

FMSP Wales Media release 26th August 2011

Taking Mathematics Further in Wales

This year's Further Mathematics results are a real cause for celebration in Wales. The proportion of Mathematics students who sat Further Mathematics A-level reached 9.2%, which is the highest result ever and also the fastest annual growth in Further Mathematics in the last eight years. Compared with last year A-level Further Mathematics student numbers have increased by nearly 29% from 240 to 309.

Further Mathematics allows students who have mathematical talent to build a more solid foundation, helping them to attain their potential in their later education, which may lead to careers in scientific and technological areas, economics, actuarial science and finance. A recent publication by the Russell Group of Universities highlights the importance of the Further Mathematics AS/A level for many university courses. Leighton Andrews earlier commented: "Further Maths is held in high regard by Higher Education Institutions across the UK and contributes to the growth of the knowledge economy in Wales as a whole."

Compared with 2009:

- A-level Mathematics numbers are up from 3165 to 3375 (6.6%).
- A-level Further Mathematics numbers are up from 250 to 309 (23.6%).
- The proportion of Mathematics students who sat Further Mathematics is up from 7.1% to 9.2%.

Compared with 2004:

- A-level Mathematics numbers are up from 2487 to 3375 (35.7%).
- A-level Further Mathematics numbers are up from 138 to 309 (124%).
- The proportion of Mathematics students who sat Further Mathematics is up from 5.5% to 9.2%.

Since 2004 AS Further Mathematics certification has been growing every year and reached 289 in 2011 (207% increase from 2004).

From July 2010 schools and colleges in Wales have been supported in teaching Further Mathematics. Funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, the Further Mathematics Support Programme (FMSP) Wales offers tuition and access to online resources to support the teaching of Further Mathematics. It is currently in a pilot developmental phase (from September 2010 to July 2013) and tuition is offered in South West Wales.

15 state-funded schools and colleges reported to the FMSP Wales that they expect an increase in the number of students studying Further Mathematics A-level by an average of 55% and AS-level by an average of 78% next year. More than 70 schools in Wales (30% of all state maintained colleges and 11-18 schools) have registered with the Programme in 2010/11. Interest in Further Mathematics is definitely growing in Wales and half of all tuition enquiries that the FMSP Wales received last year were from schools whose students received conditional offers from universities and were required to study Further Mathematics.

"I am very grateful to the FMSP Wales for the opportunity to study Further Maths. I enjoy the challenge of Maths and am planning to study it at Cambridge University. When I was told that I need to take Further Mathematics at least AS level I was not sure what to do as my school currently does not offer it. I expressed my concerns to my Maths teacher at school and she suggested the FMSP and then got in touch with them. The process was extremely quick, and I would like to thank everyone involved in that process, my teacher, Mrs Parsons and my new tutor and of course my school, Gowerton Comprehensive. I now meet my FMSP Wales tutor every two weeks. It's very different from A-level Maths as a lot of work has to be done at home and in spare time, however if you enjoy Maths and want to do well, this is a small sacrifice! I do enjoy Further Maths as it is challenging yet rewarding but still a lot of fun." Jonathon Mateo, Gowerton Comprehensive.

Although Welsh Universities do not require Further Mathematics at present, universities recognise the benefits of studying Further Mathematics. *"We do not require students to have A-level Further Mathematics to gain a place on our degree schemes. However we encourage maths applicants to study Further Maths because it gives them a better foundation for their studies and makes the transition to university level mathematics easier".*
Cardiff University, School of Mathematics.

The first FMSP Wales students will be taking their AS Further Mathematics exams next year.

Notes for Editors

1. Further Mathematics reinforces the content of the standard AS/A level Mathematics and introduces students to important topics such as complex numbers and matrices, which are vital for many mathematics-related degrees.
2. Supported with funding totalling £440,000 from the Welsh Assembly Government over a three year period, the FMSP Wales (www.furthermathematics.org.uk/wales.php) is being delivered by the Wales Institute of Mathematical and Computational Sciences (WIMCS).
3. All schools and colleges in Wales can access extensive and high quality online resources from the FMSP Wales free of charge. In South West Wales, the FMSP draws together schools, colleges, universities and local authorities to support existing teaching of AS/A level Further Mathematics as well as to encourage others to provide their students with the opportunity to study it, either "in house" or through tuition provided via the FMSP Wales.
4. WIMCS (www.wimcs.ac.uk) is a partnership of the universities of Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff, Glamorgan and Swansea.
5. The FMSP Wales is supported by Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI) which has operated a similar programme (www.furthermaths.org.uk) in England for the past 7 years. MEI is an independent charity that supports mathematics education (www.mei.org.uk).
6. For more information, please contact the FMSP Wales on 01792 606609 or by email at: infoFMSPWales@wimcs.ac.uk.

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