Staff-Student Consultative Committee
Minutes for Meeting No. 1 of 2024/2025

Date: 11th June 2025
Time: 3:00 p.m.
Venue: Rm 105, CYM Physics Building, HKU and Zoom meeting

Present:
Prof. F. C. C. Ling (Chairman, Staff representative)
Prof. H.F. Chau (Staff representative)
Dr. Judy Chow (Staff representative)
Dr. J.C.S. Pun (Staff representative)
Prof. Jenny Lee (Staff representative)
Prof. Chenjie Wang (Staff representative)
Prof. J. J. L. Lim (Staff representative)
Mr. Yang Chi Fung (1st year representative)
Mr. Fung Chiu Wah (4th year representative)
Mr. Choi Chung Hei (4th year student)
Mr. He Zhiyaun (MSc in Physics representative)
Mr. Yiu To Chung Martin (Postgraduate student representative)
Mr. Yang Feichi (Physics Society representative)
Dr. K. F. Lai
Dr. K. K. Lam

Apology:
Dr. M. K. Yip (Staff representative)
Mr. Chiu Shi Yuen (2st year representative)
Mr. To Chung Cheung (3nd year representative)

(1) Feedback from 1st year student representative

Concern: Students reported that the lectures for PHYS2265 did not cover the topics listed on the syllabus such as atomic structure and hydrogen atom. Instead, the majority of the material was replaced with senior-level quantum mechanics content.

Action: The issue will be reflected to the course teacher.

Concern: Students reported that the duration of the midterm quiz for PHYS2255 course did not match the actual workload. Most students could not finish the last part of the midterm quiz.

Deliberation: Course coordinator Dr. J.C.S. Pun acknowledged receiving the comments about the midterm test and stated he will consider these comments for future adjustments.

Concern: Students reported that the topics on the last chapter about Fourier series, Fourier transformation and Dirac delta function were not covered in the lecture of PHYS2155. The same situation happened in previous years.

Action: The issue will be reflected to the course instructor.

(2) Feedback from 2nd year student representative

Mr. Chiu Shi Yuen, 2nd year representative, emailed comments to Dr. K. F. Lai prior the meeting.

Concern: Students reported a similar comment on PHYS2265. The course material included higher level quantum mechanics knowledge such as Pauli matrices and other matrix formalism.

Action: The issue will be reflected to the course teacher.

(3) Feedback from 3rd year student representative

The committee will collect comments after the meeting.

(4) Feedback from 4th year student representative

Concern: Students expressed concern about the new Major offered by Department of Earth Sciences which includes some year-3 level physics course into their major requirements.

Deliberation: Prof. J. J. L. Lim added that the proposed Major focuses on both planetary science and astrophysics and Physics Department will teach astrophysics related components. Dr. J.C.S. Pun also emphasized that the discussion was at a preliminary stage.

Concern: Student reported that the question type for PHYS3850 midterm and exam changed to more derivation-oriented. Some questions include derivations of new concepts without additional hints, using notations and covering topics that had not been discussed in lectures.

Action: The issue will be reflected to the course teacher.

Concern: Students reported that many of the experiments conducted in the lab sessions were too simple and the results were quite predictable. Year 1 representatives added that they would prefer long report assessments instead of the current fill-in-the-blank worksheets adopted for junior year lab sessions.

Deliberation: Prof. H.F. Chau reminded students that the primary focus of the laboratory sessions is to develop experimental skills and data analysis, regardless of the predictability of the results. Dr. K. F. Lai and Dr. K. K. Lam acknowledged receiving comments about the difficulty-level of the experiments offered, writing style for the lab manuals, and the format of the long report assessments. The issue will be reflected to the multiple course teachers of these lab exercises.

(5) Feedback from MSc in Physics representative

Concern: Students reported that they had to go through multiple references to learn the course materials for PHYS8552 Condensed matter physics. They mentioned that the number of assignments and tutorials offered was insufficient for mastering the course content.

Deliberation: Prof. Chenjie Wang replied that he received a lot of comments from the students during his previous teaching of PHYS8552 and noted that he had reduced the number of assignments at that time. And the number of assignments was further reduced this year. Prof. H.F. Chau commented that the topics in condensed matter physics are inherently difficult and highly fragmented, and that two tutorial sessions are insufficient to support student learning.

Action: The issue will be reflected to the course coordinator.

(6) Feedback from research postgraduate representative

Concern: Students reported that the hand drier for 4th floor male toilet is broken again.

Deliberation: Prof. F. C. C. Ling suggested that students should report to the department office. The officer will ask HKU Estate Office to fix it.

Concern: Students suggested subscribing to an organizational Overleaf plan for the research group to enhance collaborative research work.

Action: The issue will be reflected to the department head and DRPC.

Concern: Students encountered issues while purchasing additional computers for the research group and asked if there are documents available for RPgs to learn the general regulations regarding this

issue from the department or other administrative departments.

