Student-Staff Forum
Wednesday 10 November 2021
Online via Zoom

Panel Members: Carl Paterson (CP), Michele Dougherty (MD), Ingo Mueller-Wodarg (IMW)

1. **Could the department introduce a reading week?**
   CP said that we could not introduce a reading week immediately, but it will be considered and discussed with the Student Representatives and at the Teaching Committee. To introduce a reading week, the overall workload would need to be reduced and how to do this would need to be carefully considered.

2. **When does information about IROP come out?**
   IMW confirmed that information about the IROP scheme will be given at a careers talk scheduled for later this term. The deadline to apply will be the last Thursday before the end of term.

3. **Can all lectures be moved to in-person again, with the option of Panopto?**
   CP informed all that we cannot move to all in-person lectures at the moment as we do not have the capacity for this. The situation will be reviewed at the end of the second term. Lecturers of first term modules are running their mid-course surveys now which is a good opportunity for students to provide feedback on the in-person sessions.

4. **Can Lab Demonstrators be more consistent in marking?**
   Yes, it will be asked for this to happen.

5. **Is there any update on exams?**
   CP confirmed that we are planning for the summer exams to take place in person, the only timed remote assessments will be the exams in January as the College has mandated that these must be online. The idea is that students will be allowed to take one page of revision notes into the exams as evidence shows that this is beneficial for students. This will be discussed at the Student-Staff Committee.

6. **When will be the exam timetable be released?**
   CP informed all that Victor Urubusi is currently preparing this and it will be released at a similar time to previous years, towards the end of this term. Students should assume that the exams will take place in person. We will only revert to online exams if College mandates this.

7. **It is very difficult to find a suitable space to study on campus. Can the department help pre-book some rooms for students to use? The Lecture Theatres get a bit loud sometimes.**
   MD will ask Derryck Stewart to look into this. The issues with Lecture Theatre 1 have put this on hold but we hope to start organising this from next week. MD informed all that the quiet study space on Level 1 has been refurbished and is available for students to use. During the meeting, MD requested that Derryck Stewart search for rooms for quiet study and once it has been organised it will be publicised to students.

8. **If the problem with online lectures is capacity then, essentially, you will be able to recycle lectures indefinitely. Online lectures have no instant feedback and have inconsistent durations. I cannot understand how it's an option to keep lectures online indefinitely.**
CP reiterated that the plan is not to keep lectures online indefinitely and we hope to soon be in a situation, post-pandemic, where we have blended learning with some lectures online and some in-person. Even if we were to keep a course blended then we would review this periodically to make sure it is working.

9. **Has the department replied to the open letter sent regarding online lectures and exams?**
CP said that many of the items raised in the letter have been answered via other means of communication from the department. The UG Office will look back and identify any items that have not been responded to.

10. **Can we please have the survey on whether to have online lectures or not again as a lot of students are advising against just having the online pre-recorded lectures?**
CP said he wasn't sure what this would tell us. It is not currently an option to not have online lectures.

11. **Will online office hours be moved to in-person during this year? It is difficult to discuss a problem online without having a tablet to write on.**
CP said we expect Lecturers to give two office hours a week, one online and one in-person. If this is not happening, then please report it to CP.

12. **When will third-year students on a four-year course get to choose their fourth-year options?**
CP said this will take place in May and options will need to be finalised at the start of term one of their fourth year.

13. **Does the fourth year Research Interfaces module have an exam?**
No, this module does not have an exam.

14. **Is it possible to take modules, not for credit?**
CP informed all that students can audit modules which allows them to access most of the materials for the module except for assessments. For Years 3 and 4 students have been given access to modules in their year, that they are not taking for credit, with the exceptions being where Lecturer has deemed this not appropriate. The department tends to dissuade students from taking modules not for credit as it, unnecessarily increases their workload. Exceptions are made if students need the material for a PhD.

15. **Why is 'all lectures in person with Panopto recordings' not an option and will it be in the future?**
CP informed all that we don't have space in the timetable for all lectures to be in-person given the restricted capacities in rooms. We are making lectures available via recordings and supplementing these with in-person sessions. Once the pandemic is over, and we can comfortably fill Lecture Theatre 1 to capacity, we will run more in-person lectures. We wouldn't, though, go back to mandating that all lecture courses should take place in-person, it would depend on what would be best for the lecture course.

16. **Asynchronous pre-recorded lectures are not useful to students, keeping them for future use would just make staffs lives easier and the student experience work.**
CP said this does not make life easier for staff, we may not go back to all in-person lectures as it is not necessarily beneficial for all lecture courses.

17. **Lectures for some modules are recorded the week they are released; can this be done for all? PowerPoint lectures are hard to keep up with.**
CP agreed that PowerPoint lectures, whether online or in-person have issues with pacing and engagement. Preparation for a lecture course takes a long time and CP is not prepared to ask staff to change their style for this year.

