

**Physics & Astronomy Student Staff Council Meeting  
Thursday 28 March 2024, 1 pm Staff Common Room**

**Present:** Janet Lovett, Lucy Hadfield, Claudia Cyganowski, Ozde Ozkasap, Mateo Guzmán Subiría, Lewis Thompson, Holly Seo, Lachlan Dufort-Kennett, Angela Gupta, Sam Morrison, Sam Henderson, Cameron McDonald, Bruce Sinclair, Aaron Wafflart, Valerie Bui, Lucy Kappai, Hugo Decitre, Ava Kelly, Lilla Barta, Anna Hayes, Callum Murison, Tom Rosas, Luke Campbell, Murray Purkis, Ian Bonnell, Jonathan Keeling, Cameron Rae, Graham Turnbull, Natalia Korolkova, Paul Cruickshank, Anna Conti

**Apologies:** Graham Smith

**1. Welcome**

The School President welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the class reps for all their work gathering feedback information.

**2. Textbooks**

Class reps asked students if they felt there were enough copies of core textbooks for their modules available, and to identify where more copies are required. Some textbooks are available on 3-day loan in the library but it was felt that it was not useful to have the textbook for a short time, and it would be preferable to have less on short loan but have more copies available in the library as reference only. Students would appreciate having relevant book chapters included in lecture slides, and a list of chapters covered in each lecture. Students are encouraged to use textbooks and need to develop skills in this area.

More copies of the following textbooks would be appreciated:

Griffiths, Introduction to electrodynamics  
Griffiths, Introduction to quantum mechanics  
Landau, The classical theory of fields  
Barnett, Quantum information  
Arfken, Mathematical methods for physicists  
Glazer and Wark, Statistical mechanics

**3. Coding modules, review of Comp Phys**

There was positive feedback about AS3013, but students were less happy with PH3080. They would prefer to be assessed through coursework only rather than an exam, and would like to have a smaller number of case studies that are taught in more detail. Students felt that PH3080 did not prepare them well for coding in Honours. The DoT confirmed that the number of case studies will be reduced, and discussions are ongoing to find ways to include more coding in pre-honours modules that can be built upon in 3<sup>rd</sup> year. Students have requested coding workshops and more in labs.

**4. Exams and viewing script papers**

Generic exam feedback to students contains details of any action taken to allow for a mistake in the exam paper, which is decided on a case-by-case basis and the outcome is always in the favour of the student. Students are advised not to spend too long on any exam question (whether a mistake exists or not).

There would be a significant administrative burden to make all marked exam scripts electronically available to students. Attendance at exam viewing sessions is usually quite low, but the JH modules combined session worked quite well.

## **5. Curriculum Review Discussion (see Appendix A)**

Bruce Sinclair gave a brief introduction to the curriculum review and thanked students for their comments. The positive comments included value of small group work, pre-honours workshops, labs and tutorials, computational astrophysics, and the Burn student conference was praised. There were some negative comments about coding and programming, and students would like a more coordinated programming approach. There were also comments about overall workload and workload per credit.

Suggestions for changes in pre-honours for the changing skill set of entrant students included workshops for using textbooks, and an event like the Burn conference for pre-honours students. Students felt that it was not necessary to have more lab work, coding, computational (astro)physics, mathematics in the curriculum, but it should be more effective. Students commented that they think there should be more particle and high energy physics in the curriculum, the overlap in content in Astro modules should be resolved, and they felt that there is an apparent jump in level between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year.

## **6. Conclusions**

The School ceilidh went well and was very well organised; the Pints with Professors event was well attended and will continue. The election results for the new School President will be announced tonight and Anna was thanked for all her hard work this year and received a well-deserved round of applause.

## Curriculum Review – Document for SSC March 2024

### Background

We are currently reviewing of our curriculum, and we would value your input to that, please. Our curriculum is both the subject content and the skills development. The review aims to take on board comments from you, from staff, and from external sources. It aims to come up with a set of recommendations to take to the School's Teaching Committee for consideration for action. Some of our earlier discussions have already been implemented, for example the introduction of the new honours module in Cosmology.

Our curriculum is informed by our knowledge of the abilities of our entrant students. It is informed by our knowledge of what those employing graduates are looking for, and what those taking on graduates as PhD students are selecting on. It is informed by our knowledge of what is covered in physics and astrophysics programmes in other universities, both by direct experience and by annual comments from our external examiners. Our curriculum has to satisfy the [QAA Subject Benchmark Statement](#) and the [Accreditation Requirements](#) of the Institute of Physics. The activities associated with your degree programme are part of what you can use to obtain the valuable [Graduate Attributes](#) that employers and others may judge you on around the time of graduation and afterwards.

Please note that discussions here are at a level that should be independent of who is teaching which module and how. We are considering what we should be aiming to achieve in each degree programme through the compulsory and optional modules. There also have to be reality checks - there is a finite resource available to deliver the curriculum, there is a minimum amount that graduates need to be able to do in order for the degree to be recognised, there is a maximum amount that is reasonable to ask of students in their studies.

### Requests

#### Skills Maps for our current curricula

Please would you look at the "Skills Maps" that we have drafted? The hope is that these may be helpful to students considering what skills to list when applying for jobs/research degrees. They may also be helpful in our curriculum discussions. Please tell me **before** the SSC meeting by email (or by seeing me in my office) of things that you feel should be listed and which are not yet, and any things that are on the map that you feel have not happened. I'd also appreciate suggestions on the language used. Please note that the maps may contain activities developed in any modules that are compulsory for your degree programme, including in MT2501 and MT2503.

#### What do you particularly appreciate from the current curricula?

Please go to the online form by this Wednesday at 4 pm and let me know about things that you feel are particularly appropriate or important in the current curriculum. For this exercise it is not please that Dr Y is particularly good in your opinion at explaining things, it is about what is in the content coverage and skills development that you recognise as contributing well to your education and development.

What changes would you like to see recommended in the Curriculum Review?

At Thursday's meeting we would value hearing from you your suggestions for the development of the curriculum, please, and why. For example:-

- What, if any, changes do you think we should make in pre-honours for the changing skill-set of entrants?
- Should we have more or less lab work, coding, computational (astro)physics, mathematics?
- What topics should be compulsory/optional in the honours curriculum for different degree intentions?
- Are there aspects in the development of graduate skills that we should do more or less of?
- Should we make any changes to project provision?