

Summary of feedback on SMSTC opening symposium Perth, 2016

This is a digest of what students wrote on the feedback forms at the end of the symposium. I've included here only the points that were made by two or more people.

Something about the symposium that could be improved

- The projector screen was hard to see (4 people wrote this)
Understood. We usually have the whole symposium at the Dewars Centre, where we did the curling, but they were booked up this year. From the moment we arrived at the Mercure this year, it was clear that the visibility and crowded seating were problems; however, there was no apparent way to improve the situation. We will take this factor into account when deciding where to run the symposium next year.
- Have more team-building events, group discussion, or activities like the marking exercise (3)
We're glad these are popular, and we'll try to include more of this kind of thing next year.
- The food at lunch (3)
I raised this with the Mercure staff even before I saw this feedback! The Mercure representative said that in fact, the menu was about to change. A further problem was the lack of signage regarding allergens, vegetarian and halal food, etc. Again, we'll take this problem into account when choosing next year's venue.
- Have more curling (3)
That would be nice! We're looking into it.
- Crowded seating in the auditorium (2)
See the response to the feedback on the projector screen.
- Various points about the SMSTC courses (2)
This isn't strictly speaking about the symposium, but I'll respond anyway. The Scottish graduate community in mathematics is very diverse in terms of background and interest, and one thing we've learned is that if you try to please everyone simultaneously, you end up pleasing no one. So, there will always be some people who find that the courses aren't right for them. I would emphasize three points made at the symposium: (i) It's up to you, your supervisors and your postgraduate director of studies to find suitable training courses. We (SMSTC) don't force anyone to take our courses. (ii) The central idea is of broadening training. You may already be a ninja in algebra, geometry, topology and analysis, so that those modules are boring for you. In that case, learn something you don't already know! (iii) Don't forget the supplementary modules. See www.smstc.ac.uk/timetable for details.

Something you liked about the symposium

- The skills/training talks (13 people wrote this)

The slides for all the talks are available on the website: www.smstc.ac.uk/symposia

- Meeting other students (11)

Good! That's one of the main points of having the symposium. Don't forget that you can stay in touch via the Facebook group, called 'SMSTC PhD students 2016/17'. This is for students only, not staff. We'll also set up an email list soon.

- Curling (11)

- The dinner (5)

- The stream talks (2)

The slides for all the talks are available on the website: www.smstc.ac.uk/symposia

- It was well-organized (2)

Thanks to Johanna for this!

- The hotel (2)

- The atmosphere (2)

- The team-building components (2)

Tom Leinster, SMSTC Director