

Editorial

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This issue opens with two articles offering an insight into the mechanics of providing mathematics and statistics support in higher education. First, an article by the Scottish Mathematics Support Network reports on a detailed study of practice in institutions in Scotland, with comparison to similar practice elsewhere in the UK and Ireland. This is followed by an article from the **sigma** Centre at Coventry, giving an overview of the activities of one of the better-resourced provisions with some really interesting ideas that could work in other centres.

Following this, Crisan and Rodd provide an interesting account of designing a short course for graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) that takes account of the specific requirements to teach mathematics that can be overlooked in a generic 'new to teaching' course (I am trying hard not to say 'training course', for reasons that will become clear when you read the article).

The next paper is from Hamburg and offers an interesting insight into the mathematical preparedness of incoming STEM (in German, MINT) undergraduates. Barbas and Schramm describe attempts to test for a pre-agreed set of basic mathematical knowledge and skills and provide extra learning for students to address weaknesses diagnosed by the test. I was particularly interested to hear that attempts have been made by a group representing both sides of the school-to-university transition to agree a set of minimum assumed knowledge for the start of a STEM degree programme.

I am particularly pleased by the contribution of David Smith on his views about methods for publishing mathematics lecture notes in ways that can be more adaptable to users who don't just want a standard PDF. I saw on Twitter a link to a blog post David had written on this topic and asked if he would be willing to adapt it for an opinion piece in *MSOR Connections*. He has been able to incorporate feedback he had received from readers of his blog post and further feedback from the peer review process, resulting in a really interesting piece. I think it is very worthwhile for practitioners to have a space like *Connections* in which to share opinions about their practice. We have always had an article category 'Opinion', but perhaps we haven't received as many submissions to it as we might hope for.

The final two articles are something I am trying out, that I hope you will join in with. I attended a meeting of the **sigma** Network that discussed storage and use of legacy resources which were created by projects that are no longer operating. There is a wealth of such resources out there (I give a little history in the introduction piece), but I am not sure how likely these are to be discovered without signposting, so I propose a series in *MSOR Connections* to bring attention to favourites. To kick things off, I wrote a brief review of a resource developed under the National HE STEM Programme that aims to assist those looking to include industrial problems in the mathematics undergraduate curriculum. You are strongly encouraged to consider writing a review of a favourite legacy resource yourself.

You may be aware that the editors of *MSOR Connections* take turns to edit issues of the journal. I am particularly grateful to my fellow editor Tony Mann for arranging the anonymous review of the two submissions of mine which were included in this issue, since I could not arrange this myself.

This is the first issue of *MSOR Connections* since Noel-Ann Bradshaw left the editorial team, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her substantial part in reviving the journal and

finding a home for it, supported by **sigma**, at the University of Greenwich, and her work for three years as editor.

I will end with a call for assistance. *MSOR Connections* can only function if the community it serves continues to provide content, so I 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.

Another important way readers can help with the functioning of the journal is 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 know what sorts of articles you feel comfortable reviewing.

To submit an article or register as a reviewer, just go to <http://journals.gre.ac.uk/> and look for *MSOR Connections*.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as I have putting it together.