

**Faculty of Business and Physical Sciences**

**Physics Student-Staff Consultative Committee**

**Friday 26th February 2021, 12pm via. TEAMS**

**Present:** Millie Astbury, Joy Cadwallader, Andrew Evans, Chris Finlayson, Edwin Flikkema, Jessica Gittins, Fleur Groualle, Zoe Hayne, Jack Hickton-Cragg, Morwenna Jeffery, Dave Langstaff, Ciera Leonard-Davies, Xing Li, Helen MacDougall, Tusharadri Mahmud, Harry Marsh, Martina McIvor Eleri Pryse, Sandy Spence, Youra Taroyan,

**Apologies:** Shaun Donnelly, Simon French, Dave Price

**Absent:** Owain Baulch, Kristy Bell, Emma Harrison. William Parker, Balazs Pinter, Zain Rathore

1. **Welcome and election of chair**

**Dave Langstaff** (Academic lead for SSCC) welcomed all to the meeting. Academic Representatives are reminded to please elect a chair outside of the meeting. It is suggested that someone is selected who is not leaving this year.

**Action 2021/0: Student reps to elect a Chair.**

1. **Apologies for absence**

Simon French, Dave Price, Shaun Donnelly

3.      **Minutes of last meeting**

The following corrections are raised/suggested:

- *Section 4.5. Action 2020/21/6: xxl to ensure additional Python coding support/hints and tips to be made available.*

**Xing Li** raises that Python is not usually within his actions/responsibilities, and is not sure why this has Python isn’t usually Xing’s responsibility.

**Fleur Groualle** notes that as the module in question finished quite early, there was not a lot of time to have these tips/hints implemented. However, progress was made on this, and Python hints and tips are now viewable. Action resolved.

*- Section 4.5. Advanced numerical techniques: Python is a step up form that studied in Year 2 with more students struggling as a consequence.*

This section does not name the module does not name the module clearly (PHM6610).

- *Section 4.4. Action 2020/21/3: xxl to take forward and remind staff that lecture slides must be loaded in advance of the lectures*.

It is raised that the wording of this action is not quite correct in line with the original discussion. The following amendment is agreed upon: *Staff to be reminded to schedule communication in advance when material is released, as an ideal scenario.*

*- Action 13: Move the IOP Noticeboard to outside the Part 1 Lab (Technicians)*

**Dave Price** commented on behalf of tech team that it should not be the technician’s role to do this. It is also raised that outside Part 1 Lab is a fire escape route, and therefore we should not have loose noticeboards here. Action to be reconsidered.

Minutes accepted subject to corrections.

