Department of Physics
University of Warwick

Action points arising from the meeting of the Student Staff Liaison Committee on Monday 19th November 2018

IT matters

- One computer in the workroom (on the right as one walks in) has stopped working entirely.
  We have reported this to Dan Martin in the departmental office. As ever, please do report IT workroom matters directly to Dan (or to Sue Burrows) for a speedier response.

Building matters

- There are problems with the projectors in PLT.
  These now seem to be working.

First year matters

- Some Math/Phys students don't like their timetable; they often don't have a break for four or five hours straight.
  This relates to the choice of options. If students take Abstract Algebra, then on Tuesday only they have four hours consecutively. There is always a compromise between optimising the timetable against the availability of very large lecture rooms and flexibility. It is not possible to have great choice and a perfect timetable. Four hours consecutively can be quite common in later years for Maths/Phys. The Maths/Phys course has many lectures and much choice and many of these modules are shared with students from Maths and Stats (over 600 a year). The relatively minor, and unavoidable, price to pay is that their timetable can be a little congested. We think that we do as good a job as possible in this regard - we can't offer the impossible!
- PX149. There are some problems with the Maths Moodle quizzes.
  Three students reported issues with the Week 7 quiz, all of which have now been resolved.
- PX110. Students feel that PhD students' marking of their lab books is inconsistent.
  We emphasise to markers the need for consistency. However, there will be some subjectivity in marking. Different markers will always have some differences of emphasis. Taking over the module as a whole, marking will be fair and students gain from interacting with a range of demonstrators.

Second year matters

- PX262. Some students dislike having lectures in the Ramphal building. There are few working writing rests in the lecture theatre.
  Ramphal is a valuable resource. We have reported this issue about desks to the University on your behalf.
- PX277. Some students are having issues with opening/running the Jupyter notebooks. They also feel that the lectures are not always helpful.
  Working with Jupiter notebooks relies on using an unfamiliar software. Any start-up challenges have been resolved as evidenced by 186 student submissions to the first assignment which relies completely on these notebooks.

The lectures on this workshop module play a minor role in delivering teaching (as evidenced by 5 hours of lectures compared to ten hours of workshops). The lectures only serve to reinforce the most important parts of the module script which contains the complete teaching content of the module. Lectures hence guide students to their self-learning as required on a workshop-based module. That has been made clear during the first lecture which sets out the framework for the entire module in all details.

- PX271. Some students struggle with the Electronics laboratory. They feel some lectures would be helpful.
  A one-hour lecture is given to support the electronics laboratory. The lecture material is uploaded to Moodle so that students can refer back to it as needed. The lecture covers everything that students need to understand how the lab works and gives them specific practical advice. Many of the issues that are seen during the practical are a result of students forgetting what was covered in the lecture!
- Students also feel that the 'Post-box' is no longer fit for purpose as it will not take posters, etc.
  There is a cabinet in the lab with a slot cut in the top that students post their work in to. The same cabinet has been used since the labs were refurbished with no issues. Everyone handed their fact sheets (we assume this is what is meant by 'posters') in to the box (we think), although it may be that some students gave their work directly to Sue. Anyway, all were received in good order.
- PX266. Lectures are starting on the hour rather than the usual five minutes past.
  We have spoken to the lecturer. He apologises for this. He thought that this might have happened once or twice but not systematically.

Third year matters

- PX382.
  - Some students don't like the style of the quizzes; they feel they are being 'caught out' with the required form for the answers.
    The syntax of the questions is determined by the type of MoodleX question and the lecturer cannot change this. He tried to give clear instructions for each question. He checked through all the solutions to catch any marks lost by entering e.g, 0.5 rather than 1/2 and so on.
  - Some students thought that the notation for the module is messy, and they don't like the lecture slides. It was pointed out that these are two opposing points of view: handwritten notes are likely to worsen any notational problems.
    The notation the lecturer adopts in the module is fairly standard and used in two of the textbooks (Mandl and Griffiths). At times there are quite a few subscripts and superscripts but these cannot easily be avoided. The lecturer hands out printed notes to be sure every student has a clear set of notes at the end of the module. Most students who comment in the feedback say that they have an excellent set of notes.
- PX384. Students like the tests. They think the mark schemes for past papers could be neater.
  We are pleased that the assessments have been well received. We have passed both of these comments on to the lecturer.
- PX424. Students feel there isn't enough variety of projects.
  26 project titles are offered, and students are invited to choose their favourite 3. This year topics range from: particle physics; fusion, space and astrophysics; astronomy; biophysics; theoretical physics; and the physics of swimming!

Fourth year matters

- PX402. Some students are unclear on how much to write in their project books.
  Regarding records of Work Done, students should bear in mind the advice of their particular supervisor. It is their supervisor who should have had sight of their records and who assesses their Work Done.
- On the whole students are happy with the fourth year.
  Great!

Mathematics matters

- MathPhys students would like card access to Maths.
  This issue has been raised before (see e.g. 11 May 2017). Access to the Maths undergraduate common room is not a small issue. There are over 1000 joint degree students with Maths. In addition, there can be up to 1300 students passing through the Street every hour. For reasons of security and space, we understand that access from the Street is not offered to joint degree students from CS, Physics and Stats.