

## Physics & Astronomy Student-Staff Council Meeting

Thursday 3rd February, MS Teams

**Present:** Jonathan Keeling, Chico Paulics Bresler, Lucy Hadfield, Samantha Bowers, Thomas Rintoul, Paul Cruickshank, Cameron Rae, Ian Bonnell, Polina Belousova, Veronika Sedlakova, Clara Brasseur, Laura Uronen, Vanessa Chychrun, Liam King, Macklin Entricken, Jamie Nicholas, Anna Conti, Alexander Csukai, Piper Fowler-wright, Chris Hooley, Ishbel Wright, Janet Lovett, Philip King, Maria Ramirez, Vicki Cormie, Adithiya Dinesh, Helen Cammack, Carol Ballinger, Moira Jardine, Isabelle Terry, Tori Wallauer, Natalia Korolkova, Cara Kidd, Andrew Cameron, Hannah Russell, Graham Turnbull, Donatella Cassettari, Linda Cousins

**Apologies:** Katie Myles, Lilla Barta, Emma Murray, Charlie Baily

### 1. Welcome

The new Astro level 2 rep, Vanessa Chychrun, was welcomed to SSC. Actions taken from the last SSC meeting are outlined in Appendix A

### 2. Teaching and Dual Delivery

**Transit Times** – teaching venues are quite far apart for some in person teaching activities and students are sometimes arriving late. Staff have been asked to try to keep to starting at 5 minutes past the hour and ending at 10 minutes to, so students should have a 15 minute window to travel between classes. Any problems should be reported to DoT.

**Dual Delivery** – online students sometimes find it harder to engage and ask questions in dual delivery lectures on Teams, and there can be technical problems. Raised hands in Teams are often not noticed quickly by lecturers, and the students in the room are encourage to alert the lecturer to a raised hand and pass on questions posted in the chat. Online students are encouraged to raise hand to accompanying their question in the chat as that will provide another flag for lecturers. If the venue has a projector it is useful to project the Teams screen during the lecture to be more visible if anyone has posted a question, or there are technical issues they will be noticed quickly. It was suggested that staff should ask remote students specifically if they have any questions during a lecture. Students felt that access to recorded lectures from last year is useful as a back-up if there are technical issues during a live lecture and to consolidate learning, but for some modules there have been changes to the course since last year. It was noted that having many alternatives available does not mean that students should use all of them, as if they attended a lecture in person it's not necessary to then watch a recording of the same lecture. Overall student have been enjoying lectures.

### 3. EDI Standing Item

Helen Cammack joins the EDI committee as the LGBTQIA+ Champion. Provisional plans for Wellbeing Week in week 5 include social events for pre-hons students on Tuesday, and Honours on Wednesday, with guide dogs and pizza lunch, where students can chat to peers with no staff present. Class reps suggested a discussion topic of time management, and there will be a whiteboard and post-it notes for students to write comments. PG wellbeing events are also planned.

#### 4. **SSC vacation awards**

The application deadline for SSC vacation awards is 10 March. This year fewer awards will be made, but students will be funded for a longer period. Two students from SSC are required to sit on the selection committee, and Sammi Bowers and Veronika Sedlakova volunteered.

#### 4. **Mid Semester Surveys [Appendix B]**

The feedback from last semester was that the survey was too long and took too much time to fill out for every module. This semester for in person modules the aim is to go back to a paper form in the hope of getting more responses, and there will also be an online form for remote students. Project surveys will probably be done online. Some suggested changes to the survey text and layout were noted:

- Lectures are hybrid or in person so we need to change references to online lectures.
- Tutorial workload question should be in the tutorial section not the module section.
- The contact hours responses can be quite arbitrary, but it is useful to determine if too much time is being spent on a particular module. The question should be rephrased for more robust responses.
- Include a reminder in the survey that the tone of free text responses should be respectful.
- Reduce the number of granular questions in the tutorial section.
- Be more precise in the explanation of the 5 point scale in the project section to be consistent with the other sections.
- Simplify the survey and just ask for free text responses of what you like and don't like about the module, rather than tick boxes. This would take longer to fill in, and may end up with fewer responses overall, but more useful information is gained from the free text responses. A better use of free text boxes in the sections of the survey might result in more responses.
- Some students seem to accidentally reverse the scale in the tick boxes as they don't match with the comments in the free text responses.

#### 5. **Upcoming Events and Overview of the Semester to come [Appendix C]**

There is a summary of upcoming events in Appendix C. The next SSC Meeting will be in week 10, when it may be possible to meet in person, but anyone who would prefer to meet online should contact the School President.

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

Physoc – SISCO interdisciplinary science conference has been organised with other science societies for this weekend. Social events are planned for later in the semester.

AstroSoc – successful events this semester, including talks from former students, games nights, stargazing, and a fundraiser with RAG. Star Ball is being organised and the SISCO conference. Volunteers are invited to do talks for AstroSoc.

EASy – a team has been set up to take part in UKSEDS National Rocketry Competition, and progress has been made on the design and build of the rocket. A launch event is planned for after the exam diet.

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

The School President's report is available on Teams. If anyone is interested in running for School President, Thomas is happy to chat with them.

#### 8. **AOCB**

There was no time for any other business.

## Appendices

### Appendix A – Actions Taken

- SP provided wording of Open Book Exam Survey to be included in the minutes.
- Class Reps have been instructed to go to Module Coordinators and teaching staff more promptly with feedback, especially following Mid Semester Surveys

### Appendix B - Surveys

Please find below the current wordings of the Mid Semester Survey for Taught Modules, and the Project Survey.

