



This was the second joint INI/ICMS Correspondents Day and the first to be held in Edinburgh. It was therefore particularly fitting that it took place at the new home of ICMS in the fabulously located Bayes Centre. The weather in Edinburgh was cold and sunny and the Correspondents fully appreciated the spectacular views of Arthur's Seat, Salisbury Crags and beyond that can be enjoyed from the warmth of ICMS's new home. This was a perfect backdrop for the informal conversations and networking opportunities over lunch and the breaks.

Turnout was modest compared to the previous year's event in Cambridge, with many Correspondents saying that they were unable to travel due to work commitments; thanks go to all Correspondents who made the trip to Edinburgh, and also to Katie Blaney (EPSRC) and David Brown (STFC) who represented UKRI. A full list of participants is appended.

The formal part of the meeting started with a welcome from Paul Glendinning (PG), Scientific Director of ICMS and Jane Walker (JW), Centre Manager of ICMS, and from David Abrahams (IDA), Director of INI. IDA reminded attendees that "INI and ICMS are UK infrastructure for the mathematical sciences. These are your institutes". He went on to introduce Katie Blaney, EPSRC, and Sir David Wallace, a past director of the INI and current Chair of the ICMS board who were both in attendance. He noted his formal thanks to Ulrike Tillmann (University of Oxford) for her role as interim Chair of Correspondents and introduced Niall McKay (University of York) who has been selected as the new Chair of Correspondents.

IDA and PG said that the focus of the day would be the role of Correspondents and what members of the Network might want to gain from such days. They hoped to learn from the meeting: how the institutes could better engage with the mathematical sciences community; how the institutes could better serve the community; whether the community feels that its voice is heard by the institutes; and preferences for the focus of such days in the future.

IDA gave a brief tribute to the late Sir Michael Atiyah (1929 – 2019) and his central role in the founding of INI before going on to speak about the current work of the Institute. He noted the breadth of programming at INI and observed that the recent rebranding of its Turing Gateway to Mathematics to the Newton Gateway to Mathematics, was a reflection of the impact and engagement that go hand in hand with most INI activities. IDA commented that the schedule for forthcoming years reflected the healthy shape of the community. He said that INI has ambitious plans for expansion and is that it is actively fundraising to build an extension that would include a new lecture theatre, additional working space, and extra meeting rooms.

Paul Glendinning (PG) spoke about himself and his role at ICMS. He said that ICMS's main focus is on research workshops and that it can enable mathematicians to respond quickly and bring people together with a plan to do something. He went on to outline forthcoming activity at ICMS and to discuss funding opportunities available including for research workshops, strategic workshops, Research in Groups, and International Research in Groups. He underlined the point that ICMS can be flexible, if people have an idea for activity here they should just ask. In addition ICMS can act as host if people have their own funding to run events.

The first invited speaker of the day, Professor Helen Sang of the Roslin Institute (RI), University of Edinburgh, presented a stimulating talk on *Equality and Diversity Initiatives* describing in detail how she led RI's successful application for a Gold Athena SWAN Award in 2017. She spoke of the

importance and impact of Athena SWAN and the approaches RI had taken regarding all aspects of equality and diversity. She noted that equality isn't just for women it is about ensuring that everyone has the same opportunities and that all initiatives should be inclusive: for instance rather than having an Equality Committee, RI has a Career Development Committee. Professor Sang reiterated the point that small changes add up and do make a difference, citing a number of examples including: holding training courses on site so as not to exclude people; the use of role models; projecting the right image to the world via marketing material and websites; and providing all parents with clear information about support schemes available to them. She said that change must come from the top and that any cultural change can only happen when there is active involvement from senior management. She emphasised the importance of positive action rather than positive discrimination and said that her key message was that the steps that they had taken to address equality and diversity had had a positive impact across the whole Institute. Professor Sang concluded that there is no room for complacency and that there is always room for improvement and new initiatives. She and the Roslin Institute staff worked hard to achieve their Gold Award and they continue to work hard to ensure that they retain it.

The session following the tea break was led by Prof Niall MacKay (NM), Head of Department at York and the new Chair of Correspondents. He gave some detail on his own background (he was organiser in 2007 of a six month programme at INI on *Strong Fields, Integrability and Strings*) and outlined how he would like to work with the Correspondents. NM noted that there were no representatives at the meeting from Cambridge, Oxford, Bristol, Warwick, UCL and asked how can we increase participation. There was discussion amongst the whole group as to the role of the correspondents and the information the institutes provide.

NM set out the following questions for Correspondents to consider:

- How can INI and ICMS best serve the community?
- How do the institutes correspond with the correspondents?
- How should correspondents transmit details of INI-ICMS activity to their departments?
- What is the role of this meeting? How often and what should happen on the day?

