EDITORIAL

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Welcome to this issue of *MSOR connections*, the second of two issues featuring papers arising from presentations and workshops delivered at the CETL-MSOR Conference held at the University of Liverpool in September 2025. The conference brought together practitioners from the learning, teaching and support communities across Mathematics, Statistics and Operational Research, alongside those working in related disciplines such as Mathematics Education and Staff Development. The programme explored a wide range of topics including supporting students with statistics and data analysis, building student confidence with mathematics or statistics, transition of mathematics students into or out of higher education, initiatives to enhance student engagement or student community in mathematics and mathematics teaching and support in times of generative AI.

We apologise for the delay in publishing the work originally presented over a year ago, which was due to reasons beyond our control. However, we hope you enjoy reading these articles and that you find useful ideas that may guide and influence your practice.

The issue begins with three case studies which focus on ideas and initiatives to help improve access to and success on courses involving the study of mathematics. August and Coutts starts us off by reporting on a collaboration between Heriot-Watt University and University of Glasgow mathematics support services to develop a comprehensive diagnostic test based on Qualifications Scotland's (previously Scottish Qualifications Authority) Higher Mathematics, which is the essential foundation for most STEM degrees across Scottish Higher Education institutions. This is followed up by Forero Rincón et al. who describe work to improve the accessibility of a suite of online maths courses (developed pre-COVID) at SCQF levels 5, 6 and 7 (corresponding to the last 3 years of Scottish secondary school education). The final case study in this group is by Khalid that describes a two-year teaching initiative at Queen Mary University of London designed to improve mathematical confidence and competence among biochemistry, biology, zoology, and medical genetics students.

These are followed by four articles that explore approaches to skills development when studying mathematics or data science related subjects. The first of these is a case study by O'Sullivan that describes the embedding of algorithms and algorithmic thinking into a first-year undergraduate pure mathematics course at the London School of Economics (LSE). The next article by Buckingham (also a case study) then explores the use of annotation sheets, containing the algebraic steps of proofs or derivations with spaces left for students to add explanations, as a means of providing structured note taking which allows students to focus on the reasons behind the steps. The third by Solanki (also a case study) presents a novel learning activity, called Deeper Discussions, for developing such skills within mathematics education. This group of articles is then rounded off by a research article by Mott that explores the use of authentic assessment through real-world tasks to support the development of soft skills demanded by employers.

The issue is then completed by two articles that focus on statistics education. The first of these is a case study by Kuveke et al. which describes updates to the design, delivery and performance of a first-year undergraduate statistics subject (or course/unit/module), entitled Making Sense of Data, at La Trobe University, Australia. This is then followed by a workshop report from Riach et al. who

describe Workshops held in 2025 aimed to provide a dedicated space for experts to talk and, importantly, document their professional experiences and perspectives so that these ideas could be disseminated to the wider community of Higher Education statistics educators internationally.

We would like to say thank you to all these authors for sharing their work. *MSOR Connections* can only function if the community it serves continues to provide content, so we strongly encourage you to consider writing case studies about your practice, accounts of your research into teaching, learning, assessment and support, and your opinions on issues you face in your work. However, just as important are the many reviewers who continue to contribute hugely to the sharing of this good practice and experience, but often go unacknowledged – thank you too for all your support for the journal. We can all help with the functioning of the journal by volunteering as a peer reviewer. When you register with the journal website, there is an option to tick to register as a reviewer. It is very helpful if you write something in the 'reviewing interests' box, so that when we are selecting reviewers for a paper, we can match you with articles we feel you would be comfortable reviewing. To submit an article or register as a reviewer, just go to https://journals.gre.ac.uk/index.php/msor and look for *MSOR Connections*.