4.      **Matters arising from last meeting- Actions Brought Forward**

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| **Action Number** | **Actions from previous meetings** | **Whose Action** | **Action Status** |
| 13 | Move the IOP Noticeboard to outside the part 1 Lab | Technicians | See above correction. Action to be reconsidered/investigated further by dpl. |
| 2019/20/20 | Gregynog Working group to be formed to include SSCC chair, dpl, bap, and dne to iron out Gregynog issues and to cover fit with other modules and move to a 20 credit module. | Dpl and Chair | Action suspended due to pandemic response as no longer applicable. Action to be readdressed when more options available. |
| **Action Number** | **Actions from this meeting** | **Whose Action** | **Action Status** |
| 2020/21/1 | Take forward to L&T the request for consideration of an activity weekend such as had occurred in Computer Science as a way of team building taking into account safety and practicality. | dne | Action outstanding  **Andy Evans:** raises that this requires further discussion. Student reps are asked to report back on their thoughts.  **Harry Marsh:** Year 1 set up an online meeting group, which worked well (online). There are around 6-7 regular attendees. There is now a large Discord server setup with much more engagement.  **Martina McIvor** adds that this group also crossed over with Maths modules, so students were meeting with different departments. The Discord server hosts discussion, games, career development etc.  **Dave Langstaff** adds that there is/was a server set up by Lyra for similar reasons. It is recommended that reps have a chat with her to maximise the servers. |
| 2020/21/2 | Take forward to L&T the request for consideration was asked to be given to releasing the Assignment timetable on BB early in the Semester to enable planning – the timetable to include release and submission dates. | dne | Action closed  **Dave Langstaff** investigated the possibility of this; however, the Assignment timetable is already released as early as it can be. Putting release dates on the timetable would be too much of a burden for staff due to the already high amount of organisation/workload that the timetable requires. Students are welcome to contact dpl to chat further about this if they had any particular concerns. |
| 2020/21/4 | All staff to be reminded to tick the email message option on BB when they upload information/announcements/slides. Consistency of location would also be helpful if could be managed across the Department | All staff | Action completed  All staff are reminded to tick the email option on Blackboard when sending an announcement (so that an email of the announcement is sent to all students). |
| 2020/21/5 | To discuss and consider availability of PG presentations for Yr 3 and above students | Dne/hum2 | Action completed  **Andy Evans** comments that this was raised and possibilities investigated. The decision was taken that this time could be better used by students for working on projects. |
| 2020/21/6 | To ensure additional Python coding support / hints and tips to be made available | xxl | See above in *Section 3.* |
| 2020/21/7 | All staff to consider making assignment feedback available ahead of the exam period | All staff | Action in progress  **Dave Langstaff** raises that this was discussed in the staff Learning and Teaching committee (25/02/21). A plan of action is being decided for this. |

**5.      Library Issues (Joy Cadwallader)**

**Joy Cadwallader** reports that postal loans are now available on request for students. Students are also reminded that Simon French is available for one-to-one appointments to discuss learning materials/resources for projects etc.

**5.1: Library issues raised by students**

**- Harry Marsh** raises the topic of learning support for Dyslexia. **Joy Cadwallader** comments that there is an app available to make use of the University’s support software in study spaces. It is noted that if students require support with dyslexia, they should contact Student Support. **Martina McIvor** comments that there are students who do not receive DSA for dyslexia, and so do not currently receive support.

**Dave Langstaff** notes that there is a standard package available remotely on University workstations (Read & Write) which can be connected to via. Guacamole.

**Action 2021/1:** DL to circulate further details of remote desktops/software support available remotely.

Information Services webpages have a section on assisted training technology, it is noted, however, that the IS webpages are not clear about the accessibility for this software.

**Action 2021/2:** Joy Cadwallader to investigate accessibility on IS webpages.

- **Tusharadri Mahmud and Helen McDougall** raise that the in-town library services are not working correctly/ not accessible (card swiper note working). Joy Cadwallader responds that the director of IS is currently putting forward a proposal for a high-quality in-town computer and printing service to replace the current closed down space (due to Old College refurbishments).

**6.      Student matters**

**0.      Year 0 (not present)**

**1.      Year 1**

**1.1 It is requested that the page limit within ongoing assessments/exam be increased, as students are finding it hard to fit within the current limits.** DL comments that this was discussed in the staff Learning and Teaching meeting. It was decided to relax the page limit and instead keep a word limit. This should address many of the concerns/issues had with the page limit (e.g.: accessibility). A rubric will be in place for Alternative Assessments for May/June.

**1.2** **The background colours of many lecture slides are primarily white, which can cause reading and accessibility** **issues.** It is commented that some lecturers are using blue backgrounds, which is very useful and much easier to read.

**1.3** It is noted that some lectures (with MP11010, Further Algebra and Calculus given as an example) are being recorded live. DL states that there is a privacy issue here if recording of questions/voices are audible on Panopto. All lecturers recording live should cut out Q&A sessions or get express permission from students for recording.

**Action 2021/3:** DL to investigate/ remind lecturers about privacy when recording lectures as live.

**1.4** **There has been feedback that students are engaging more with pre-recorded lecture sessions rather than recorded as live sessions.** With modules such as PH01010 (Introduction to Physical Forces), lecture material is uploaded on Monday, with smaller seminar sessions being held throughout the week. Students are engaging well with this model.

