

Minutes of APTS Advisory Committee meeting on 13 September 2007

Meeting held at the University of Warwick

Present: Wilfrid Kendall (chair: APTS co-Director), Trevor Bailey (Exeter), Leonid Bogachev (Leeds), Lothar Breuer (Kent), Sean Collins [EJC] (Bristol), William Deans (co-opted external adviser: GCHQ), Paul Fearnhead (Lancaster), Nick Fieller (Sheffield), Robin Henderson (Newcastle), David Hobson (Warwick), Brendan Murphy (Dublin), Phil O'Neill (Nottingham), Prakash Patil (Birmingham), Richard Samworth (Cambridge).

In attendance: Stephen Connor (APTS Programme Manager), David Firth (APTS co-Director).

Apologies for absence: Mark Bambury (EPSRC), Adrian Bowman (Glasgow), David Elston (co-opted external adviser: BIOS), Paddy Farrington (Open University), John Newell (Galway), Julian Stander (Plymouth).

All members of the Advisory Committee were formally welcomed by WSK. There followed four short presentations on various aspects of APTS: the slides used for these have already been circulated to Member Institution academic contacts. The following questions were raised during the resulting discussion sessions.

1. Introduction

Q1) What are the plans for future years?

A1) The AC is to meet at this time each year and give feedback, which will influence future plans.

2. APTS Programme

Q1) How committed is APTS to using the same modules each year? Should this be discussed with other taught-course programmes?

A1) We will be assessing this each year – it is envisaged that the modules will be the same, but this is open to discussion.

Q2) Are EPSRC-funded GTP courses continuing?

A2) Nobody was certain about this. They may be continuing but are aimed more at 2nd-3rd year students. Money has now run out for the current GTP initiative, so a fresh application to EPSRC would have to be made. It is believed that Steven Gilmour (QMUL) and/or the RSS Research Section may be planning to apply for further GTP funding. It was emphasized that APTS does not preclude the GTP initiative.

Q3) DF identified the need for APTS students to have a good basic knowledge of R, and

asked for advice from the AC on the best way to achieve this.

A3) Learning from peers is most successful. Some members of the AC expect their students to know how to programme by July, but this will not be the case for all students at APTS. Information concerning prerequisite material about R should be made available by the start of October.

Q4) Are model solutions to be provided for assessments?

A4) This will be up to the module leaders, who have not been asked to provide answers.

3. *Procedures*

Q1) What will happen if APTS weeks are over-subscribed?

A1) The criteria in the APTS Constitution will be used to prioritise students, and a reserve list will be kept in case of cancellations.

Q2) How much will it cost to send students to APTS?

A2) The costs are provided on the student registration page of the APTS website.

Q3) What is the policy regarding late allocation of places to students arriving mid-year?

A3) APTS should be contacted directly about such instances; APTS would try to be flexible, numbers permitting.

Q4) How many students can APTS accommodate per week?

A4) The maximum number per week is currently set at 60. APTS will be gathering information about this and welcomes feedback.

Q5) What about funding for students from other research councils?

A5) This is a matter for the research councils concerned: no such funding has been provided as yet.

Q6) What is the APTS policy regarding travel expenses?

A6) "In the case of an EPSRC-funded student, APTS will pay the accommodation/food charges and will also make an allowance to the sending institution to cover the cost of travel (at "saver return" rates)." (Taken from the APTS website.)

- WD (GCHQ) declared an interest in sending new staff on APTS weeks as part of their statistical training in future years.

4. *Administration*

Q1) Who is underwriting the future of APTS?

A1) The intention is to build APTS activity over the period of the grant to the point where it is financially self-sustaining. We will need to see what happens during the next 4 years, and then decide how to continue. Numbers may change, and so delivery may have to. It was pointed out that we won't be building a national community of students if the delivery method is changed from intensive residential courses.

Q2) Priority is given to 1st year students. In the first year of APTS 2nd year students may benefit a lot.

A2) APTS wasn't expecting to have to prioritise students, but preliminary numbers are

higher than anticipated. EPSRC-funded 2nd year students still have a chance of being accepted.

Q3) Lots of students start in Jan/Feb, especially UK students having finished an MSc. Will they be counted as 1st years?

A3) The registration process for 2007-8 will be closed by then. It was agreed that students will count as 1st years if in their first year when the relevant registration period closes.

Q4) Will APTS material be made public before/after an APTS week?

A4) Yes, although it is up to the module leaders how much is made available. A minimal amount is *expected*. Any such material will be made available free-of-charge.

- It was clarified that a student receiving *any* EPSRC funding means that they are EPSRC-funded.
- EJC pointed out that once APTS is self-financing, the prioritisation criteria will have to be changed: this is something to consider in the future.
- It was noted that the approximate cost (in 2007-8) for sending a non-EPSRC student to all four APTS weeks is approximately £1000. TB expressed the view that this is a very reasonable price to pay for so much training.

5. *Election*

WSK asked for nominations for up to two members of the AC to sit on the APTS Executive Committee. RH and PP agreed to stand, and were duly elected: PP will hold this post for one year, and RH for two.

6. *AOB*

- TB asked how much contact there is between APTS and MAGIC? JF (the MAGIC contact for APTS) replied that there are not many statistics courses on MAGIC at the moment; opportunities for future collaboration will be explored over the period of the grant.
- PP asked the same question about APTS and NATCOR. WSK replied that APTS is also in contact with NATCOR, and we have noted possibilities for overlapping training (for example, a NATCOR module on optimization would be very suitable for some applied probability PhD students).

END