

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS

Main Office (617) 495-2171
Undergraduate Studies Coordinator (617) 495-9116
Graduate Studies Coordinator (617) 496-5211
Fax (617) 495-5132



Science Center 325
One Oxford Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138
www.math.harvard.edu

August 15, 2012

Review of the Implementation Report of the Open University

I want to thank the faculty and administration of the Open University for their report on the implementation of the committee's recommendations. In all reviews of this nature, the most important goal is to stimulate an internal review of departmental practices. I am convinced that this has occurred.

Some of the recommendations of the committee were at a national level, such as the adjustment of level of the material covered in first year courses and the consideration of a national program for graduate students. Although these were not adopted as a whole, I note that several institutions have added preparatory courses for entering students, and that the separate graduate programs are now coordinated under the auspices of the Israel Mathematical Union. Both represent steps in the right direction.

The Open University has some special issues, as it does not offer a graduate program. I was delighted to hear that the labor issues with the tutors were successfully resolved. I think the introduction of the new website Mathematics at the OUI will be helpful to entering students, and may even have an effect on the high drop-out rate without modification of the material covered in the introductory courses. (If not, I would recommend that they reconsider our recommendation to rethink this curriculum.) The department views its recent increase in senior faculty as a first step towards the introduction of a Masters program. I would urge them to stay focused on their special mission of providing high quality mathematical education to the wide range of undergraduates who cannot attend traditional University programs.

Sincerely yours,

Benedict H. Gross
Leverett Professor of Mathematics
Harvard University