Running a School Wide Maths and Stats Support Solo

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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

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

Birkbeck Student Body

- Total no of Students
- Part Time
- Full Time
- Under 25
- Over 25

2010/11: 12000
2011/12: 13000
2012/13: 12000
2013/14: 11000
2014/15: 10000
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

School of Business Economics and Informatics

Management

Economics, Mathematics and Statistics

Organizational Psychology

Computer Science and Information Systems
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