

Staff-Student Consultative Committee
Minutes for Meeting No. 2 of 2014/2015

Date: 28th April 2015

Time: 12.34pm

Venue: Room 518, CYM Physics Building, HKU

Present:

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

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

All undergraduate and graduate representatives, as well as members of Physics Society

(Dr. M.K. Yip had a class and Dr. Jenny Lee was on professional leave.)

The concerns/requests detailed below were reported at the Staff Meeting on 29 April 2015, and remedial actions agreed upon at the staff meeting also are mentioned below.

1. 1st-year student representative.

There is a very strong demand by students in PHYS 1250 (which is the first undergraduate course for Physics majors) for their reports on Laboratory 1 to be graded and returned before they submit their reports on Laboratory 2. In this way, students can see what the graders are looking for in their reports, and improve upon their reports for Laboratory 2 accordingly.

This is particularly important for students of this course because it is the first course in their major curriculum and thus they do not know what is to be expected from the submitted reports and what is the standard required.

There are two reasons why reports on Laboratory 1 are not returned before reports on Laboratory 2 are due. First, for greater efficiency, all reports are collected before they are graded. Second, and more importantly, to not provide the opportunity for students who have not yet done Laboratory 1 to copy from students who have had their reports on Laboratory 1 graded and returned.

It was suggested that perhaps a sample report (contents different from the work actually conducted in the laboratories) can be posted online so that the students can see what is required in their reports.

- The suggestion of a sample report will be raised with the newly incoming Laboratory Coordinator for action.

2. 2nd-year student representative.

Lecture times for courses in the Physics department have clashes with those in the Chemistry and Earth Science departments, limiting choices in course selection for those conducting majors or minors involving courses across the different departments.

Before course timetabling was centralized, there was a degree of coordination among these three departments so as to minimize clashes between their core courses. Now that timetabling is centralized, such coordination becomes much more difficult if at all possible.

A number of possible solutions were explored (e.g., evening or Saturday classes), none of which were found desirable. This concern will be passed on to Judy Chow, who is responsible for the timetabling of physics lectures.

- This issue was raised at the Physics Department Staff Meeting. It was concluded that higher priority should be given to minimize timetable clashes between courses that are required by students choosing major/minor combinations in physics, math/physics, and astronomy. And this is already quite a challenge with a flexible 4-year curriculum and a mixture of students entering in the first and third (Direct Admission Scheme) year.
- The SSCC Chair will let the Faculty know of this concern.

3. 3rd-year student representative (4-yr curriculum).

There is little or difficult-to-find information on the application datelines and requirements for Capstone courses.

Because of recent changes to Capstone requirements at the Faculty level, the department has had to respond accordingly and, as a result, some of the information may no longer be posted in a transparent manner. This will be something the department will address for the following year. It was suggested that the department can have an information session on the final year project and directed studies courses.

- The suggestion of an information session was raised at the staff meeting for consideration.

4. 3rd-year student representative (3-yr curriculum).

For students about to graduate and not planning further studies, their primary concern is job prospects.

The individual consultation service provided by CEDARS provides only general suggestions, of limited help to students seeking actual jobs. SCNC 2005 is not helpful in actually finding a job as it only teaches students how to write CVs.

The Physics Society is planning a career information day. The SSCC plans to stay in close touch with the Physics Society and report back to the Department for suggestions of help or contributions for the career information day.

5. Graduate representative

There is a vocal and apparently universal agreement among the graduate students that the graduate courses conducted by the Graduate School (as opposed to those conducted by the Department) are of limited if any value (quote: “a waste of time”). This concern has been raised constantly over the years not just to the SSCC, but also to their individual supervisors.

Despite recording their concerns in the SETL, there have been no visible improvements in the courses conducted by the Graduate School.

- Students should be reminded to continue to voice their opinions on these courses in the SETL survey.
- A new Vice President of Research will be appointed, and it is hoped that he/she will respond to student concerns.

6. Physics Society representatives

The lock for the cabinet used by the Physics Society is broken. This issue has been raised with the Estates Office for remedy.

A request was made for a room for the exclusive use of the Physics Society. Unfortunately, because of the lack of office space, no such room can be designated at the moment. Instead, it was suggested that the Physics Society be allowed to book Rm 522 of the CYMP building when not used by the Department.

- This suggestion was raised at the Staff Meeting, and guidelines for how the room can be reserved by the Physics Society will be discussed.