**1.5 Students have been struggling with time management**. PH12910 (Physics Career Planning and Skills Development) has between 5 and 7 sessions a week, which students are finding difficult to keep up with. Whereas other modules, such as PH14310 (Modern Physics) has one main session a month. It is commented by the module coordinator that there are weekly drop-in sessions on a Monday, to try and make contact time more regular. This is acknowledged, however, it is raised that the drop-in sessions for this module are scheduled straight after a career planning workshop.

**Action 2021/4**: Yot to try to move drop-in session for PH14310 to a more suitable day/time if possible. Student reps are asked to sent suitable times for students.

**1.6 The student uptake on MEQs was low. Students report feeling overwhelmed with emails, and others did not feel that they had enough information about the MEQs to feeling confident completing them.** It is suggested that MEQs could be held in the second to last week of the Semester, to give more time for explanation and spreading word. DL comments that timing has always been an issue with the MEQs- the window of timing is very narrow. As MEQs are organised centrally, the committee can feedback student comments to the central team. Students are also encouraged to submit feedback via. Tell Us Now.

**1.7 Comments have been raised about teaching on MP11010 (Further Algebra and Calculus).** There have been comments received that students felt the lecturer was sometimes abrupt in addressing them.

**Action 2021/5:** DL to investigate further and discuss with lecturer on MP11010.

**1.8 Students did not feel completely satisfied with timing on feedback from assignments.** In survey, 56% reported that they do not/did not receive timely feedback on assignments. DL replies that there is a policy in place that feedback should be returned within 15 working days.

**Action 2021/6:** DL to remind staff of the 15 working day deadline for feedback to students.

**1.9 It is raised that some students haven’t heard from their personal tutors at all this Semester and were wondering as to when they would receive an appointment.** DL responds that students should shortly be receiving appointment invites to discuss mid-year exams with their personal tutors.

**1.10 Students have reported that they would really like more 1 on 1 sessions with their personal tutors; once a month is suggested as a timeframe.** DL responds that this can be looked into, such as the Year Tutorials which took place earlier in the Semester 1. Dne comments that this is a good point to bring to the staff meeting, and will raise this in the next event.

**Action 2021/7:** DL to look into arranging further Year Tutorials as a possibility.

**1.11 Students are reporting feeling more relaxed/comfortable with lecturers via. online sessions.** Due to the lack of face-to-face teaching, this was a concern at first.

1. **Year 2**

**2.1 There has been a specific complaint about marks within two modules, PH24610 (Stars), PH28510 (Planets) being lower than across other modules.** Some students did not feel that they were receiving the help that they required. One assignment received marks but no feedback. The module coordinator comments and apologises for this and states that this will be looked into. Dne comments that it is important that whenever issues are encountered to raise them as soon as possible with staff.

**2.2 Students feel that there is a lack of consistency with Blackboard layouts**

**Action 2021/8:** DL to investigate consistency on Year 2 Blackboard layouts.

**2.3 Students are finding PH34510 (Modern Optics and Photonics) seminars very engaging.**

**2.4 Some students are struggling with amount of reading work.** Some feel that there is too much, others feel that there is too little. Lecturers are asked to clarify essential reading on reading lists.

**2.5 There has been unwillingness to engage with numerical techniques.** DL asks as to how we can re-engage students in this? It is suggested that a poll is put out to students to discover what particular issues/problem areas there are. However, reps report that students are not replying as much in Year 2 (and beyond) to rep queries. DL comments that staff will make sure that students are aware of the no-detriment policy. Students are also encouraged to see their personal tutors with any particular concerns, or pass on any feedback/comments to student reps.

**2.6 Student reps had a meeting about the potential for a skills module for Year 1 students that focuses on time management and basic mental health skills.** DL agrees that this is a good idea; however, space in the curriculum is limited. There is also an issue that any modules would need to be assessed. It is raised that time management skills may be a good topic for the existing career planning module. The Student Union currently offer seminars on Mental Health; it is raised that these are not very widely advertised.

