

## LETTERS

## Doctors' advice

It is equally both fascinating and annoying to discover how the *British Medical Journal* views the contribution of statistical work and statisticians.

Under the title 'Setting up a research project as an SHO, and getting it published: part 2', the *BMJ* careers website displays (November 2009) the following text:

'Once you have all the data collected, liaise with your statistician to get the "answer" to your question. You can now simply add in the data to the results section, add the discussion of your results to your discussion, and the paper is complete.'

This is not about making a cake, mending a bicycle tyre or pushing buttons to reserve a train ticket online.

Admittedly, the *BMJ* is only a publishing house but our learned professional body, the RSS, should continuously be warning members to avoid being under-estimated, under-valued and, presumably, under-charged for our contribution to the design, analysis and report-writing in a project.

Without mature statisticians there would be, at best, mediocre publications coming from such publishing houses.

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*Letters should be sent to John Logsdon, letters editor, at [letters@rss-manchester.org](mailto:letters@rss-manchester.org). Would all email correspondents please remember to include their town and country.*

MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES  
IN THE NATIONAL  
HE STEM PROGRAMME

In 2006 a group of mathematical organisations bid for and received a £3.3m grant from HEFCE to look at ways of increasing uptake to mathematical sciences in higher education (HE). The project was one of four initiated by HEFCE to increase uptake into strategically important and vulnerable subjects, the others being in physics, chemistry and engineering. The mathematical sciences project, the More Maths Grads project (MMG), has been working in areas of England and Wales as well as looking at the implications for HE. Details of the project and its outcomes are available at [www.moremathsgrads.org.uk](http://www.moremathsgrads.org.uk) and its resources have been incorporated into [www.mathscareers.org.uk](http://www.mathscareers.org.uk).

The four projects will now be integrated into a national HE STEM programme, a three-year initiative aiming to generate interest in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) among young people, enhance higher level skills in the workplace and increase accessibility of higher education courses in these subjects. Though focused around STEM, it will primarily support chemistry, engineering, mathematical sciences and physics, aimed at stimulating HE to attract more and wider entry and seek to build greater employer engagement and careers focus. The new programme, coordinated by the University of Birmingham, engages both with subject groups through the professional organisations and with universities through a group of 'spokes' based at the Universities of Bath, Birmingham, Bradford, Manchester Metropolitan, Southampton and Swansea (see [www.stemprogramme.com](http://www.stemprogramme.com)).

Building on the experience of the MMG project, a group of societies and others in the mathematical sciences have collaborated to oversee and direct the mathematical sciences input to the national HE STEM programme. The bodies comprise: the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications (IMA), the London Mathematical Society (LMS), the Heads of Departments of Mathematical Sciences

(HoDoMS), SIGMA, the HEA MSOR Network along with our own Society. The IMA will lead the consortium of mathematical bodies, chairing the Mathematical Sciences HE STEM Programme Board. The national programme will involve the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Institute of Physics and the Royal Academy of Engineering in those organisations' subject areas.

The mathematical sciences programme will address the following main themes:

- ◆ integration and diversity – drawing on and extending the work of MMG and others to widen and enlarge entry to mathematical sciences undergraduate courses and embed these into universities
- ◆ employer engagement – looking at employer needs in basic and high-level mathematics and statistics and in the application of scientific and mathematical knowledge in order to meet the government's wish to improve workforce skills, and exploring implications for the HE curriculum
- ◆ HE curriculum innovation – exploring current learning, teaching and assessment practices within mathematical sciences departments and disseminating good practice
- ◆ mathematical sciences support – establishing and extending a network for mathematical sciences support in universities, building on SIGMA's regional hub model, working together to share resources and experience.

The mathematical sciences programme will be coordinated from a new unit, which will contain staff employed on the above activities as well as a further staff member based at the MSOR in Birmingham. The three societies – the IMA, LMS and RSS – are considering how the unit might further be beneficial in working collaboratively on other activities in outreach and careers awareness, including some societies' activities being run out of, or linking, to the work of the unit. ■

Report by Martin Dougherty  
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