

Staff-Student Consultative Committee
Minutes for Meeting No. 1 of 2017/2018

Date: 1st December, 2017

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Venue: Rm 518A, CYM Physics Building, HKU

Present:

Dr. J. J. L. Lim (Chairman, Staff representative)

Dr. J.H.C. Lee (Staff representative)

Dr. J.C.S. Pun (Staff representative)

Dr. M. K. Yip (Staff representative)

Mr. Yeing Wai-Yen Ryan (1st year representative)

Mr. Wong Hong Tsun Thomas (2nd representative)

Mr. Gong Zheng Yang Guang (3rd year representative)

Mr. Ng Ka Wai Patrick (4th year student representative)

Mr. Chan Ho Cheung (Postgraduate student representative)

Miss Kwok Ka Yee, Elizabeth (Physics society)

(1) Report from the chairman

Student response to SETL remains low. Student representatives are instructed to encourage their peers to provide feedback on individual courses through the SETL. Feedback on positive aspects are welcomed; feedback on negative aspects are equally encouraged, as this provides critical input for departments/teaching units to better understand student learning experiences and to make adjustments so as to improve course effectiveness.

(2) Feedback from 1st year student representative

Concern: Students would like the department to help strengthen their knowledge in calculus.

Deliberation: In years past, the Physics department had provided short courses on calculus during the term. Attendance in these courses, however, was very low. Nevertheless, enrichment courses in mathematics continue to be regularly held during the summer vacation.

Action: Notify curriculum development committee.

(3) Feedback from 2nd year student representative

Concern: Students taking PHYS2250 (Introductory Mechanics) requested swapping homework and tutorial problems as homework problems were usually more difficult than tutorial problems.

Deliberation: The instructor (Yip), who is a member of the SSCC, agreed that the homework problems were more difficult than the tutorial problems. The tutorial problems encompass different levels of difficulty so as to provide training before students worked on the homework problems. The homework problems are meant to be more difficult, in part because they serve as a means of assessment.

Action: The instructor will include more problems, spanning different levels of difficulty, to the homework assignment.

Concern: Students taking PHYS2260 (Heat and Waves) believe the tutorial problems were well designed, but the assignment problems too simple. Furthermore, the graded assignments are returned very late in the semester. They would also like to instructor to know that his lectures can be improved with better preparation before class.

Action: The course coordinator has been notified.

Concern: Students taking PHYS2265 (Modern Physics) find the difficulty level of this course to be too high.

Action: The course coordinator has been notified, and advised to seek regular student feedback to gauge their level of understanding.

(4) Feedback from 3rd year student representative

Concern: Students taking PHYS4350 (Advanced Classical Mechanics) reported a large overlap with PHYS3550 (Classical Mechanics), especially the contents on Lagrangian mechanics. Students find Goldstein's textbook to be too difficult, and suggest the instructor to not directly extract his PowerPoint notes from this book – as they cannot follow the textbook, the PowerPoint notes are ineffectual. Instead, they request supplementary materials to this course.

Action: The course coordinator has been notified.

Concern: Students taking PHYS3851 (Atomic and Nuclear Physics) reported that this course cover many topics in quantum mechanics (e.g., WKB method, among others) that were not taught in PHYS2265 (Modern Physics). They needed more detailed notes on these topics.

Action: The course coordinator has been notified.

Concern: Students taking PHYS4651 (Selected Topics in Astrophysics) expressed that this course is well designed and covered many topics. Nevertheless, they suggested the inclusion topics related to high-energy astrophysics.

Action: The course coordinator has been notified.

Concern: Students taking MATH courses would like departmental guidance on which MATH courses to take. They find that only one third or even less of a given MATH course to be useful. Some enrolled in inappropriate MATH courses and obtained very poor.

Action: Discuss with curriculum development committee on path to provide such advice.

Concern: Students taking PHYS4150 (Computational Physics) found that only MATLAB was used throughout the course. They worry whether they have enough training for future research given the many software packages and computer languages available in the research community.

Action: The course coordinator has been notified.

(5) Feedback from 4th year student representative

Concern: Students taking PHYS3250 (Theoretical Physics) expressed appreciation for the performance of the course tutor because he always highlighted the main points of each tutorial problem.

Action: Pass feedback to Instructor and Department Head.

Concern: Students taking PHYS3850 (Waves and Optics) found the course too easy and that it has extensive overlap with PHYS2260 (Heat and Waves). On the other hand, they had problems with laboratory experiments, and found that the errors in the experiments were

abnormally high. They suspect that there were defects in the equipment.

Action: The course coordinator has been notified.

Concern: Students taking PHYS3851 (Atomic and Nuclear Physics) request more exercises to supplement their study.

Action: The course coordinator has been notified.

Concern: Students taking PHYS4150 (Computational Physics) suggest that the course should provide flexibility on program coding; e.g., allowing them to use alternative computer languages in the homework assignments. They found the course rather difficult, and suggest lowering the level of difficulty. They also suggest that the due date of each assignment to be explicitly written in the assignment so as to avoid confusion.

Action: The course coordinator has been notified.

(6) Feedback from postgraduate representative

Concern: Postgraduate students applauded the newly organized activity in the department, i.e. the Friday Departmental Gathering.

Action: Feedback to Department Head.

Concern: Postgraduate students reported that the quota of the graduate school course on “Thesis Writing” was too low, so that many of them could not enroll in this course in the first semester.

Action: Feedback to Graduate School.

Concern: Postgraduate students requested keeping their desks when they extended their period of graduate studies.

Deliberation: In practice, whether this is possible or not depends on the availability of desks.

(6) Feedback from physics society representative

Concern: The Society requests a society room. The room will serve as an office as well as a place for students to gather and study.

Action: There is every desire to provide such a room when one becomes available.

Concern: A general request was made for the department to provide a printer, so that students can print documents such as homework assignments and tutorial problem sheets.

Deliberation: This issue has been extensively debated in the past, and no action taken because of concerns in how to manage such an open-use printer.

Concern: Because of clashes with classes, some students could not join the departmental tea reception.

Deliberation: There will always be timetable clashes, so those who miss out in one semester can join in another.

Communication: Next executive committee will organize the high table dinner.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

MK YIP (Temporary Secretary)

1st December, 2017