

## CONTENTS

Editor's Foreword viii

Preface ix

### 1 WHAT IS MODELLING? 1

1.1 Introduction 1

1.2 Models and modelling 2

1.3 The learning process for mathematical modelling 3

1.4 Summary 4

### 2 GETTING STARTED 5

2.1 Introduction 5

2.2 Examples 5

2.3 Conclusion 35

2.4 Further examples 35

2.5 Further comments on the examples in section 2.2 37

### 3 MODELLING METHODOLOGY 39

3.1 Introduction 39

3.2 Definitions and terminology 41

3.3 Methodology and modelling flow chart 43

3.4 The methodology in practice 46

3.5 Summary 54

### 4 UNITS AND DIMENSIONS 55

4.1 Introduction 55

4.2 Units 55

4.3 Dimensions 60

4.4 Dimensional analysis 61

4.5 Summary 65

5 MODELLING SKILLS 67

5.1 Introduction 67

5.2 Listing factors 67

5.3 Making assumptions 73

5.4 Types of behaviour 74

5.5 Translating into mathematics 83

5.6 Choosing mathematical functions 84

5.7 Relative sizes of terms 92

5.8 Reducing the number of parameters 95

5.9 Summary 98

6 USING DATA 100

6.1 Introduction 100

6.2 Data collection 101

6.3 Empirical models 102

6.4 Estimating parameters 112

6.5 Errors and accuracy 118

6.6 Testing models 121

6.7 Summary 124

7 USING RANDOM NUMBERS 125

7.1 Introduction 125

- 7.2 Modelling random variables 125
- 7.3 Generating random numbers 130
- 7.4 Simulations 134
- 7.5 Using simulation models 144
- 7.6 Packages and simulation languages 149
- 7.7 Summary 149

## 8 USING DIFFERENTIAL EQUATIONS 151

- 8.1 Introduction 151
- 8.2 First order, one variable 152
- 8.3 Second order, one variable 157
- 8.4 Second order, two variables ( uncoupled ) 171
- 8.5 Simultaneous coupled differential equations 177
- 8.6 Summary 188

## 9 REPORT WRITING AND PRESENTATIONS 190

- 9.1 Introduction 190
- 9.2 Report writing 190
- 9.3 A specimen report 196
- 9.4 Presentation 209

## 10 EXAMPLE MODELS 212

- 10.1 Introduction 212
- 10.2 Doing the dishes 212
- 10.3 Shopping trips 218
- 10.4 Disk pressing 222
- 10.5 Gutter 227

10.6 Turf	233
10.7 Parachute jump	237
10.8 On the buses	244
10.9 Further battles	249
10.10 Snooker	253
10.11 Further models	259

Bibliography	268
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Solutions to Exercises	269
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Index	275
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## PREFACE

Whilst there are a number of recent texts in mathematical modelling of the 'case study' variety, these are generally of most use as source material for the teacher. This Guide to Mathematical Modelling, however, is intended to be read by students; so the topics treated and the order of contents have been chosen with this in mind. We have tried to address the problem of how mathematical modelling is done as well as what a mathematical model is, and so have avoided presenting just a long catalogue of completed modelling examples.

The book is essentially a first course; so the amount of prerequisite mathematics and statistics is quite modest. It is chiefly aimed at the first-year level in an undergraduate degree course in mathematical sciences, but the treatment is such that the book could be used in the second year of a school sixth form. The contents have formed the basis of the first-year modelling course for students studying for B.Sc. in Mathematics, Statistics and Computing at the University of Greenwich (formerly Thames Polytechnic) and have proved a successful component in this course. We also gratefully acknowledge the influence of the pioneering work of many colleagues from the Open University and the former Polytechnics in the area of teaching mathematical modelling. The book stops short of investigating large-scale simulation models requiring software packages, but it lays valuable groundwork for subsequent study of such models.

At the outset, it is important to explain not only what modelling is, but also why it is worth doing. It is not merely a means of making the usual first-year curriculum in mathematics and statistics more lively and applicable. To accept that is to miss the point. The objective is to provide an approach to formulating and tackling problems in terms of mathematics and statistics. Eventually, when entering employment where real problems have to be dealt with, mathematicians will require additional skills to those fostered by study of conventional topics on the curriculum. The study of modelling promotes the development of these extra skills.

The book is divided into 10 chapters. Although it is not necessary to read the book strictly in chapter order, this may be preferred since there is some progression in difficulty as the subject is developed. It is vital, however, that readers try their hand at solving many of the problems posed, since modelling skills can only be learned by active participation.

Having set the scene in the opening chapter, some simple modelling problems are presented in chapter 2. These come from a variety of backgrounds, and readers should try some of the examples themselves from the problem descriptions provided. Mathematical modelling is by its nature difficult to structure, but it is useful to lay down general guidelines within which to operate when faced with new situations. To this end a general methodology is described in chapter 3.

The succeeding three chapters are particularly important for the beginner. Here the essential skills for successful modelling are developed. These are as follows.

1 Identifying the problem variables.

2 Constructing appropriate relations between these variables.

3 Taking measurements and judging the size of quantities.

4 Collecting data and deciding how to use them.

5 Estimating the values of parameters within the model that cannot be measured or calculated from data.

The backbone of the text comes in chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 7 deals with approaches to problems involving random features which demand some statistical analysis. Chapter 8 covers modelling situations which give rise to differential equations, such as are often encountered in physics and engineering.

Communication is vital for successful implementation of a mathematical model. It is necessary to explain ideas behind a model to other people, some of whom may not necessarily hold the same opinion as the modeller. It is also necessary to advise on the use of a model, often to non-specialists who need only to understand the essential points. Further, both at college and later in employment, it is often necessary to present findings verbally to a small group. These communication skills do not always come naturally; so, in chapter 9, advice is given on these matters.

Finally, in chapter 10, more demanding modelling assignments are presented. Some of the models are fully developed but others are left for the reader to process.

The content of this book complements other material usually studied in a mathematics degree course, and there is plenty of scope for further work in modelling as experience in mathematics and statistics is increased. Solving real problems by mathematical modelling is a challenging task, but it is also highly rewarding. If by working through the book readers gain confidence to take up this challenge, then the authors will be satisfied that the effort of writing the book has been worthwhile.

Woolwich, 1988

D.E.

M.J.H.