

Annual General Meeting 2019

5th September 2019, at 17:15, Dublin City University

Notice of Meeting and Associated Documentation

Agenda

1. Chair's Report
2. Secretary's Report
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Ratification of membership of Steering Group 2019/20
5. Future plans for the sigma Network

Chair's Report

It is now three years since the **sigma** Network was constituted as a professional association for people working in HE mathematics and statistics support. Despite no longer having external funding, we have been able to maintain a thriving programme of meetings, professional development and training events, resource creation and publications for the benefit of mathematics and statistics support practitioners across HE. This is due entirely to the hard work and commitment of our maths support "community of practice" and the willingness of institutions to facilitate and host meetings and otherwise enable their maths support staff to engage.

Specifically, the **sigma** Network would not exist constitutionally without the work of its Steering Group, and as Chair I would like to thank all SG members for their efforts and involvement over the past year to keep things running. In a few moments I will be inviting you to ratify the proposed Steering Group membership for 2019/20. But now I would like to record our appreciation of the contribution of three people who have recently stepped down from the Steering Group:

- Ruth Fairclough has been involved with **sigma** for many years, having been Midlands Regional Hub Co-ordinator during the HEFCE-funded period up to 2016. She helped organise numerous meetings and activities over the years, where her cheerfulness contributed to the success of the Network's events.
- Mohamed Mehbali, and his colleagues at LSBU, have always been staunchly supportive of the **sigma** Network. They promise to remain engaged, even though Mohamed has to take a break from the Steering Group in order to pursue other projects in the coming years.

- Michael Grove represented the IMA on the Steering Group earlier this year, and his wide experience and sage advice was always valued. The IMA is now represented by Duncan Lawson MBE, who I am sure needs no introduction to the work of **sigma**!

I would like to use this report to highlight some of the successes of the **sigma** Network over the past year:

- We started the year with 5 training events around the country (Greenwich, Leeds, Cardiff, Coventry and Essex) for new tutors working in mathematics and statistics support centres. We again deployed a “collaborative” model of new tutor training, whereby centres who know they will need to train their own new tutors invite new tutors from other local institutions to join the training, which makes each course viable and allows an interesting cross-fertilisation of experiences and ideas.
- One of the above tutor training days focused specifically on the needs of Statistics Support, highlighting the increasing demand for specialist support in this area.
- In addition to the tutor training courses above, we were able to organise 6 wider CPD events for maths support practitioners, hosted by the Universities of Coventry, Lancaster, Middlesex, Staffordshire, Chester and Bedfordshire. The topics included: Evaluation & Impact; Inclusive Teaching; Supporting Nurses with Drug Calculations; Online Maths Support; Using Free Analysis Software for Stats Support; Differentiation in Academic Skills Support.
- In total, over the past three years, we have organised 30 events which attracted 565 attendees from 80 institutions. This demonstrates considerable reach across the sector. All these courses have been free of charge, thanks to the generosity of the hosting institutions and the willingness of experts from the maths support community to share their expertise.
- Our Employability Special Interest Group (SIG) finished writing and released a collection of high quality resources to support students’ preparedness for taking employers’ psychometric tests (numeracy and non-verbal reasoning) as well as Numerical Professional Skills Tests for those going into teaching.
- Work continues to review, catalogue and secure a range of legacy resources for mathematics and statistics support, and enhance the accessibility of the mathcentre and statstutor websites (led by our Accessibility Special Interest Group)
- Focused training and resource development was provided for people working specifically in statistics support (by our Statistics Special Interest Group).
- A new Special Interest Group (SIG) to look at the Evaluation and Impact of mathematics and statistics support provision was established this year, and has started to meet and set out priorities.

We have maintained communication with the mathematics and statistics support community through:

- A mailing list that has grown to over 380 subscribers, including some international members;
- A Newsletter, published twice a year. Thanks to the editor, Hansa Bissoondeal, for maintaining the high production standards.
- A website www.sigma-network.ac.uk that is expanding and kept as up to date as possible.

In September 2018 we instigated a new Individual Membership scheme for the **sigma** Network, as promised at last year's AGM. It is important to be able to evidence a defined membership in order to meet the constitutional requirement of the **sigma** Network as a constituted professional association. At the time of writing the Individual Membership list comprises 105 people with a professional interest in HE mathematics and statistics support. Individual Membership remains free of charge, gives you advanced notification of **sigma** Network events and the right to vote at our AGM. It also indicates your professional commitment to the work of the **sigma** Network, and helps promote the importance of mathematics and statistics support more widely. If you or your colleagues have not already taken out Individual Membership, I commend this to you – there is a clear link on the homepage of our website www.sigma-network.ac.uk

We have developed our links with other bodies:

- The IMA, through continued co-opted membership on our Steering Group;
- The Association for Learning Development in Higher Education, and the LDHE Network, evidenced by our first joint Symposium in July 2019;
- The national Q-STEP project and the Nuffield Foundation;
- Newly established maths support centres at a number of universities in the Czech Republic, through the provision of training and consultancy for a second year;
- And not least, our friends in the Scottish Mathematics Support Network and the Irish Mathematics Learning Support Network who continue to actively support the **sigma** Network through co-opted membership of our Steering Group.