**In this case, it may be good to have information on Mental Health skills, videos etc.** readily and easily available to students.

**Action 2021/9:** DL to investigate possibility of skills folder on Departmental Blackboard Page (and to also raise awareness of the page’s location).

1. **Year 3**

**3.1 Feedback suggests that Year 3 students have been happy with their studies.**

**3.2 Students have requested more contact time and more online seminars, if possible, as this would help with motivation.** Students would also like reassurance from lecturers that it is acceptable for them to ask questions about previously covered material.

**3.3 There has been feedback for Module PH38410 (Professional Skills in Engineering) that lectures can seem rushed.** Some students has also not been satisfied with communications from this module.

**3.4. Students have reported feeling unhappy about late feedback (no specific module is mentioned).**

**3.5 Students have been engaging less with reps, and so it is hard to gather more specific feedback.** It is commented that sending a group email to the constituency usually gathers more responses. DL suggests that reps need to talk to Amy Goodwin (Student Union) about the destination of constituency emails, as there are some that do not go to all students (Joint Hons etc.)

**Action 2021/10:** Student reps to contact Amy Goodwin about issues with constituency emails.

**3.6 Mental health is raised as an urgent issue.** Exacerbated by the current circumstances, many students are feeling very strained.

**Action 2021/11:** DL to contact personal tutors to make students aware of the support they can receive from Student Support remotely.

**3.7 Students have commented that they would like access to Physical Sciences Library.** DL comments that this is currently being discussed by the L&T team.

**3.8 Students are reporting not being happy with time slots currently available for study space.**

1. **Year 4**

**4.1 From a survey conducted, results are quite positive. Students reported being happy with the Semester overall.**

**4.2 Students on PHM3010 (Advanced Quantum Physics) felt that the exam marks returned were quite low, and were not happy.** There was confusion about a question on this paper (which was raised with the module coordinator).

**4.3 From the survey, it is reported that 25% of students who responded did not feel on track with their final project, and would like further interaction with staff members.** Dne comments that this has been taken on board, and will look providing more opportunities for interaction.

**Action 2021/12:** Andy Evans to look into providing more opportunities for interaction on Year 4 projects.

1. **Joint Honours**

**5.1 It is commented by student reps that it has been hard to get student feedback this semester.** Feedback is noticeably less than in previous semesters.

**5.2 The page limit within Physics exams was raised- however, this has now been resolved (see Actions completed).**

**5.3 Students found it difficult to keep up with pre-recorded material and preferred live lectures.**

**6.      Postgraduate (not in attendance)**

**7. Welsh Medium (not in attendance)**

**8.      Careers and Employability** *(Morwenna Jeffery)*

Students are reminded that there is an upcoming Virtual Careers Fair as well as other future Careers events planned. An employability event is also taking place on 26/02/21 from 10am (with future events planned).

**8.      Diversity and Inclusion**

DL thanks the student reps for raising issues such as white backgrounds on lecture slides. Staff are reminded to use pastel/non-white shades for lectures wherever possible.

**9.      Infrastructure Issues** *(Sandy Spence)*

It is commented that Information Services have requested a list of software required by departments for the next Academic year. The technician team will be considering this around July. Students and staff are asked to email the tech team with any further information/ideas they may have on this.

**It is also commented that the Guacamole interface for accessing University machines/software remotely has low usage. Student reps comment that many students had not received much information/did not know that this was an option. It is also added that students have been receiving a high volume of emails, and that information could easily have gotten lost/deleted.**

**Action 2021/13:** Information on Guacamole to be re-circulated in reader-friendly format (bullet points, not long paragraphs) to students and to try and prevent email build-up, lecturers will also be encouraged to let students know about the system within lectures.

**10.  Staff Matters**

**Dne** raises that a new MSc is planned: Radio Spectrum. The L&T Committee would be interested in hearing student views on this. Students are encouraged to submit thoughts to the department.

**11.  AOB**