, how long a session and when – volunteers can then contact the university directly
* Academic Reps can also contact other Academic Reps
* Put something in Maths Today

Should IMA programme accreditation encourage the development of high level employability skills relevant to mathematics?

* Concerns about introducing employability to curriculum for ‘maths with’ degrees as could have impact on accreditation due to two thirds maths requirement
* What instructions could be given to an external examiner/assessor – need guidance even if just to say they need to be flexible to take into account employability
* As long as a university can make a case that these are skills that maths graduates need then the IMA should accept this as part of accreditation
* Accreditation rules shouldn’t be over prescriptive and should acknowledge the value of such skills
* Should be a statement of the valuable things we should be delivering through a maths degree
* Would like IMA accreditation to be stricter as have concerns that an institution’s new policy on assessment means employability elements are being removed
* Be aware that competencies are not the same as skills – students who have done a project and presentations to groups will meet most competencies but students will need to understand and explain what they learnt from it for interviews
* Employers have respect for the accreditation process but look for evidence that graduates have a reasonable level of employability

Recognise that internships and placements are valuable for individual students but it is difficult to get them involved in the process – is one day spent at companies to see what the workplace is useful?

* Any tour or day demonstration will have a mix of enthusiastic and disengaged students so it’s not universally useful
* Companies are not always happy to invest the time and effort as this is not focused on a specified individual
* Noel-Ann Bradshaw outlined a recent IMA Meet the Employers event held at Tesco which raised the profile of jobs that maths graduates could apply for. More of these could be arranged at local large employers

Can the IMA help to facilitate internships or share details of internships available?

* IMA could add value and help make links between students and organisations but have we the resources to do this?
* Needs discussion at the July Strategy Review
* Erica Tyson had posted a request for information re offering internships to Professional Affairs Committee but with no response – we need to work harder with the Employer Representatives
* The IMA’s big strength is connecting different groups
* Looking for maths jobs that are not just finance – but don’t have personal contacts
* It would send a strong message to students if the IMA helped them make contacts
* Richard Pinch described the Employers’ Form – an annual event that brings together Employers to discuss issues such as employability. One of the issues talked about is the difficulty of talking to academics – Academic Representatives should be invited to attend

**Extending Academic Representatives**

* 5 minute slot at HoDoMS?
* Provide a list of Universities currently without a representative to Academic Representatives and ask for suggestions
* Make scheme more visible
  + Academic Representatives webpage
  + Report re Employability

**Conclusion**

David Youdan thanked the presenters and all for attending. He summed up the discussion regarding the role and support for Academic Representatives by confirming that the IMA

Will work to provide:

* Chris Linton to talk to academic colleagues re the IMA
* An Academic Representatives newsletter
* Enabling University Departments to provide profiles on the MathsCareers website
* Anonymised data to demonstrate take up of e-Student membership
* Basecamp forum for Academic Representatives
* Add Academic Representatives to the e-Student newsletter circulation list
* Welcome feedback on why colleagues did not join the IMA
* Publicise Academic Representatives when the coverage is more complete
* Look at provision of Web pages

Will consider:

* The implications and feasibility of monthly subscription payments
* How to upselling MIMA -> FIMA
* Options for Departmental membership
* Sharing membership data with the general public (data protection issues)
* The introduction of Student Representatives
* Raising the profile of e-Student via HoDoMS
* Options to enable Departments  to sign up year 1 degree students to e-Student newsletter – with an opt-out mechanism
* The use of Social media (to be considered at Strategy Review Weekend)
* IMA role in supporting/creating links for Internships

Will expand the Academic Representative Scheme

* Better offer now thanks to the discussions today
* Identify names for Phase II
* Executive Board and Academic Representatives to review and consider future steps

Dagmar Waller

January 2017