Physics Department
Warwick University

Action points arising from the meeting of the
Student Staff Liaison Committee on 19th June 2017

Building matters

- Some students suggested that many do not know of the Physical Sciences workroom until later on in their degree and that it could be better advertised.
  There will be some changes to student workroom provision over the summer, as well as changes on the Science Concourse, which we hope will be seen as an improved offering of study space. We will ensure that all facilities available to students are suitably publicised.
- Some students suggested that there could be a maximum noise level imposed on one or both of the workrooms at some times during the year.
  This is a good suggestion. The workrooms are provided as student study spaces and we generally expect the student body to decide how they will use the space; however, with the additional spaces on the Concourse available for 'noisy' group working we will consider making one or more of the closed workrooms into a quiet space.

First year matters

- Some students enquired whether examples classes/tutorials could run later into Term 3.
  Tutorials in Term 3 run throughout the first four weeks for students in year 1. Later in the term, students are invited to contact their personal tutor if they require further help with their revision.
- Some students reported that anonymous forum postings on module websites would be a good idea.
  The current version of Moodle does not allow students to post anonymously. When a student emails a query to a lecturer, the Department encourages the lecturer to post the question and an answer to the module forum, without revealing the name of the sender. This practice has worked well this year for PX262.

Second year matters

- PX263: Question one on the exam paper required recall of material from PX120, which some students thought unreasonable.
  This comment has been passed to the lecturer. However please note that, in general, material from previous years' core material is examinable.
- PX274: Some students reported that there is too much material in this module. 8 marks out of 50 were for a derivation in the appendices of the lecture notes. The lecture notes are written to a high standard and flow well, but they contain far more than students can be expected to cope with. The 2016/17 lecture notes were only posted on 23rd May (the 2015/16 notes had been uploaded in error).
  The lecturer has been informed of these comments. The syllabus for 17/18 will not change, however some details in this year's presentation will become non-examinable. The lecturer comments that only 2 marks in the exam were awarded for material which was only presented in an appendix.

- Some students suggested that it be made clear which formulae they were required to memorise, and which would be given in the exams.
  Understanding the derivation of some formulae is particularly important. A question may focus on the physics behind a formula, in which case a derivation may be asked for, or on its implications for some observable phenomenon, in which case a formula may be given.
- Some students queried the progression rules used at the second year exam board.
  The criteria for progression are exactly as stated in the undergraduate handbook at http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/physics/current/teach/physics/year2/progress/ and http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/physics/current/teach/mathsphys/year2/progress/
- Some students reported that their exams were rather unevenly spread throughout the main season.
  The University believes that the examination timetable is fair. It ensures that no one should take more than 9 hours of examinations in two days and even this occurs only very rarely. The constraints placed on the examination timetable are largely the result of allowing students from almost all departments to take outside options.

Third year matters

- PX366: Part of the exam was reported by some to be a test of the ability to do mathematics quickly, rather than to demonstrate knowledge of physics. It was further noted that much of the lecture notes relate to non-examinable material for interest only.
  This comment has been passed to the lecturer. The examination paper was approved by the examination panel and by the external examiners. Good facility in mathematical manipulation is an important part of many branches of physics. The lecturer has commented that all of the material in the formal lecture notes is examinable.

Fourth year matters

- PX438: To some students the exam seemed disconnected from the lecture. They also reported that the lecturer presented the material in a ‘lacklustre’ fashion (reading out slides verbatim). The students said that they would like more problems to work on (there being only 4 at present).
  The lecturer will be reminded about his duty to provide examples sheets.

Mathematics matters

- MA250: The lecturer stated that the lecture notes and problem sheets were the ones written by his predecessor, but his module deviated from these and included material about mathematical biology which was not mentioned in the syllabus. It wasn't clear to students whether they should work from the old notes or the new ones.
  These comments have been passed to Mathematics.