Physics & Astronomy Student Staff Council Meeting
Thursday 5 October 2023, 1 pm, Staff Common Room

Present: Cameron Rae, Mateo Guzmán Subiría, Lilla Barta, Ozde Ozkasap, Angela Gupta, Phil King, Graham Smith, Ian Bonnell, Sam Morrison, Lewis Thompson, Tom Rosas, Luke Campbell, Murray Purkis, Shiju Prasad, Katie Stewart, Elias Malisi, Cameron McDonald, Holly Seo, Lachlan Dufort-Kennett, Nikko Juengsophonvitavas, Anna Conti, Theo Cuthbertson, Varvara Konovalova, Rory Brown, Ava Kelly, Callum Murison, Hugo Decitre, Bruce Sinclair, Moira Jardine, Kenny Wood, Paul Cruickshank, Sebastian Schulz, Aleks Schulz, Graham Turnbull, Lucy Hadfield, Natalia Korolkova, Janet Lovett, Valerie Bui, Lucy Kappai, Aaron Wafflart
Apologies: Vicki Cormie

1. **Welcome and introductions**
   The School President welcomed everyone to the first SSC meeting of the semester and each member introduced themselves.

2. **Year Group Reports**

   5th year reps report
   The Astro rep, Experimental Physics rep, and Theoretical Physics rep have discussed issues raised by students with module coordinators and there is nothing to bring to SSC.
   The Photonics rep reported that students are enjoying lectures, but are finding that their timetable is tightly packed with lots of labs, and several students are travelling in from Dundee so they have additional travelling time. Not all students have a background in Physics and some feel that there is not enough independent learning time to get up to speed. Students would like more tutorials to help their understanding of the material. The module coordinator for Photonics lab explained that the timetable is based on credit weightings and accounts for approximately 150 hours over the semester, part in lab and part independent study, and the request for tutorials can be discussed.
   There were no issues from the MSc Astro students.

   4th year reps report
   Astro – the survey had a good number of responses, and students are generally happy with workload, and lecture pace is good.
   Physics – students are generally happy. Some students reported that they are spending a lot of time on lab work outside of labs. This has been discussed with the Lab Coordinator who clarified the expected hours for credits in the module are 70 hours in lab and 80 hours outside of lab.
   Theory – there are no major issues, and the rep has discussed feedback with relevant module coordinators.

   3rd year reps report
   Astro – students have found the lectures in AS4010 difficult to understand, and have discussed with the module coordinator and DoT.
   Physics – students are enjoying PH3081 and would like more time to ask questions and more worked examples. Some students are finding PH4037 lectures are too fast, and would also like more worked examples.
   Theory – some students are struggling to understand lecture content, students are enjoying transferrable skills.

2nd year reps report
Astro – students are generally happy with AS1001, although have some issues the solar system topic.
Physics returning – students are happy with lectures, tutorials, and labs. Workshops are good and the class rep has spoken to the Module Coordinator about having more demonstrators available.
Physics direct entry students are finding labs quite a difficult jump from what they did in school, but are getting used to it.

1st year reps report
Astro – structure and presentation issues on AS1001 have been discussed with the Module Coordinator. Lecturers give plenty of opportunity for questions.
Physics – students are very satisfied with teaching and feel they can ask questions in and out of class. The class rep and School President are putting together resources for career prospects for students. Study skills workshops have been advertised, plus physics base is available and class reps should spread the word.
Gateway – students are happy, some are finding Astro lectures are quite fast.

Joint Honours rep report
There was a good response from joint degree students to the survey. Some students reported module clashes and the DoT explained that efforts are made to avoid multiple deadlines occurring close together, but some clashes are inevitable. Some students feel that their Academic Adviser is not providing enough information about pathways in their programme. Joint honours students in pre-honours have one Adviser from either School in their programme. DoT will discuss issues with the class rep. An introductory talk for students on joint degrees would be useful.

3. **Missing lectures: results from surveys and discussion**
Since the pandemic, lecture attendance has been low with a significant number of students missing lectures. Class reps have asked for feedback on this and reasons given include: ill health, early morning lectures, some students prefer to watch recorded lectures in their own time, lecture pace is too fast so it is hard to take notes when attending in-person, students became used to online learning during the pandemic, some students felt uncomfortable attending lectures during the UCU strikes. There are learning and wellbeing benefits of attending lectures in-person and interacting with other students and staff, and this is a good way to build a sense of community. There are concerns when students do not attend lectures or watch the lecture recordings. Students would like more support if they fall behind but there is not much time during the semester. Some students are reluctant to ask for help and we should encourage them to seek advice sooner rather than later.

4. **Workshops/tutorials in Honours**
This will be discussed at the next meeting.

5. **School Roles Reports**

EDI Rep Report – International Day is being organised with the School of Management. Pride week events are planned, staff are requested to include pronouns in their email signatures.

Sustainability Report – the rep is collecting feedback on how we can do more for sustainability as a School, including looking at the efficiency of the recycling bins in our building.

Disability and Academic Support Report – students request lecture slides be released before rather than after a lecture.

Careers and Employability Report – organising workshops on writing a CV and skills development.

6. **Society Reports**

AstroSoc – have had a strong start to the year with up to 3 events per week with an average of 100 students attending. The committee are looking for staff to give talks, and funding ideas for conference.

PhySoc – have a 25% increase in membership this year. Events this semester include AGM, Cern trip organisation, wellbeing event with dogs, collaborating with Optica student chapter for events with PG students.

EASy – still some positions to fill following the AGM. The recent CAD workshop went well, and Dr Dav Macfarlane is giving a talk in week 7. Anyone interested in giving an engineering related talk should please get in touch with the rep.

7. **AOCB**

There was no other business.