

Faculty: Business and Physical Sciences

Department: Physics

Date/Time: 23/03/2022, 1:00pm

Reps in Attendance: Alejandro Rowlands Doblas, Ciera Leonard-Davies, David Fifer (Chair), Harry Marsh, Helen MacDougall, Luke Pearson, Marcus Hall, Nika Karsanova, Shaun Donnelly, Terry Hand, Zoe Hayne

Staff in Attendance: Alun Jones, Andrew Evans, Balazs Pinter, Chris Finlayson, Dave Langstaff, Edwin Flikkema, Eleri Pryse, Morwenna Jeffrey, Shelley Fullwood (Minutes), Simon French, Youra Taroyan

Apologies/Absent: Millie Astbury

The meeting started with a welcome from Dave Langstaff and introduced David Fifer who chaired the Meeting.

1. **Apologies** from Millie Astbury
2. **Minutes of last meeting (17/11/2021)** were accepted
3. **Matters arising from last meeting**

Actions from previous meeting

- Circulating instructions about how to use remote desktop – Complete
- Checking gender neutral toilets and signposting – ongoing

Student matters

- The quantity of Teams links sent for lectures to be raised in departmental meeting. Majority of modules have adopted that now – look on Learning Activities on blackboard.
- Year 1 rep to set up anonymous method for setting up feedback – completed – look to share with other year groups for them to adapt
- Marking rubric coming reported to be confusing – to be raised in L&T – complete
- Blackboard contact (for one specific module) content – complete
- Assignment released on a Friday afternoon due in on a Monday – Chris said PM260 test should have been in person test but had to be an online test of 24 hours (it was actually in reading week). Next working day was Monday. Further test later in the term was scheduled in the middle of the week.
- Online materials are more detailed and students are therefore less receptive in seminars – this has been discussed in Physics staff meetings. Hopefully more in-person teaching in the future.
- Students on the Astrophysics scheme said they've been busy, length of assignments and asking for more uniformed deadlines.
- PH33310 – a student felt the lecture notes were insufficient to complete an assignment. It was to be raised with module co-ordinator. Ongoing but it should be noted that by the time you are in third year, you are expected to find certain information out yourself. Andy also said that students should go to the Module Co-ordinator or their Year Tutor at the time with any issues as things can be solved immediately rather than waiting for an SSCC.

4. **Computing, Library and Infrastructure Issues (Alun Jones, Simon French)**

Alun Jones (Computing and Infrastructure)

- New PCs have arrived for PGR students but there is a 5 month lead time on monitors.
- Big changes are coming for next year (University wide), particularly on the computer security front. Working behind the scenes to get this in place
- Request for remote desktop links – Alun shared in the chat today but it was circulated in October <https://remote-desktops.dcs.aber.ac.uk>
- Infrastructure – nothing new come online

Simon French (Library)

- Libraries are open and study spaces are available. Physical Sciences (PS) library is open 8.30am – 5.30pm. Hugh Owen library is open 24/7.
- Card entry is still required
- Simon is in the PS library Monday mornings until 12pm and is in HO on Thursday afternoons but he is available on email the rest of the time
- HO click and collect has moved further down the library and is now by the self-return machine
- The book return machine in the Old College has been removed due to building work. It will be repositioned and we will be updated in due course.
- There is a book return up at Fferm Penglais
- Get in touch with Simon about reading lists, ideas etc.
- Purchase request form is available on Primo if books are required. Repts to feedback to academics and academics who will drive book purchases
- More book services can be found here: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/library-services/morebooks/>

5. Careers and Employability (Morwenna)

- Recordings are available of many departmental activities that have already taken place. Many more to come.
- The Aber Forward scheme is back. You can register your interest in their website <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/careers/current-students/aberforward/>
- Nika was introduced as the Careers Rep for Physics, Maths and Computer Science. She will be helping with ways to improve services provided, finding out what sort of events students would like in the future and asking students how they would be liked to be contacted about employability

6. Diversity and Inclusion

- Juno will be restarting again soon – Physics would like to regain its Juno status (it has expired)

7. Student matters

a. Year 0

- Alternative assessments seem to be very vague compared to previous years. It took students a while to work out what information was required. Balazs said he could set up mock exams so that students could see what sort of information is required. He has done this in the past though and not a single student did the assessment. Andy said that past papers should be available to look at and he is happy to provide feedback and solutions on attempts to previous papers
- It was reported that Thursdays and Fridays have heavier workloads, there is not an even waiting through the week. Maths modules were mentioned specifically – 4 different lessons

in 48 hours which is making it hard to concentrate and absorb. Online lessons are difficult to concentrate on. Balazs said the 2 online Maths modules are organised by different departments and Physics have no impact on this. Hopefully the timetable will not be as spaced out next year as we return to normal teaching (multiple sessions of classes with very few students will not happen)

