



Media release

14 August 2008

Excellent increases for AS/A level Mathematics and Further Mathematics

Both Mathematics and Further Mathematics have built upon last year's increased entry with further significant rises.

- AS Mathematics numbers are up from 77387 to 85413, a 10.4% increase.
- A level Mathematics numbers are up from 60093 to 64593, a 7.5% increase.
- AS Further Mathematics numbers are up from 7426 to 8945, a 20.5% increase.
- A level Further Mathematics numbers are up from 7872 to 9091, a 15.5% increase.

These increases are an excellent reward for the efforts of the various initiatives set up to promote and support mathematics. The continued very large increases in Further Mathematics numbers show the effectiveness of targeting support for Further Mathematics through the Further Mathematics Network.

Since the Further Mathematics Network was set up in academic year 2004/5, Further Mathematics numbers have increased by 125% at AS level and 59% at A level. Students with Further Mathematics qualifications are especially welcomed by universities because their extended mathematics knowledge means they are very well prepared for degree courses in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

The Further Mathematics Network is particularly keen to widen participation in Further Mathematics. It has enabled many students to take Further Mathematics from schools and colleges that previously would not have been able to offer it. Much has been achieved and the figures are very encouraging, but there is still a great deal of work to be done to ensure that all students who would benefit from studying Further Mathematics are aware of it and realise they have access to tuition.

Charlie Stripp, Leader of the Further Mathematics Network said:
"These figures are fantastic news. Mathematics and Further Mathematics are recognised as amongst the most demanding subjects at A level, as well as being amongst the most useful. It is excellent news that increasing numbers of young people are rising to the challenge and choosing to study mathematics at this level. Students with these qualifications are well-prepared



to study Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects at university and to go on to make a valuable contribution to the UK economy.”

However, he adds a note of caution:

“Although this is excellent news, it is vital that we continue to support mathematics so that these increases can be sustained and built upon into the future.”

Professor Adrian Smith, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education (ACME) said:

“These increases in numbers are very encouraging and the Further Mathematics Network is to be congratulated for its contribution. We must now ensure that other key policies to support the take-up of mathematics in schools and colleges are implemented as soon as possible to reinforce and sustain the current positive trend. In particular, we must move quickly to the introduction of a double mathematics award at GCSE to appropriately recognise and reward the importance and challenge of the subject.”

Professor Celia Hoyles, Director of the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics (NCETM) said:

“I am delighted with the news of the significant upturn in take up in mathematics post-16. This is so important for us all as individuals as well as for the country. Maybe we are - at last - seeing a shift in our culture where no longer will it be socially acceptable to say that ‘I can’t do mathematics - and I am even proud of it.’ In order for this upwards trend to continue, we must now try to ensure that we have enough well-qualified and confident teachers of mathematics post-16. The NCETM is looking forward to working with partners to find ways to achieve this objective.”

Sir Peter Williams, author of the independent review in June on the teaching of mathematics in early years and primary schools, commented :

“I welcome these positive trends in A and AS level mathematics. It is vital that at all ages, uptake in mathematics is strengthened and that we encourage a ‘can do’ culture in the subject. The importance of mathematics to young people’s careers and to the economy in general cannot be overstated”.

Andrew Ramsay, Executive director of the Engineering Council, ECUK, said:

“We are delighted with the latest evidence of increasing interest in Further Mathematics. Maths skills are fundamental to the success of professional engineers – Further Mathematics A level provides a sound foundation from which to study engineering at university.”



Notes for Editors

1. The Further Mathematics Network is a government-funded initiative, supported by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and is managed by Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI), an independent charity that supports mathematics education. It was set up following a successful 5 year pilot project that was developed by MEI and funded by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation.
2. The Further Mathematics Network involves schools, colleges and universities working together collaboratively to widen opportunities for students. It uses a blended learning strategy that employs intensive tutorial input alongside independent study that is supported by extensive, purpose-written, online resources. This model is proving very successful and, suitably adapted, could be used by other high-value shortage subjects such as physics and modern languages.
3. Further Mathematics reinforces the content of the standard AS/A level Mathematics and introduces students to fundamental concepts such as complex numbers and matrices, which are vital for many mathematics related degrees.
4. Case studies of students who have been able to study Further Mathematics because of the Network are available; please contact Janice Richards on 01225 774777 or by email at janicerichards@fmnetwork.org.uk.

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For detailed background information on the Further Mathematics Network, please see www.fmnetwork.org.uk.