



Sefydliad Mathemateg a Ffiseg
Institute of Mathematics & Physics

PHYSICS

STUDENT/STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 23rd February at 12.00pm
In Room 319, Physical Sciences Building

MINUTES

Present:

Chair:	Mr James Carter	JAC08	PG Rep
Secretary:	Miss Sarah Spring	RMS	Staff
	Dr Martin Wilding	MBW	Staff
	Dr Balázs Pintér	BAP	Staff
	Ms Raquel Gonzalez	RQG	Staff
	Mrs Tegwen Meredith	MZM	IS Representative
	Mr Timothy Hudson	TYH8	Year 1 Rep
	Mr Keiron Pizzey	KPP7	Year 3 Rep
	Miss Hannah Wakeford	HTW7	Year 3 Rep
	Ms Jessica Cole	JSC6	Year 4 Rep
	Ms Erin Conner	ECC6	Year 4 Rep
	Mr Gruffudd Williams	GTW07	PG Rep

Apologies: None received

1. Minutes of the Last Meeting

- 1.1 JSC6 corrected point 4.11; the problem had been that students didn't know that there was a semester 2 deadline for the project plan set in the first semester. The deadline had been listed on Blackboard, but the students were unaware as it had been listed under deadlines for 2nd semester modules.
- 1.2 Subject to the above amendment the minutes of the meeting held on the 30th November 2009 were approved.

2. Matters Arising

- 4.3 RQG noted that she had spoken to the Technical & Laboratory Services Manager, and that all computer mice had already been replaced for new ones before Christmas 2009.

- 4.7 RQG confirmed that Liz Hyde had emailed all students with details of where to find SSCC information such as previous minutes, current student representatives and useful links, etc.
- 4.1 RQG noted that she had asked JAC08 to forward her details of any PG who had a broken computer chair; and that no information had been received. JAC08 responded that the problem had been resolved as they had managed to find replacement chairs from elsewhere. JAC08 commented that the quality of the recent computer chairs was not satisfactory.
- 5.9 RQG confirmed that she had circulated an email to all students advising them of the new extended library opening hours.

3. Student Matters

Yr 0:

- 3.1 No representatives present.

Yr 1:

- 3.2 TYH8 raised an issue regarding the exam for PH14310 The Quantum Universe; students sitting that exam had not been provided with copies of the Table of Physical Constants. This had been brought to the attention of the invigilators during the exam, who had informed the students that they were not supposed to have it. On checking with the lecturer after the exam, he had confirmed that they should have had the table in the exam. MBW explained that at the Part One Exam Board it had been agreed that a straight average of both the coursework and the exam would be taken (making the weighting for each part 50% (instead of the current 30% coursework, 70% exam splitting). MBW noted that the exam scripts had also been evaluated on a case by case basis and the lack of tables had been taken into consideration; some students had done surprisingly well on the part requiring the tables despite the lack. MBW explained that the section of the exam which did not require the tables carried more weight and that an average of the two parts was taken for an overall mark. MBW explained that confusion over the tables had arisen as tables were not routinely handed out in Part I exams, but noted that they would be from now on. .

Action: Issue to be reported to the Director of Learning & Teaching.

Yr 2:

- 3.3 No representatives present.

Yr 3:

- 3.4 KPP7 noted complaints from students and staff that the temperature in Lecture Theatre Physics B was freezing. HTW7 noted that there was a window permanently left open at the back of the room behind a curtain, which nobody could reach to close. RQG asked students in future to notify the General Office if the temperature in any lecture venue was uncomfortable; appropriate action could then be taken to rectify the problem.

Action: RQG to ask Porters to close the windows in Physics B and check that the temperature is generally acceptable.

