

## **Department of Statistics: Teaching plans in the event of a swine flu pandemic**

**Summary:** The overall message in Oxford in respect of the pandemic is that it is “business as usual”, even if staff/student numbers are lower than usual.

This paper sets out departmental teaching plans which may need to come into effect in the event of a swine flu pandemic within the University. MPLS has asked that we draft contingency plans and circulated a model from Biological Sciences. This plan draws on that model and, substantially, on the Mathematical Institute plan as statistics undergraduate teaching is almost all to joint degree students in Mathematics and Statistics, Mathematics, and other maths joint schools. The purpose of the outlined arrangements is to aim to ensure that students are not disadvantaged.

### **Lectures**

If students miss lectures, lecture still proceeds. We have a complete (or almost complete) set of online lecture notes, so if one or two lectures are cancelled we should note this and inform examiners, but no other action would be needed. If possible, cancelled lectures could be made up, each lecturer determines what is possible for them, so that students may attend as many lectures as possible.

Lecturers should inform the Academic Administrator ([academic.administrator@stats.ox.ac.uk](mailto:academic.administrator@stats.ox.ac.uk)) of any cancellations and she will maintain a central record and pass this to the respective exam board for consideration at the end of each term/start of the subsequent term. With the cancellation of one or two lectures, it is unlikely that exam topics would need to be curtailed. If 3 or 4 lectures are not given, examiners are advised to take this into account when approving/setting exam papers. In extreme circumstances it may be necessary to remove some examinable material: each exam board should decide based on the record of missed lectures and availability of online notes. Candidates should be notified of any changes to the exam syllabus via the usual Notices to Candidates.

### **Problems/practical classes**

If classes are cancelled, it may be possible for these to be made up within the same term or early in the subsequent term. It is possible that problem sheets may not all be marked if the TA is unwell, in which case solutions are available and the tutor(s) should give these to the affected class(es) and encourage students to assess their own work. The TA would need to notify the tutor of their incapacity so that the tutor could look through the work to identify what to focus on in the class. (The tutor is NOT expected to mark the work). If the tutor is unwell and the TA has marked the work, it is hoped that the TA would give a short class (normally, each TA demonstrates about one question per class). In this case the TA could informally give feedback to students on their progress and circulate solutions. Maintaining records of attendance in Minerva is important.

### **Tutorials**

Each College will have its own plan and over the course of the year it is envisaged that no student will be unduly disadvantaged. Prolonged or serious illness of candidates is reported to examiners via the Proctors as usual. College offices may wish to notify the Academic Administrator ([academic.administrator@stats.ox.ac.uk](mailto:academic.administrator@stats.ox.ac.uk)) of any of their students who miss two or more weeks of lectures and tutorials/classes but this would be picked up by the Proctors if no other mechanism is possible.

### **Illness of students**

Students should follow the University’s official guidance (<http://www.ox.ac.uk/flu>) and their College’s guidance. Students should report their illness to their College Senior Tutor/Dean. Online

notes should be studied and problem sheets tackled as students' health improves: this may be possible even if they are not well enough to attend classes/tutorials and lectures.

If they have missed several weeks of lectures/classes, examiners would be informed of this and may take this into account although it is unlikely that adjustments would be made to formal assessments. Colleges notify Proctors as usual and examiners are thus informed.

If deadlines for submission of assessed work are missed, the student's college should as usual apply to the Proctors for an extension. Examiners will take this into account (as per guidance from the Proctors) when deliberating classification.

We do not envisage swine flu being very different from other illnesses (although more people may be affected).

### **Exams**

Plans for the year are set by each exam board at the start of the academic year. We will not make changes to these now, but will remind setters that they should be aware that illness, or say the University having to temporarily close due to swine flu, may delay the checking of papers and they should allow extra time.

Before the exam period begins, each board would need to take into account the likely effect of illness of lecturers and whether candidates had been unduly disadvantaged. Overall, during the year, some timings of meetings might be delayed and external examiners may need to be informed, but over the whole cycle of the year, it is thought exams should be prepared and ready for Trinity Term.

Contingency plans would be necessary should a significant proportion of candidates be unable to take exams. If necessary, another set of papers might need to be prepared (in which case further assessors may need to be appointed to assist), although we would hope not to have to do this – in particular, for specialised papers this is unlikely to be feasible. If a sizable proportion of faculty and students are still unwell in TT, examinations could possibly be deferred.

### **Admissions**

For undergraduate admissions see the Mathematical Institute plan at <http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/current-students/undergraduates> as undergraduate admissions for Mathematics/Statistics/Computer Science are run jointly.

### **Support Staff**

The department has drawn up plans for support staff. (Under review.)

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05.11.2009