

27th November 1934

Dear Dr Sheppard,

I have now had time to examine Mr Turing's fellow-ship dissertation^[*] and to give an opinion of it. In doing so, I ought to say that I have been guided by the point you stress in your letter that you are particularly anxious to be advised as to the intellectual promise and qualities shewn, rather than the actual addition made by the student to the sum of ascertained knowledge. It would not be at all fair to judge of Mr Turing's paper by the latter criterion.

The subject chosen for the thesis is one which I have always though decidedly unattractive and has been worked over, from various points of view, by continental and especially Scandinavian writers to the point of making it positively repellent. Yet, as a medium for displaying the author's special ability it must be judged well-chosen. His treatment is impressively capable. He shows complete mastery of the method chosen and in the appendices he shows that his taste is sensitive. I should judge, quite apart from the example in the preface, that his reading had been limited, and his interests at present undeveloped, but the dissertation is certainly good evidence of capacity and promise.

[* The Gaussian Error Function]