- 3.5 HTW7 raised a concern about the health and safety implications of teaching in the third floor rooms with stages, as staff risked falling off. RQG noted that the IMAPS Health and Safety Officer had already raised this issue with Estates and had proposed that the stages be removed. However due to budget restraints there were no immediate plans to action this, but it would be noted for future refurbishment plans. HTW7 stated that the chalk dust in these rooms made them extremely uncomfortable teaching venues for students and staff. RQG explained that the blackboards in these rooms were already scheduled for removal and will be replaced by white boards in due course.
- 3.6 KPP7 expressed concerns over the recent loss of key members of teaching staff as well as the imminent departure of MJO, and the impact for teaching in the next semester. RQG explained that a permanent replacement lecturer for MJO is due to start in May but that the rest of the vacancies were still being discussed by the Institute Director and AU Senior Management Team. HTW7 stated that as this would clearly mean a reorganisation of certain modules, that students should be kept informed of any module schedule changes. HTW7 noted that the effects of the increased volume of new students for the 2010/11 session on teaching should also be taken into consideration. He reiterated that students wished to be kept up to date on any and all module and teaching changes.

Yr 4:

- 3.7 JSC6 reported that Year 4 students had really benefited from the PHM3010 Quantum II tutorials which had included revision based on past exam questions.
- 3.8 JSC6 commented that the current system of coordinating assignment deadlines could be improved. Students were often unsure of exact deadline dates and times, and the GO did not always have sufficient notice to create the drop-in lockers. JSC6 explained that last minute deadlines or changes to existing deadlines, created additional confusion. JSC6 proposed that lecturers should post all deadlines on Blackboard so that students were able to click on their calendar and see all forthcoming deadlines listed. JSC6 also proposed that a cut-off date be introduced a few weeks after the start of term beyond which lecturers would not be permitted to set additional assignments. JAC08 commented that he had observed that advance notification of deadlines in other departments worked well. MBW agreed that he saw no reason why a system like this could not be implemented and noted that it would also be beneficial to the Year Tutors.

Action: Issue to be reported to the Director of Learning & Teaching.

- 3.9 ECC6 raised an issue regarding the confusions arising between Year 4 PHM3910 Advanced Topics, which is run jointly with Year 3 PH34040 Advanced Techniques module. ECC6 reported that information is sometimes sent erroneously to Year 3 instead of Year 4 students and vice versa. There was sometimes confusion with the assignment submission lockers. HTW7 suggested that one way to solve the information dissemination problem is for tutors to include both third and fourth year students in the topic groups so that the information is received by all students on these modules. HTW7 agreed that the coordination of this module could be improved upon in order to limit confusion to Year 3 and Year 4 students.

Action: Issue to be reported to the Director of Learning & Teaching.**PGs:**

- 3.10 GTW07 reported that the new system of smaller tutorial groups seemed to be working and should be continued.
- 3.11 MBW suggested that drawing up guidelines for the responsibilities of PG Demonstrators would be beneficial. While it was vital for PG students to be given the opportunity to teach/demonstrate, there was a danger that they could become unpaid tutors. It was also important that their PG studies did not suffer any detriment from working as Demonstrators. MBW suggested that teaching staff and PG's should meet in order to discuss how to formalise this part of the PG course requirements. RQG suggested that induction processes for new PG Demonstrators could also be included in the role specification. JAC08 wondered how the increased numbers of new UG students and smaller staff numbers would affect the availability of PG Demonstrators for Part II students. MBW reiterated that these concerns further highlight the need for sensible guidelines on PG Demonstrator's roles

including defined ratios of PG's to UG's, etc. MBW also noted that making better use of tutorial groups (e.g. running them as small workshops with PG assistance) would be vital when managing increased student numbers.

- 3.12 JAC08 noted a recurring problem regarding the filling in of timesheets for PG demonstrators. JAC08 argued that as the timesheets are set up for the teaching by one person on one particular module; this causes problems, in terms of pay, when a demonstrator needs to find cover from a colleague. MBW stated that he feels that there should be a move away from timesheets as a pay system for PG students.

Action: Issue to be reported and discussed at the next laboratory meeting.

4. Staff Matters

- 4.1 MBW noted that there were no additional staff matters to add to those which have already been raised; in particular the current shortage of teaching staff.

5. AOB

- 5.1 No other business.

6. Date of the Next Meeting

- 6.1 The next meeting to be held in April/May, once the module questionnaire results are issued. Date and venue to be confirmed.