



Media release

11 August 2008

For immediate release

Great news for mathematics as A Level Mathematics and Further Mathematics entries continue to grow

When the A level results are published later this week, both Mathematics and Further Mathematics will show healthy growth with substantial increases in the numbers of students completing these prestigious qualifications.

This is excellent news, particularly following the publication of a number of reports this year, which have highlighted the importance to the UK economy of young people highly skilled in mathematics.

The increase in A level Mathematics is expected to be between 5% and 10% and for Further Mathematics around 15%. This will mean that A level Mathematics numbers will be at their highest point for 15 years and that Further Mathematics numbers will have increased by about 60% at A level and well over 100% at AS level since 2004.

The Further Mathematics Network was set up in 2004/5 to support and promote Further Mathematics. Tuition is now available to all students, even if some schools and colleges cannot teach Further Mathematics themselves, and more university courses are beginning to specify Further Mathematics as a requirement, or encourage students to take it.

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 more information please contact Charlie Stripp on 07771 864 507 or by email at charlie.stripp@mei.org.uk. He will be available in London for media interview when the results are published on 14 August.