The **sigma** Network exists to support and represent the work of the growing HE mathematics and statistics support community. At the last AGM, I asked for suggestions of what we could do for you. Twelve suggestions were received (some overlapped, some were not specific to maths support). Over the past year we have been able to respond to the majority of those suggestions, through:

- An event dedicated to examining how the impact of maths support can be quantified and help raise our visibility with senior managers;
- A day to provide experience of statistics software tools, including free open resources;
- An event (with authoritative guest speakers) on how to provide online maths support to remote learners;
- Sharing experiences of statistics support, through a dedicated training day;
- A meeting dedicated to sharing experiences of supporting Nursing students;
- An event looking at differentiation in maths support, for example working with students of mixed ability and backgrounds.
- Professional recognition for maths support practitioners – our recently published resource MS-MAPS gives clear guidance on how to align maths support activity with the UK Professional Standards Framework for those working towards HEA Fellowship.

In summary, I believe that over the past three years the **sigma** Network has demonstrated that it has coped admirably with the transition from a funded project to a voluntary professional association with a defined membership and growing reach across the sector. In a moment I will ask this meeting to ratify the membership of the Steering Group to continue this work over the coming year, and also ask you all for your views of what the **sigma** Network could focus on in the next twelve months that could help you in your work in maths and statistics support.

For now, I would like to express my thanks to the Steering Group and everyone else who has contributed to the continued success of the **sigma** Network this year.

- *David Bowers*

Secretary's Report

A Secretary's report would typically cover matters relating to association membership. As just outlined in the Chair's report, we have this year implemented a formal scheme for Individual Membership which has been well taken up, with over 100 people signing up to show their support of the **sigma** Network, and new members continuing to come forward each month.

We thank Ed Southwood for his excellent work in his new role as co-opted Membership Officer.

In the future we might wish to extend a more formal membership arrangement to institutions as well as individuals, but only if this would have clear benefits and sufficient support. Nothing will be done without consultation and approval from a future AGM .

- *Mary Lorimer*

Treasurer's Report

This is a very brief report. Over the past 12 months, the **sigma** Network has been able to sustain its activities through the voluntary involvement of the Steering Group and other key players, with the support of their institutions. We are particularly grateful to Loughborough University for continuing to host our websites, and for the CETL-MSOR conference organisers to allow us to host our AGM here at Belfast. Also, we acknowledge the generosity of many institutions in hosting meetings and events on behalf of the **sigma** Network this past year (including Cardiff University, Coventry University, Lancaster University, Middlesex University, Staffordshire University, University of Bedfordshire, University of Chester, University of Essex, University of Greenwich, University of Leeds. Apologies for any omissions!)

Our bank balance (September 2019) stands at £624.80.

- Carried forward from September 2018: £624.80
- Income: zero
- Expenditure: zero

No formal audit was deemed necessary.

In the coming year we will be looking more actively at ways of generating income in order to be able to invest in future development work. Ideas of how to go about this - without risking the good will that currently exists within the maths support community - to sustain the ongoing work of the **sigma** Network would be welcome.

- *Chetna Patel*

Ratification of membership of Steering Group for 2019-20

Nominations received (together with institutional statement of support):

Hansa Bissoondeal	University of Essex
David Bowers	University of Essex
Emma Cliffe	University of Bath
Nick Goddard	University of Chester
Mark Hodds	Coventry University
Mary Lorimer	Loughborough University
Tony Mann	University of Greenwich
Ellen Marshall	Sheffield Hallam University
Alun Owen	Coventry University
Chetna Patel	De Montfort University
Robert Wilson	Cardiff University

Plus 4 co-opted members . . .

Representative of the IMA	Duncan Lawson
Representative of the SMSN	TBC
Representative of the IMLSN	TBC
Membership database officer (Bath)	Ed Southwood

Future Plans for the sigma Network

Suggestions and ideas that reflect the interests of HE mathematics and statistics support practitioners will be invited from the meeting, and may also be submitted in advance to chair@sigma-network.ac.uk