The participants then broke into small discussion groups to address these questions. The groups were given some time on their own before being joined by staff from the institutes who contributed to the discussions.

Notes from the break out session discussions are given below:

- *Correspondents and Correspondents Day*
 - Why are so few people here? Is it cost? Timing?
 - Suggested May or June rather than January.
 - Clarity required on expenses and accommodation etc.
 - Are substitutes allowed if named Correspondent can't make it? Yes.
 - What about virtual meetings? No thank you.
 - Format of meeting:
 - Make sure there is a maths talk
 - Include dinner and offer of overnight accommodation for those who wish.
 - A job description for Correspondents is required:
 - What do they do and why?
 - What are the perks of being a Correspondent?
 - Introduce a (renewable) term of office for Correspondents and an emphasis on appointing more female Correspondents..
- *Communication*
 - Correspondents requested:
 - Printed posters advertising forthcoming events and Calls for Proposals

- A presentation (+ crib sheet) about each institute so that Correspondents can tell their colleagues what the institutes do and what is available
- FAQ for Correspondents
- o PG and IDA should visit departments more frequently.
- o Tell Correspondents more about things that are relevant, for example: ECR events; Post-doc events
- o INI emails were praised.
 - Would like Correspondents only emails, 4 times a year with short, sharp messages about forthcoming opportunities, eg submission deadlines and opportunities
- *Activities*
 - o Streaming of talks/events very highly valued
 - o Suggestions of proposal writing workshops, how to write maths, support for ECRs.
 - o There should be ECR representation on workshop organising committees.
 - o Activities should be relevant at all levels
 - Comment that ICMS events are more accessible for ECRs on short term contracts as they aren't planned so far ahead.
 - There should be more one-off events that bring the mathematical sciences community together eg Women in Mathematics, Young Researchers in Mathematics.

The day ended with an inspiring talk by Professor Bernd Schroers, Heriot-Watt University, on *Sir Michael Atiyah and Mathematical Physics*. Professor Schroers, who had himself collaborated with Sir Michael over a number of years, delivered a fascinating and personal talk highlighting key individuals who influenced Atiyah, including Einstein, Maxwell and Dirac, Atiyah's "heroes", as well as those that he collaborated with including Ed Witten, Nick Manton and Isadore Singer. He paid tribute also to Sir Michael's close friend Andrew Ranicki whose home was often used as a meeting point for many of the leading mathematical physicists of the era.

After the formal end of the day, a number of Correspondents enjoyed further informal networking over a drink and some canapes and a few were even able to stay on and enjoy a dinner and more conversation to wrap up the day.

Thanks go to everyone who was able to come to this most enjoyable event. Having taken note of comments made, we anticipate that the next Correspondents Day will be held in Cambridge in May 2020.

Further details of the programme and a list of attendees is given below.

Programme

- 12:00-12:45 Lunch
- 12:45-13:30 *Welcome and introductions.* **Paul Glendinning** (ICMS), and **David Abrahams** (INI).
- 13:30-14:30 *Equality and diversity initiatives.* **Helen Sang** (Roslin Institute).
- 14:30-15:00 Tea and Coffee
- 15:00-15:40 *Engaging with the community* **Niall MacKay** (York), Chair of Correspondents.
- 15:40-16.10 Break out discussion groups
- 16:10-16:30 Reporting back from groups and next steps
- 16:30-17:00 *Michael Atiyah and mathematical physics.* **Bernd Schroers** (Heriot-Watt),

List of attendees

David	Abrahams	Isaac Newton Institute
Dan	Aspel	Isaac Newton Institute
Wolfram	Bentz	University of Hull
Katie	Blaney	UK Research and Innovation (EPSRC)
Horatio	Boedihardjo	University of Reading
David	Brown	UKRI UK Research and Innovation (STFC)
Paul	Glendinning	International Centre for Mathematical Sciences
Michael	Grinfeld	University of Strathclyde
Robin	Henderson	Newcastle University
Richard	Hibbs	Operational Research Society
Ostap	Hryniv	Durham University
Antal	Jarai	University of Bath
William	Lee	University of Huddersfield
Niall	MacKay	University of York
Shahn	Majid	Queen Mary University of London
Christie	Marr	Isaac Newton Institute
Alexandre	Martin	Heriot-Watt University
Ben	Mestel	The Open University
Frank	Neumann	University of Leicester
Ulrich	Pennig	Cardiff University
Helen	Sang	Roslin Institute
Bernd	Schroers	Heriot-Watt University
Bernd	Schulze	Lancaster University
Victor	Shrira	Keele University
Samantha	Skehel	Isaac Newton Institute
Kathryn	Stewart	Edinburgh Napier University
Ivan	Todorov	Queen's University Belfast
Jane	Walker	International Centre for Mathematical Sciences
David	Wallace	International Centre for Mathematical Sciences