- Could module assignments be handed in at 4pm rather than 2pm?
- Found work overall good and challenging

b. Year 1

- Forms have been set up for feedback. A ratings system has been set up. The average course rating is 8.85 out of 5
- Weekly assignments on Blackboard – some people do not like the fact that only the answer is assessed, rather than the calculations / method also being included in their marks. Maths do this (including marks for calculations / method. This in with particular reference to Forces Energy and Classical Relativity. They do not like being tested weekly, they prefer how Maths do it (tested one week, then being marked the next).
Action: Dave said that staff will look at how to give automatic feedback but also so that the students can check their learning. Balazs said he has prepared feedback in the past but students do not want it.
- There was a request for exam timetables to go on the Student Record rather than on a spreadsheet. Some people find the spreadsheet stressful and confusing.
Action: Zoe is raising it at Faculty level next week as it is something that has been brought up across the Faculty.
- There are 2 electronic labs in semester 1 but they do not get to use the knowledge until semester 2. High level of assumed knowledge.

c. Year 2

- A survey was conducted amongst students and it was found that students took between 4 and 10 hours to complete the alternative assessment / exam, with an average of 6 hours. Some students took 24 hours (with sleep – making it 14 hours). Barely anyone felt that they could do an exam in 2 hours.
- Some students had looked at previous exam papers.
- The last time that students did formal exams was in 2019 and they do not feel prepared to do exams. There was concern about what will happen next year. Andy confirmed that this was why no change has been made for this semester (exams are staying online).
Action: A working group is being developed to collate ideas on how to move forward with in-person exams. Andy invited students to be involved.
Chris said there might be a transitional period of some modules having exams, others not. The Institute of Physics (IOP) might provide steer on this.
- There have been reports of tutors not reaching out to students this semester.
Action: Zoe has a list and will forward it to Dave (Zoe had left the meeting by this point to attend the Computer Science SSCC)
- Very negative responses to PH230 module
- Optics – students enjoy the interactive quizzes and the working in groups is very well received
- PH257 – overall enjoyment of the modules and structure and the group work is well received. Positive momentum from the Postgraduates on this module.
- Severe lack of attendance has been noted across the board. Ideas were discussed about ways in which to improve attendance but no conclusions were met. Helen reported that attendance across the university is low and they are trying to figure out why

- It was raised that assignments all come out at the same time – it is therefore difficult to juggle workloads and has caused stress (and possible lack of attendance). Chris said that there is a deadline sheet and this has been working well.

d. Year 3

- Overall, the alternative assessments went well. Students felt that they could get the work in on time but did not feel it reflected their best work. They asked if 48 hours would be possible. Students felt that the current exams could not be done in person.
- Some assignments felt clumped together. One student felt that a module assignment was not communicated well and they missed being able to do this assignment.
- Comments were made about the special circumstances procedure / policy. Some students find it very intimidating to fill out a full form for an extension – the 3 day rule happening over a weekend makes it longer , or getting ill close to a deadline when they only really need an additional day. Students are put off by the length of the form and often do not bother submitting. They suggested that there should be a separate form for extension requests and special circumstances – Chris confirmed that there was.
- The deadline sheet has worked well.
- Students would like workshops and practice sessions.
- Some emails are not going to joint honours students. It was previously referred to the Student Union but it has not been resolved. Ciera does not have access to some of the mailing lists.
Action: Helen will raise this.
- Lecture timings – students feel there is too much content for 45 minute lectures. It would be good for timings to be reiterated.
- There was a request for practice runs of presentations or coaching sessions ahead of report presentations. There was also a request for guidance on how to present on Teams. Most presentations will be in-person.
- **Action:** Dave will discuss with staff what to do about students who are nervous and do not want to present in front of too many people.
- There was apprehension about projects for next year. Dave said that projects will be distributed between staff so that it does not happen that one member of staff has too many groups. Pairs are worked out from this – if one person in a pair does not pull their weight, students should not worry as they are still assessed separately.

e. Year 4

- Last semester went well and students were mostly happy with the exams and research topics. Modules where new software was involved have run a lot smoother when two members of staff were there
- Gregynog went well, including for those who attended online. Some concerns were raised about marking – how much does the element of peer marking affect their grades? Balazs said that the marking is explained at Gregynog. It is not done by peers – it is decided by lecturers who given detailed feedback. Some students felt that it was a bit too geared towards Computer Science
- 24 hour assessments seem about right as most people have found a good balance. People do not like the 2pm starts however as it is too close to the evenings (it was previously a 12pm start). Different year groups liked different start times.

f. Postgraduate

- Everyone happy and content

- It was raised that there has been a slight lack of communication / directive between the University and Postgraduates as to where they stand coming back into the building during Covid times. Please can this be made clearer?

g. Welsh Medium

- Rep sent apologies. Nothing specific mentioned in the report sent in – the report mentioned exams but this has been covered by other reps.

8. Staff Matters

- A survey will be coming round from JIC wanting to know about the digital learning experience – they are offering the chance to win Amazon vouchers
- Rudi Winter has retired. An official announcement will be sent round shortly.

9. AOB

a. Exam preparation for next year

End of term assessments will stay online for May 2022. Everything discussed during this meeting will be reviewed. Exam preparation will be provided. Could a mock exam be done? The Maths department have said they will be doing mock exams.