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Academy for the Mathematical Sciences:
Spring/Summer 2023 Consultation

Executive Summary of the Responses to the Consultation

December 2023

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The Academy for the Mathematical Sciences (AcadMathSci) ran a Consultation Period from 26 April to 30 June 2023 to seek feedback from the community on AcadMathSci's [Progress Update and Consultation Document](#). This included five Consultation Events that collectively attracted approximately 250 participants (involving approximately 200 individuals) and an online Consultation Questionnaire, which received 73 responses. Attendees and respondents included academics, teachers, educators, mathematical scientists in industry and government, knowledge exchange facilitators, and maths communicators amongst others, from across the UK, including a broadly representative proportion of early career mathematical scientists.

The videos from the five Consultation Events will be made available shortly. The Events' format was a presentation by the chair of the proto-Academy, followed by Questions & Answers. A list of the Questions asked is available [here](#).

In addition to an initial question on the proposed vision of the Academy and a final question asking for comments, the Consultation Questionnaire included questions on: Policy; Advocacy; Education; Implementation of the Mathematical Sciences; Academies and Societies; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Early Career Mathematical Scientists; Governance; Fellowship; and Finance.

The responses to the survey demonstrated strong support for the establishment of an Academy from across the mathematical sciences community.

In the five Consultation Events, only one questioner led the panel to think they were opposed to the possible Academy. Responses to the Consultation Questions demonstrated strong support from the mathematical sciences community for the creation of the AcadMathSci. Stakeholders across academia, industry, government, education, and research sectors expressed enthusiasm for the initiative, highlighting in particular the current fragmented landscape of the mathematical sciences in the UK and of the Academy's potential to redress that.

Common Themes

Timeliness and Importance: The establishment of the Academy was deemed a timely and important initiative, particularly for Early Career mathematical scientists, and it was widely welcomed as a solution to unify the fragmented mathematical landscape.

Engagement and Ethos: There was a widespread appreciation for the engagement efforts made by the Academy with learned societies, and the focus on application and transferability of mathematical knowledge was also well-received. The commitment to a unified voice for the mathematical sciences in the UK is seen as a positive step.

Community involvement: A recurring theme was to ensure there is a way to enable the meaningful involvement of **all** members of the mathematical sciences community in the Academy, especially those who are not either Fellows or Trustees.

EDI Considerations: Many stakeholders emphasised the importance of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) considerations throughout the mathematical science community, and about broadening participation in mathematical sciences by people of all genders and all backgrounds. Many responses emphasised the importance of inclusivity in the Fellowship election process. A range of mechanisms for ensuring this were suggested (see below).

Finance and Funding: There was consensus on exploring all possible sources of funding, including ethical considerations when accepting donations. However, caution was advised to ensure that external funding does not undermine existing activities.

Areas where Opinions Diverged

Fellowship Model and Criteria: Diverse opinions emerged regarding the proposed Fellowship model with various suggestions including a call for clear communication of the benefits, lessons from other institutes, and possible separate categories of Fellowship. Opinions varied on criteria such as seniority/experience, demonstrable contributions to the community, and peer respect.

Definition of Excellence: Different sectors and stakeholders offered varied perspectives on what constitutes “excellence” and concerns were raised about the subjectivity and exclusivity of the term.

EDI Among Fellows: Many suggestions for ensuring equity, diversity, and inclusiveness among Fellows were offered, with a number of respondents emphasising transparent selection criteria and diverse selection panels. Other strategies suggested ranged from quotas to proactive promotion, alternative selection models, and proactive involvement of learned societies and networks. Some reservations about balancing representation with excellence were expressed.

Specific Activities and Remit: Opinions diverged on specific activities the Academy should pursue, with a call for more detailed information on certain areas. Expanding the remit to include the history of mathematics and addressing societal challenges were suggested.

Of the 73 responses, 71 were in the form of responses to the consultation questions, while 2 were separate letters from individuals not aligned with the consultation questions. 8 were submitted on behalf of an organisation (including ORS and RSS), one was from a collective of 19 signatories focussing on EDI, and the remaining 62 were questionnaire responses from individuals representing their personal views.