#### Taught MSS

- Module as a whole
  - Select option which best represents your view (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)
    - The module resources are well organised.
    - I find the lectures engaging.
    - I know where to get help if I need it.
    - I have worked consistently on this module.
    - I feel prepared by the pre-requisite courses.
  - The module workload is:
    - Too light
    - OK
    - Too heavy
  - The tutorial workload is:
    - Too light
    - OK
    - Too heavy
  - How many hours a week on average IN TOTAL (inc. contact hours) do you spend on this module?
    - ≤ 3
    - 4-5
    - 6-7
    - 8-9
    - 10-11
    - 12-13
    - 14-15
    - 16-17
    - 18+
  - Briefly elaborate on any responses if you want: [free text response]

- Lectures
  - Does your module have lectures?
    - Y/N
  - Who is (one of) your lecturer(s)?
    - Select from list (repeated for modules with multiple lecturers)
  - Select option which best represents your view (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)
    - Material is organised well
    - When I have asked questions, my lecturer has responded promptly and helpfully
    - Lectures help my understanding
    - Lectures have been well adapted for online delivery
  - Lecture pace is:
    - Too fast
    - OK
    - Too slow
- Tutorials
  - Does your module have tutorials?
    - Y/N
  - Select option which best represents your view (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)
    - Our tutor explains the material well
    - Tutorial sessions help my understanding
    - Marking feedback is helpful
    - Our tutor stimulates group discussion and problem solving
  - Briefly elaborate on any responses if you wish [free text response]
- Labs
  - Does your module have labs?
    - Y/N
  - Select option which best represents your view (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)
    - Lab sessions are well organised
    - Lab material is interesting
    - Demonstrators are well prepared
  - The lab content has:
    - Too much new
    - The right amount of new
    - Too little new
  - The lab workload is:
    - Too heavy
    - OK
    - Too light
  - How many hours a week in total on average do you spend on labs in this module?

- < 1
  - 1-2
  - 3-4
  - 5-6
  - 6-7
  - 8-9
  - 10-11
  - 12-13
  - > 14
- Briefly elaborate on any responses if you wish [free text response]
- Workshops
  - Does your module have workshops?
    - Y/N
  - Select option which best represents your view (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)
    - Workshops are well organised
    - Workshops are useful for my learning
    - Demonstrators are competent and helpful
  - Briefly elaborate on any responses if you wish [free text response]
- General Free Text Responses
  - Please indicate aspects of the module you enjoy and suggestions for improvement
  - Please indicate any positive aspects or suggestions for improvement of dual delivery learning (i.e. learning where some of the class are in the classroom and some are online)
  - Please indicate any positive aspects or suggestions for improvement of wholly online learning (i.e. learning all aspects of your class occur online, whether live or pre-recorded)
  - If you have any other general comments, please add them here.

### Project Survey

- Project
  - Which module are you?
  - How is your project going?
    - 5 star rating from Badly to Great
  - How much support do you get from your supervisor?
    - 5 star rating from Too Little to Too Much
  - How easy is it to communicate with your supervisor?
    - 5 star rating from Very Hard to Very Easy
  - What is going well in your project? (e.g. How are you and your supervisor making it work? Any suggestions for fellow students?) [Free Text Response]
    - This was flagged as the most important question in last years survey.

- What could be better? (e.g. what is causing you stress?) [Free Text Response]
  - “Another super important question. Please be honest, there is still time to fix anything. If you have any urgent specific issues please contact the module coordinator(panda-proj-coord@st-andrews.ac.uk) or a class rep.”
- Any general feedback on project organisation? (e.g. What do you think of the timetable? Are there specific things that would think would be useful to feel better supported?) [Free Text Response]
- If you are currently going into the lab, how safe do you feel?
  - Very Safe, Somewhat Safe, Neither Safe nor Unsafe, Somewhat Unsafe, Very Unsafe
    - *Believe this was due to COVID considerations.*
- Careers (Optional)
  - What type of jobs are you applying for? (Check all that apply)
    - Academia (Masters + PhD)
    - Industry
    - Teaching (PGDEs, PGCEs, etc.)
    - Taking a Break
    - Something Else
  - How apprehensive are you about the current job market?
    - 5 star rating from Very Nervous to Very Comfortable
  - Have you been to the Careers Centre?
    - Y/N
  - Any feedback on Careers Support? [Free Text Response]

### Appendix C – Semester Overview

- Week 3
  - Class Rep Forum and Student Staff Council
- Week 4
  - UG Colloquium – Prof Moira Jardine
- Week 5
  - Mid Semester Surveys
  - Demystifying Academic Talk – Caitlin Duffy – PhD in the Netherlands/Europe
  - Union Election Nominations
  - Wellbeing Week
- Break
- Week 6
  - Union Election Campaigning
    - School President Hustings
  - Potential for CR led socials
  - Potential for UG Colloquium
- Week 7
  - Union Election Voting

- Potential for CR led socials
  - Potential for UG Colloquium
- Week 8
  - UG Colloquium
- Week 9
  - Demystifying Academia – PhD/PostDoc Panel
- Week 10
  - Class Rep Forum and Student Staff Council
  - Careers Talk – Science Communication – Dr Simon Clark
  - UG Colloquium – Atmospheric Physics – Dr Simon Clark
- Week 11
  - Potential Social and Wellbeing events

#### Other events to find a place

- Sustainable Careers Event