

Running a School Wide Maths and Stats Support Solo

Eva Szatmari

School of Business, Economics and Informatics
Birkbeck College, University of London

Outline

- Birkbeck and its student body
- Support at Birkbeck
- My role and its evolution
- Main challenges
- Rewards

Birkbeck and the Birkbeckians

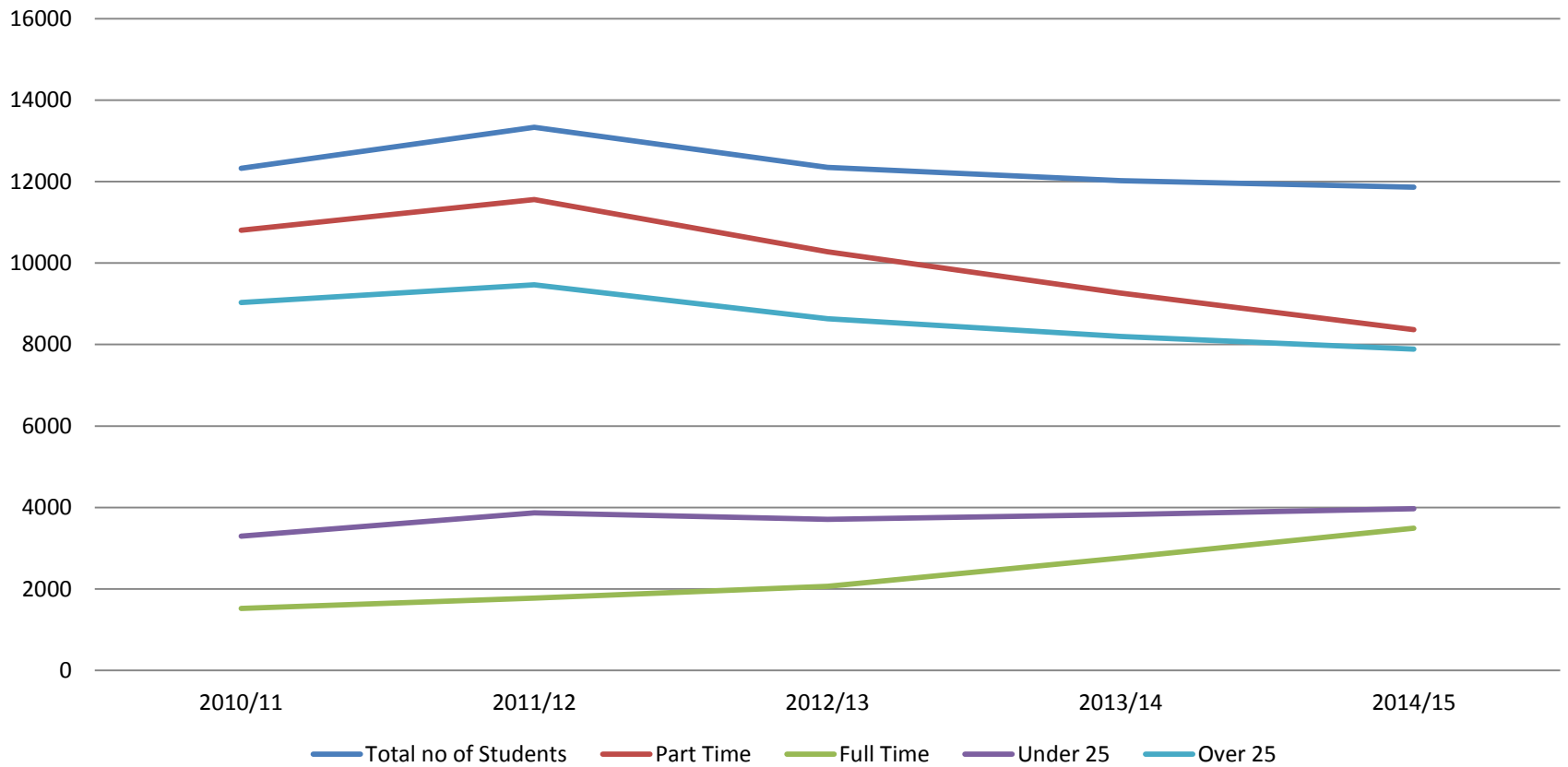
- Unique position in the HE scene
- Evening lectures
- Traditionally part time, becoming full time
- Mainly mature students body

Birkbeck and the Birkbeckians

Academic Year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Total no of Students	12326	13334	12349	12022	11860
Part Time	10805	11559	10280	9263	8366
Full Time	1521	1775	2069	2759	3494
Under 25	3295	3869	3711	3826	3970
Over 25	9031	9469	8636	8196	7890