18. **The pre-recorded lectures for Mechanics by Professor Foulkes are very good in quality as we can see him explaining and can also see the slides. In the case of the Linear Algebra lectures, we don't see the lecturer at all and for the Functions lectures, the camera recording Professor Berkshire is placed way too far away from him and as a result, we cannot see him explaining clearly. Could you please request other lecturers to follow the recording methods of Professor Foulkes?**
CP thanked the student for the feedback. We have tried to incorporate feedback from last year for the recording of lectures and share good practice with those yet to record their lectures. CP urged students to continue to provide feedback so we can contact lecturers asking them to make changes and improvements. The more responses we get, the better.

19. **Can you make the results of the survey from the start of the year regarding in-person versus online lectures public?**
CP will liaise with the Student Representatives who ran the survey but doesn't see an issue with making the results public. CP confirmed that the results of the survey were relatively evenly split.

20. **Could you advise lecturers to not go over the 50-minute duration for a lecture? Some online lectures are well over an hour long.**
CP will remind lecturers of this requirement.

21. **Is there any way to give feedback for pre-recorded lectures that can be actioned during the lecture course? It is frustrating and hopeless that no changes can be made once the lectures are recorded.**
CP informed that not all feedback can be actioned straight away. The lecturer may make it clear what can be actioned straight away, this would be true for in-person lectures also. CP reiterated that students should give feedback via the mid-course surveys, the lecturers will read this and look at how they can action the feedback received.

22. **Could we have more printing credits since we are not provided with printed notes anymore?**
CP will check the current arrangements with Derryck Stewart.

23. **Could a breakdown of assessments be released? It's not clear when assessed problem sheets will be released or how much they are worth.**
CP said that this information is in the module specifications and that the Head of Year should release a timetable of assessed problem sheets. IMW informed that there is also a webpage dedicated to assessment deadlines.

24. **Can fourth-year students choose third-year modules?**

CP confirmed that fourth-year students can choose third-year modules. There is a requirement for MSci students to take at least 60 ECTS at Level 7. If one of these options is taken in the third year, then students will already have some Level 7 credits and have the flexibility to choose a third-year module in their fourth year.

25. **Why don't we have third-year comprehensive tutorials in all years? The only feedback we received is the Year 1 Mechanics & Relativity exam and we could be making systematic errors and losing marks.**

CP informed that the comprehensive paper is a third-year module and a complement of tutorials are associated with that module. In Years 1 and 2, students have seminars and meetings with their academic tutor on alternate weeks which should allow students to address these issues. Ideally, we would like the academic tutor meetings to be student-led. In addition, students complete problem sheet questions and assessed problem sheets. If students have issues or concerns about these then their academic tutor is an appropriate person to contact.

26. **What is the department's view on term-time UROPs?**

CP said that these are allowed but students should be careful about completing one as the degree programme workload is intensive. The department is working to address the workload issues and don't stop students from taking a UROP during term-time but does caution students that it may impact their degree work.

27. **If you change from a four year to a three-year course, how long would it take for this to be reflected on the pre-award transcript?**

Transcripts are produced at the end of the academic year so if the change is made mid-way through the year then Registry will have this information. IMW can also provide a supplemental note whilst the transfer is in process.

28. **How will feedback on the new format of the comprehensive module (i.e. the Team-Based Problem Solving) be collected and dealt with? Will this be mid-year or end of the year?**

CP confirmed that there will be an opportunity to provide feedback at the end of this term and since the module is also run in term two there will be an opportunity to provide feedback at the end of that term. The feedback will be looked at carefully and, provided we receive a good amount of feedback, modifications will be made for the following year.

29. **If I am taking 62.5 ECTS worth of credit, are all modules still weighted the same?**

CP will check with Victor Urubusi to confirm but doesn't think that the weighting changes.

30. **When will we find out of term two lectures will be in-person or online?**

CP said that format for term two will be the same as term one, this information was provided before the start of this term.

31. **How long will pre-recorded lectures be used before they are updated?**

CP said that lecture recordings should be reviewed by the Lecturer yearly. This doesn't necessarily mean they will be re-recorded every year although some might be re-recorded as part of the review due to it being outdated or of poor quality.

32. **The assessed problem sheets for the core third-year modules are not on the webpage and there is no overview link in other years.**
    The Head of Years 3 and 4, Jing Zhang (JZ), confirmed that there are assessed problem sheets for the core third-year modules. This is the first time we have had assessed problem sheets in the third year and the schedule is evolving depending on how staff members are progressing with lectures so a fixed date for the assessed problem sheets had not been set. JZ will contact the lecturers to get a schedule in a written format so it is clear to students.

33. **Can solutions for problem sheets be released one week after the problem sheet is available instead of two?**
    This is dependent on the lecturers who have guidance which is coordinated with the Head of Year. The guidance states that the solutions are released at the end of the second week.

34. **Will feedback sessions like this be planned to be regular in the future? Are there any other official channels to give feedback?**
    These meetings will run regularly, once a term, throughout the academic year. Students can provide feedback through the anonymous suggestion box (the student representatives have sent out the links), through the Year Student Representatives, through personal tutors and through the Student Liaison Officer.