

**Meeting of the Student Staff Liaison
Committee on Thursday 9th May 2024**

First year

- Positive feedback was received for the PX156 particle physics lectures, and the typed notes for PX154.
We will pass this on to the lecturers concerned.
- Some students would prefer fewer lectures in term 3.
A few years ago, we abolished April exams for first year PX modules, to allow more time for revision, laboratory work, and lectures. Fewer lectures in term 3 means more in terms 1 and 2. We will continue to keep this under review.
- Some students expressed concern about the amount of time they spend preparing for the electronics labs.
There has been no change in the time required for lab preparation this year. Do note that students get credit for this preparation (both through a Moodle quiz and their in-lab mark). The module team think that the time normally required is in line with the CATS credit, and that optional material is clearly marked.
- The 'self-cert' process for first year labs is not suitable for students with underlying health conditions.
Students are allowed up to two self-certified absences from the laboratory in the first year. For longer term absences, or reasonable adjustments, please speak to us.

Second year

- Can problem classes be run in term 2 for PX275, as they were in term 1?
We will pass this on to the module team.
- Positive feedback was received on the typed notes for both halves of PX262.
We will pass this on to the module team.
- Could PX284 start in week 1 of the academic year and finish by the end of term 2?
We believe that there is value in teaching in term 3. It brings students into contact with staff and other students. We want to keep this. What we are proposing for next year is that SMETO will run at 3 lectures a week in weeks 20-24 so that only 5 or 6 slots will be needed in term 3. Term 1 is already full (particularly for Maths/Phys students who have two core maths modules in term 1).
- Hyperbolic functions are used this year. Were we formally introduced to them?
Staff will be reminded not to assume that the notation of hyperbolic functions (linear combinations of exponentials) is known by all students and to take time to introduce it.
- Could all information about examinations be put in one place, rather than scattered across module pages? In particular, information about which past paper codes are relevant for each module.
The changing codes is a temporary issue associated with the new credit framework. The main issues with past papers relate to small changes in syllabus as lecturers and emphases change. Such changes are best explained by individual lecturers on the

module homepages. We will remind the lecturers to be clear about relevant questions on past exam papers.

- Some students think that term 3 online assessments disrupt their examination preparation.

We believe that a small amount of online assessment helps keep students engaged with the material as it is delivered. Next year (see above) the rhythm of PX284 SMETO will be faster in term 2 and slower in term 3.

Third year

- Some of the new modules (in particular PX3A8 Physics of Life and Medicine and PX3A4 Plasma Physics and Fusion) do not seem cohesive. There can be a disparity in the amount of information delivered in each ‘half’.

We will send this information to the lecturers concerned and ask them to look at the rate of deliveries of the two halves.

- Some students wanted more constructive feedback on their Project report. Students reported a diversity of experience in Project vivas.

Projects are on such a diverse range of topics that variations in approach and style are normal. The process is overseen by a team of moderators and the overall management team. They concentrate mostly on accuracy of marking and constructiveness of feedback but less on a unified style of feedback. In contrast with lab reports, the project report is the final piece of work and feedback will not concentrate so much on detailed suggestions about how to write a better report. Instead they concentrate on assessment of the work – much as we receive from referees and critics of our work.

Fourth year

- One student reported that they had four examinations in one week.

This is typical. The Exams Office try to minimise two examinations on the same day. A preponderance of third and fourth year papers are scheduled for the first weeks of the Summer exam period, in recognition that finalists’ results are released first. The exam timetable is put together centrally, as students are allowed to take modules from across external departments. We think they do an excellent job, solving what is almost an unconstrained problem.

- Should students have been invited to graduation by now?

Students in the final year of their programme should at the time of writing (Corpus Christi) have been invited. Third year students on a four year programme who have requested to graduate early with a BSc will not yet have been invited. These early graduation requests will be considered at the relevant exam board, and the central university notified shortly afterwards.

- Some students feel that the lecture notes for PX447 lack detail (although not everyone agrees).

The typed notes are 76 pages long (not including the exercises). We do not think that adding more would be that helpful. By the fourth year, we feel that it is important to go beyond the lecture notes and look at other sources. The modules are often covering research-related material or open questions and adding yet more detail may not be helpful.

- Some students think that the approach to PX454 is at times slapdash. The lecture notes run to 200 pages, and there is much overlap.
We will pass this on to the lecturers (200 pages seems a lot).
- Lots of material is covered (quickly) in PX455.
The team delivering this module are aware that there were issues with the delivery of this module largely associated with the availability of one lecturer. The team is already working on improving the delivery for next year.
- Students liked the availability of third year modules.
We are pleased that the flexibility and breadth of our curriculum is appreciated.
- Positive feedback was received for the organisation of the Convenor of the SSLC.
We will pass this back to the Convenor.

Mathematics

No issues were raised