

Reference Group Meeting I 10/Sept/2019

full attendance

i. Book

Our first topic of discussion was the suitability of the book. It was noted that it was good as a reference for theorems and how it contained many simple exercises. The question was raised as to whether it is used by the Department for any module that is a pre-requisite for Matematikk 4N, or for any later courses, due both to its bulk and the fact that 4N only covered a minority of the topics in the book.

ii. Mathematics

It was mentioned that lectures were proceeding quickly. However, the level of mathematics in the book was not considered too burdensome. One member explicitly requested that more theoretical aspects of the module be excised, especially as it concerns proofs, to be replaced with examples, as only those were deemed useful. This was met with mild partial assent.

iii. Lectures

With the implementation of video recording in F1, we reviewed the technical aspects of that technology and it was agreed that the video quality was acceptable to all. Document camera was preferred over blackboard for visibility reasons. SMART board had the draw-back that it compelled too much skipping back-and-forth. However, there is now a way to display a current and previous slide simultaneously. It was requested (and this is being done) that lectures begin with a précis of the same, as well as a recapitulation of the previous lecture. Scanned notes were requested, and this request granted consent. These are now in circulation.

An interesting question arose as to whether lecturers should regurgitate examples in the book or be uncircumscribed thereby, as students are able themselves to read. No conclusion was reached.

iv. Exercises

These were roundly judged to be too difficult. Rooms are too small and TAs too few to attend to all who sought help at exercise sessions. Explicit requests were: (1) make exercises more like examination questions, (2) assign more, and simpler exercises "that are the same", understood to mean rote calculation exercises where "formulae were applied", and (3) set (probably past) examination questions as exercises. It was pointed out that the book contained just such exercises as requested in (2) (indeed, cf. sec. i -- comments on book). Nevertheless, it was requested that they be explicitly assigned. It was agreed that there can be one mildly more challenging problem, but it should come with hints. Also requested (and assented to) was that an explicit threshold for approval of exercises be indicated.

v. Miscellanies

Students asked finally that the course be better and more explicitly subdivided/structured. However, it was also pointed out early in the meeting that this is done on the course web-page. Students would like to have hyperlinks on the "Lecture Plan" page, and not to have to refer to sections in the text. It was also noted that "students are obsessed with resources", and of them, "the more the better".

minutes by Peter Pang