

## Physics & Astronomy Student-Staff Council Meeting

Thursday 7th October 2021, MS Teams

**Present:** Paul Cruickshank, Natalia Korolkova, Ian Bonnell, Veronika Sedlakova, Laura Uronen, Lucy Hadfield, Thomas Rintoul, Isabelle Terry, Samantha Bowers, Philip King, Ishbel Wright, Janet Lovett, Cameron Rae, Polina Belousova, Maria Ramirez, Liam King, Lilla Barta, Katie Myles, Alexander Csukai, Macklin Entricken, Carol Ballinger, Jonathan Keeling, Emma Murray, Alexander Scholz, Luis Koester, Tori Wallauer, Graham Turnbull, Chico Paulics Bresler, Chris Hooley, Jamie Nicholas, Donatella Cassettari, Cara Kidd

**Apologies:** Moira Jardine, Helen Cammack, Charlie Baily

### 1. Welcome, Introductions and Admin

School President welcomed the new committee, and DoT and HoS introduced themselves and their roles.

### 2. Rep Reports

**1<sup>st</sup> Year Physics** – generally things are going well. Students would like tutorials to have more emphasis on collaboration between students during the session which the DoT agreed we should encourage, but also acknowledged that we can't force students to collaborate. Some students were concerned that they would need more prior knowledge of chemistry for the PoM part of the module, but this may be due to material being less familiar than other parts of the course. Any student who feels there is assumed knowledge in any part of the course should let the module coordinator know.

**1<sup>st</sup> year Astro** – positive feedback overall, especially for labs. Students would also like more collaboration in tutorials, and hopefully this will improve as the semester goes on. Students requested a section at top of the AS1001 moodle page for weekly organisation and this has been actioned by the module coordinator.

**2nd Year Physics** – things are going well. There was some concern about lack of familiarity with the cohort and with the lecturers after a year of online teaching, and events are planned with the direct entry students to get to know everyone, and also looking at the possibility of an event to get to know staff so that students can feel more comfortable asking questions. There were issues for some continuing students running out of time in labs sessions but this has been resolved by the lab coordinator. Students requested that Q&A sessions be scheduled at different times each week to allow everyone the opportunity to attend (there are apparently some clashes with maths tutorials), and the module coordinator will see if this might be possible while still ensuring that the timing is accessible to students in different time zones. The module coordinator added that live in-person workshops start next week, so there will be an opportunity to meet lecturers and ask questions before the class test at the start of week 7.

**Junior Honours** – students are enjoying the semester so far, the workload is a step up from sub honours but students are managing, and students are enjoying being in-person again. Students are enjoying using python in PH3080, but some students are finding the coding difficult and are putting in long hours for assessments. There were some concerns about a lack of coding experience in sub-hons. Students have wide range of coding skills and working with peers has been helpful for some, so the class reps will try to arrange student-run help sessions, possibly in a weekly timeslot and

including input from a PhD student. PH3014 is going well and students are enjoying the module. Some students whose first language is not English are finding essay writing more challenging and have asked for clarification on the rules for proof reading work before submission. The School's Academic Misconduct Officer will email information to JH students on the university policy on proof reading English language. Other JH modules are going well. Students are enjoying PH3074, PH3061, and PH3081. Astro students are enjoying AS4010, particularly tutorials and coding sessions where the emphasis is on student collaboration.

**Senior Honours** – all going smoothly. Students are especially enjoying in-person lab sessions. Class reps are planning a social event for students, and looking into the possibility of an in-person Burn conference event as students missed out on this in JH.

**MPhys Year** – things are going well, students are happy to be back in the building, and general wellbeing seems to be good. Class reps are hoping to organise a welcome back social event. There were some concerns over larger class sizes in terms of student support, and marking and feedback schedules. There was some concern that there are lots of deadlines and class tests towards the end of semester. Students are encouraged to manage their time well, and some flexibility on deadlines can often be arranged if requested in advance. There was positive feedback for PH5015, and for non-assessed labs in PH5023.

### 3. Student Support

**Commuting Students** – It is often hard for commuting students to find study spaces in the School, particularly at busy times of day, and they require access to charging points. Students are reminded that they can use the timetabling system to find vacant rooms, and some of our smaller tutorial rooms with limited capacity are usually free. If any students need a quiet space to join an online teaching activity they can contact the School Office to request a room booking. The DoT has requested a list of commuting students from the university and will contact these students to request further details of what is required.

**ACTION** – School President to flag up lack of power points in JF Allen building for commuting students.

**Junior Honours** – some students have felt intimidated by comments from staff about stepping up to the increased workload and feel that staff could be more supportive and provide practical advice to students on how to cope with the increased workload through study techniques and advice to avoid falling behind. There is quite a lot of work to be done in JH, but it doesn't have to be intimidating and students should absolutely ask for help if they are struggling. JH students should also be supporting each other, which may be more challenging for this cohort as they have not been together for the last year. We would like to encourage everyone to work together and support each other. It was suggested that we could make short video with study techniques.

**MPhys Year** – lack of support for computational work is causing anxiety for some students and they are spending a lot of time struggling with coding. In PH5024 students feel they would like more support, but other modules like PH5023 have support sessions in place to help with computational aspects.

**Other Comments** - Mid semester surveys will take place in week 5 for all modules, and will include EDI questions. Staff are asked to encourage students to complete the MSS for their module and if possible to set aside 5 minutes of class time for this.

#### **4. Wellbeing Update**

Mentoring Scheme Update – no mentees have signed up this semester, but there are 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year student here ready to mentor 3<sup>rd</sup> years and students are encouraged to sign up. Class reps are requested to help with publicity.

#### **5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Standing Item**

EDI Lead Report – Janet Lovett introduced herself as the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Lead and briefly outlined the role of the School EDI committee.

#### **6. Society Reports**

**PhySoc** – successful freshers events, full committee elected at AGM, lots of events planned.

**AstroSoc** – busy freshers week, still unable to go inside the Observatory so star gazing events are outside, any staff available to give talks are encouraged to contact AstroSoc.

**EASy** – so far this semester there have been social events, AGM, and collaborations with AstroSoc. Arduino workshops planned and competitions.

#### **7. President's Report**

There was no time for the School President's report

#### **8. AOCB**

Next meeting will be 13:00 on Thursday week 9