

Report of the subcommittee on IoT participation in the IMS

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The following report is a distillation of views put forward by the various contributors in the above list. It is hoped that this report will provoke discussion and perhaps some concrete initiatives that will result in increasing the profile of the society among mathematicians working in the IoT sector.

1. THE ROLE OF THE IMS

The IMS needs to clarify for itself who it represents and who it wants to represent. Also it needs to consider exactly what such representation entails. Terms like “Irish mathematicians” and “mathematicians living in Ireland” are quite vague. Here is a list of four different types of mathematics lecturers in the IoT sector.

1. Lecturers in the IoT sector who lecture mathematics (and possibly other subjects) but who do not have a degree in mathematics or do not regard themselves as mathematicians.
2. Mathematics lecturers in the IoT sector who are very well qualified mathematically but who are no longer active in mathematical research (possibly as a consequence of the absence of incentives to conduct research).
3. Mathematics lecturers in the IoT sector who are not active in mathematics research but who are active in research in mathematics education.
4. Mathematics lecturers who are active in mathematics research.

Does the IMS wish to represent and have membership from all four of these groups? Presumably from group 4 at least. If it is looking for membership from the other groups then it is much more difficult to target this more diverse cohort. Obviously focussing more on mathematics education would be a step towards making the IMS more relevant to Groups 1, 2 and 3 above. However we do realise that this may not be a choice that the society wants to make. Approximately one quarter of the talks at the September meeting are devoted to mathematics education and the remainder to mathematics research. This balance would have to alter to attract more mathematicians from Groups 1, 2 and 3 above. This would be a significant step, but may not be in the best

interests of mathematics in Ireland. The IMS does a good job on behalf of Irish research mathematics, but this good work may be diluted by broadening the remit of the IMS.

Another point to consider in this regard is the nature of the representation provided by the IMS. Many mathematics lecturers in the IoTs are not interested in pursuing a research career and view their job as primarily a teaching job. Such mathematicians will probably only be interested in the IMS insofar as it helps them, whether by advocating smaller class sizes, arguing for mathematics modules to be taught by mathematicians, advocating fair rules for advancement/promotion, etc. The society might consider whether or not it wants to broaden its remit to include such issues.

2. RESEARCH

Mathematicians working in the IoT can feel isolated from the larger mathematical research community. Most of the recent mathematicians recently recruited to the IoTs have PhD's, yet many are no longer active in research. While it is true that the higher teaching load in the IoT sector leaves less time for research, it is also surely true that many potentially excellent researchers are not receiving sufficient encouragement to continue their mathematical research. Perhaps the IMS can find ways to assist IoT mathematicians who so desire to remain active. Some specific suggestions in this regard are

- The IMS could take a leading role in developing a life long learning programme for mathematics lecturers working in the IoTs. Such a programme might involve IoT lecturers attending advanced courses at one of the universities. More ambitiously, the IMS might consider organising some workshops outside of the teaching periods aimed at bringing some of the IoT mathematicians back to research.
- Would the University mathematics departments consider the possibility of creating some fixed term contract positions for IoT mathematicians with a view to assisting those people to develop their research profiles? Clearly there is no place for such positions under current rules and legislation. The IMS could investigate ways in which such positions might be created and could perhaps encourage the relevant legislative bodies to allow the creation of such positions.