

Statistics in the GCSE curriculum

The MEI position

- The content of statistics at GCSE should continue to be included in GCSE Mathematics since it is only there that there is any hope of its being properly taught.
- The idea that this content is now somehow distorting GCSE mathematics teaching is historically incorrect as will be seen by comparing with the old SMP and MEI O Levels.
- It may, however, be that statistics is somewhat over-weighted in the assessment of GCSE Mathematics.
- However, the coursework is not well placed within mathematics but should be done in context in other subjects. Its assessment should not form part of GCSE Mathematics but be carried out according to criteria relevant to those subjects, with the possibility of contributing to their GCSE grading.
- There needs to be more interaction between mathematics departments, who are teaching the statistics, and those subjects that are using it.
- As a first step in this direction, we recommend a study involving those responsible for the GCSE curricula in all relevant subjects (including mathematics), leading to a defined statistics core for GCSE Mathematics.
- The study would provide a comprehensive set of examples of where and how the various techniques are used. Future GCSE Mathematics syllabuses would be based on it. The study would also define the statistics available for use in other subjects, including their coursework.
- As a next stage a mechanism should be found for mathematics departments to provide leadership for teachers in other subjects. The report of the study could form a suitable formal starting point.