Deliberation: Prof. F. C. C. Ling replied that he also had trouble identifying the relevant regulations. He noted that the administrative parties will determine and notify you whether your requests are acceptable. He stated that changing the current situation is unlikely and almost hopeless.

Concern: Students from the non-astrophysics group expressed reluctance to attend seminars covering astronomy-related topics.

Action: The issue will be reflected to the DRPC and the course coordinator of PHYS8950 Postgraduate Seminar.

Concern: Students requested additional reminders for Graduate School courses, as some students forgot to attend these courses which some of these courses are only offered once per year.

Deliberation: Prof. H.F. Chau replied that they could raise this request to Graduate School. Students are encouraged to mark down the important date and follow the schedule.

Concern: Students reported inconvenience with new mailbox procedures following the department office renewal. They must collect the mailbox key from the department office, use it at the distant mailbox location, and return the key afterwards. Students inquired about possible improvements for this arrangement.

Action: The issue will be reflected to the department office.

(7) Feedback from Physics Society representative

Concern: Students asked about the availability of CYP Room 522 and request a room for the Physics Society.

Deliberation: Prof. F. C. C. Ling reported that Room 522 is now available for booking. He mentioned that he has raised the request for a room for Physics society to the Dean and will follow up this request officially via email.

(8) Feedback from teacher representative

- Prof. J. J. L. Lim initiated a discussion on using AI tools in studies, noting ongoing departmental discussions about integrating AI into major courses. Dr. J. C. S. Pun mentioned two 3-credit AI courses will be offered to new students entering from 2025-26 and

encouraged students to provide suggestions and comments on AI-related content.

- Dr. J. C. S. Pun reported that additional prerequisites will be added to some physics courses (PHYS1150, PHYS1240, PHYS2150, and PHYS2155) in response to prior feedback about senior-year students from other departments enrolling in these junior-level physics courses, potentially creating unfair competitive advantage. He encouraged students to report similar situations in the future.
- Dr. J. C. S. Pun reported that new laboratory sessions and experiments will be added to physics major courses. He also encouraged students who took PHYS2255 and PHYS2265 to complete a questionnaire about the new labs implemented.
- Dr. J. C. S. Pun reported that a new timetable will be adopted in 2025-26, featuring significant changes to the scheduling of courses.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Kenneth Kin Fung Lai (Temporary Secretary)
11th June, 2025

Remarks:

Mr. Choi Chung Hei, year 4 student, emailed a comment after the meeting on the PHYS3xxx lab components. He suggested to shift the focus of PHYS3xxx-level labs practical skills and experimental design, incorporating creative or open-ended components instead of demonstration of physics principles.

PHYS3760 Physics Laboratory
Lab 2 (ESR experiment):
The lab was quite interesting. However, I believe it could be further enriched by incorporating more hands-on experience with instrumentation techniques. This would provide students with a better understanding of the tools used in experimental physics.

Lab 7 (Dynamic response of a second order system using metal plate vibration):
I found the wiring component particularly engaging. I agree with the point that Prof. Chau mentioned in the meeting that connecting the wire was more challenging than simply drawing the circuit diagram, which made it a valuable learning experience. I would suggest including similar hands-on wiring tasks in other lab sessions as well, to reinforce practical circuit-building skills.

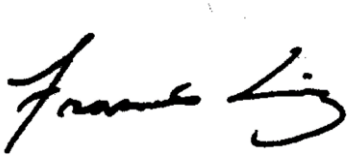
Lab 8 (Physical pendulum):
Although the lab content itself felt a bit monotonous, I appreciated the data analysis component. It helped me develop some basic coding skills, which I found useful for processing experimental data.

Project 2 (Michelson interferometer):
This project felt somewhat too simple, even compared to the regular lab sessions. Additionally, the instructions provided were a bit excessive, which may have reduced the necessity for independent problem-solving. I suggest replacing the detailed lab manual with a curated reading list instead. This would encourage students to source and synthesize relevant information on their own, thereby making the project more skill-oriented. It would also help balance the workload by guiding students that they do not have to find the paper themselves.

PHYS3851 (2023-2024 Sem 1):
This lab was quite engaging and offered a great introduction to nuclear physics. I found the content both interesting and informative.

PHYS3750 (2024-2025 Sem 1):
I particularly enjoyed the interferometer experiment. It was rewarding to learn how to align the laser, and I also gained a deeper understanding of the underlying physics.

PHYS3850:
Lab 2 was interesting and informative. However, I found Lab 1 less relevant to the optics theme of the course. The experiment involving a guitar string felt more suitable for a classical mechanics course, as it is something familiar and easily observable in everyday life. I would prefer to see more labs focused on optics-specific topics such as polarization, Fourier transforms, or geometrical optics.



Prof Francis Ling
Chair, Staff Student Consultative Committee