

May 9, 2022

Statement about the teaching and master thesis supervision of Álvaro del Pino Gomez

To whoever it may concern at Utrecht University,

My name is Bas de Pooter, I have graduated from the Mathematical Sciences master programme at Utrecht University in the summer of 2021. During the master programme I followed the course 'Topologie & Meetkunde' in the academic year 2020-21, taught by Álvaro, and in the next year I wrote my master thesis under his supervision. I enjoyed Álvaro's style of hands-on and prepared teaching a lot, which motivated choosing him as a supervisor for my thesis. During the master thesis project his supervision was involved too, and his additional advice on academia matters were of immense help in finding a PhD position afterwards. I shall expand briefly on these three points.

The course 'Topologie & Meetkunde' is an introduction to the subject of algebraic topology. This subject has strong motivations and clear goals, developing objects and machinery for studying topological spaces. The developed theory, however, relies on many smaller parts, which means a lot of time has to be spent to rigorously develop results. I feel that Álvaro struck a very nice balance during the lectures between telling the story motivating the smaller steps and end-results, and the time spent on rigorous proofs. I feel that this balance is part of what makes or breaks a course in abstract mathematics, so I enjoyed the course a lot. The tutorials too, were well-prepared: there were many exercises (not all mandatory) which ramped up appropriately in difficulty, and which connected directly with the material. This is the other important part of an abstract mathematics course, I feel. He asked for feedback from students and tried to make sure that old material was understood, and would spend more time on previous topics if necessary. This hands-on approach made it easier for me to ask questions, and motivated me to keep working on the course.

For the master thesis project I asked several professors for a potential topic, and the main reason for choosing Álvaro was his involved teaching during the previous year. During the project, he was indeed again involved; we had (sometimes more than) weekly meetings, and I was sometimes asked to present what I learned to other interested (PhD) students of his. As the thesis project is often experienced as somewhat lonely, the regular contact and invitation to interact with others was highly motivating. I felt that it was easy to communicate with Álvaro about the state of the project and what his expectations were of me, which made the meetings, and the project in general, a more friendly experience. The suggested project was great: it matched my mathematical level well and allowed me to experiment with writing down some actually new results.

Before starting the project, I was already interested in pursuing a PhD position. As the project affirmed my interest, I started sending out applications after the winter of 2020. Álvaro was of great help here; he was happy to read and comment on cover letters or CV's, provide advice on who to ask for letters of recommendation, and to suggest possible positions or put me in contact with potential supervisors. In general, he provided very helpful guidance on entering the academic world.

I hope this statement is of use to you, please contact me if you have further questions!

Yours faithfully,

Jacobus Sander (Bas) de Pooter