Birkbeck and the Birkbeckians

Birkbeck Student Body



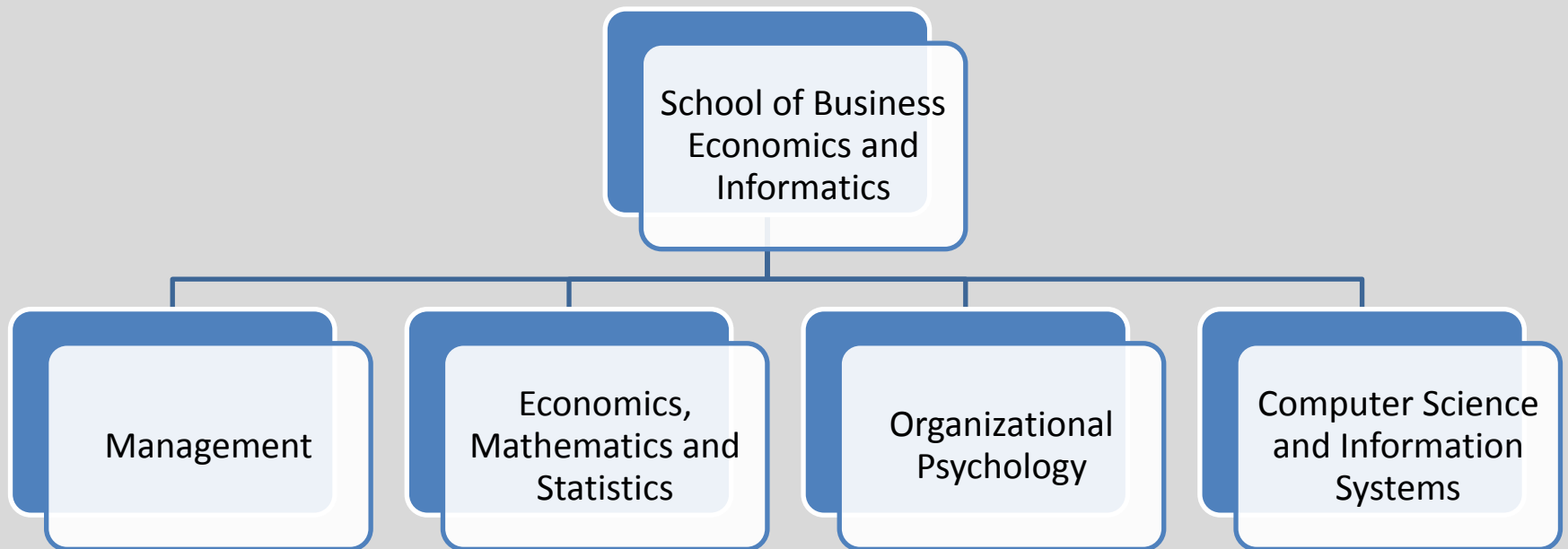
History of the Support Roles at Birkbeck

- Academic Support Office pilot in Law 2006
- Learning Co-ordinators in Management & Psychology 2007
- Learning Co-ordinators in all Schools 2010
- Learning Co-ordinator in Management role widened to School of BEI 2010
- Learning Co-ordinator for Maths & Statistics appointed to BEI 2013
- Sessional maths support officer appointed to the college (CTPLT) 2014

History of the School

- The School of BEI started in 2010
- Reorganization to respond to major funding changes (ELQ)
- Consolidation of departments

School of BEI



Support at Birkbeck

- Personal tutor
- Dedicated course administrator
- Module lecturer and/or module convenor
- Programme directors
- Counselling
- Disability services
- Careers

The Mathematics Support Role at BEI

- The role started at 2013
- Still the only school with full time mathematics support
- Clear demand
- Retention

Main challenges

- Communication to staff
- Communication to sts
- Attendance for workshops (generic vs. module specific; weekday, evening, weekend)
- e-mail support
- One-to-ones are in quite high demand

Main challenges

- Different demand of different modules, degrees
- Being highly skilled at both maths and stats at all levels
- Massively wide range of enquiries in stats: from basic descriptive to distribution theory
- Different packages used
- Often outside of comfort zone – needs to develop new skills/knowledge

Main challenges

- Skype and phone coaching (explaining maths over the phone)
- Almost no break: there's always someone preparing for a maths test or exam (3 term vs. yearlong modules)
- Pastoral care: grown adults in tears in the office
- Between academic and admin staff
- Needs to define own role

Main challenges

- Being creative
- Self-motivation
- Solitude, not really part of a team
- Taken seriously by academics

Rewards

- Students' constant positive feedback
- Students of other schools finding out about me and seeking my help
- James* and ABBA – algebra proofs
- Internal review – highly praised by students
- Students progressing onto masters from our GDE

Rewards

- Stimulating and challenging environment
- Many lovely supporting colleagues (Steve + feedback e-mail)
- Winning a Sigma funding for recording some video tutorials, great support from department
- Learning a lot of different subjects: management, economics, finance, computer science