

STUDENT-STAFF FORUM
Wednesday, 26 October 2022
12:00 pm
Blackett Lecture Theatre 1

Present: Michele Dougherty (MD), Ingo Mueller-Wodarg (IMW), Jing Zhang (JZ), Yasmin Andrew (YA), Derek Lee (DL), Kayleigh Murphy (KM – Secretary)

Welcome:

MD welcomed all and informed attendees that next term we will look to run separate Forums for each year group.

There has been a lot of refurbishment works taking place in the department; the Microprocessors Lab is now complete, Year 3 Lab is nearing completion, the first phase of the Level 3 corridor is complete, Blackett 311 has had new furniture and AV equipment, Lecture Theatre 1 has had furniture restored and new AV equipment will be installed in time for Term 2. Planning permission has been granted for a student led design for the Blackett terrace. Any ideas on space and what students would like or need are welcomed.

Updates:

Lecture attendance has been high, higher even than pre-pandemic levels.

Mid-course surveys are due out for Term 1 modules. This is a chance for students to give direct feedback to lecturers. Many modules have been newly developed for this academic year, so feedback is particularly welcomed for these.

Assessed problem sheets for first and second year students will have threshold marking which is new for this academic year. Marks will be out of 10 from 15 available. For Year 2, the APS will be grouped into two sets per term. In-course assessment for the Year 3 Solid State and Nuclear & Particle Physics modules will now be online quizzes. A new format for Rapid Feedback sessions is being piloted in the Group Theory and Unification modules with an emphasis on problem solving classwork. JZ asked for feedback on the new format.

Year 2 update: The Year 2 Quantum Article deadline has been moved later in Term 2 to allow students to have more of a break over Christmas without having to work on this. A timetable of assessments has been put together so there is no more than one deadline at a time. A simplified mitigating circumstances process has been implemented which goes through the Seminar Leader. Town Hall meetings have been planned with three taking place per term.

Year 1 update: A similar process has been implemented for in-course credit for seminars.

Support & mitigation update: Personal Tutors should be the first point of contact for any support. Students should let the Senior Tutor or Student Liaison Officer know if they do not hear from their Personal Tutor. Places of support outside of the department:

Faculty Student Wellbeing Advisors: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/natural-sciences/education-and-teaching/wellbeing-support/resources-for-students/advice-team/>

Student Mental Health Intervention Officers: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/counselling/student-mental-health-intervention-officers/>

Students were reminded that they should contact Mery Fajardo at ph.disabilityofficer@imperial.ac.uk if they have a chronic issue, learning support needs and need to apply for additional exam arrangements. Students should do this at least six weeks before any assessment or exam the additional arrangements would need to be in place for.

Questions:

- 1. What is the reason for replacing the Solid State and Nuclear & Particle Physics continuous assessment with online quizzes?**

JZ: moving to an online multiple-choice quiz can guarantee feedback time. There was an issue with marks and feedback for this continuous assessment being delayed last year and we're hoping to prevent any such delays by implementing this change.

- 2. What support is in place for students finding it difficult to adjust to a new working system or to manage their time?**

YA: Year 1 counts for little to account for the huge adjustment from College/Sixth Form to University. YA provides study skills support and works with students to help improve their working practices. Students can visit YA in her office, room 305a, Level 3 Blackett, email her at: ph.studentliaison@imperial.ac.uk, or message her on Teams for study skills support.

- 3. The threshold marking system is not rewarding for students. Is there a system in place to encourage students to push to get the full 15 marks?**

IMW: the threshold marking for APS has been implemented to relieve stress and pressure on students, so they don't spend more time than is required on these assessments. Students can do the full problem sheet for their own satisfaction but there will be no credit awarded for this.

- 4. Can students view lectures from other departments?**

IMW: this would depend on other departments policies, but we will look into and confirm this to students. **Post meeting note:** it was confirmed that departments do not allow audit access to modules. Students have the option to take a Horizons module in their first, second, or third year: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/horizons/> and an iExplore module for credit in their second year: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/academic-support/i-explore/horizons-modules/>
JZ: students in their third and fourth year can take modules outside of the Physics Department for degree credit.

- 5. Why are Rapid Feedback sessions only scheduled for Theory modules?**

JZ: the original intention was to provide these sessions for Theory modules as compensation for students not having labs and, therefore, less teaching contact time. They are also in place to support the more mathematically challenging modules. Some non-Theory modules, such as Cosmology, do have Rapid Feedback sessions. **JZ will raise this for discussion at the next**

Teaching Committee which is scheduled for 9th November 2022 and advised students to request these in the mid-course survey if they felt it would be beneficial for a module.

6. Would it be possible for some first year problem sheets that are not assessed to be marked?

MD: we wouldn't want to overload students or staff or add anything additional before we are where we should be with marking and feedback. It was suggested that Academic Tutors could go through problem sheets or the mark scheme during tutorials.

7. What is the deadline for students wanting to transfer from the BSc to the MSci?

IMW: the latest a student can transfer degrees is Term 2 of their third year. Students should speak to their Personal Tutor, or the Senior Tutor, about transferring degrees. IMW reminded students that to graduate with a BSc they would have needed to do a project in their third year, so will need to do this if thinking about transferring from the MSci to the BSc. For international students there are also visa implications to consider. YA: the International Student Support Office are delivering information talks next week on this type of information. The talks are in student timetables.

8. What support is available for first year students struggling with Python?

YA: runs study skills support, see the answer for Question 2. The Physics and Coding Helpdesks run three times a week on the Level 2 Foyer. Students can drop-in to get support on problems they are having difficulty with. Information on the Helpdesks and when they are run can be found on the dedicated webpage: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/physics/students/current-students/undergraduates/phd/>

9. Could first years have more academic tutorials e.g., one per week as they are very useful?

Students can attend the Physics and Coding Helpdesks for support, see answer to Question 8, or attend Lecturers' Office Hours. These are posted on the relevant module Blackboard page.

10. What is expected in the Lab Report for Year 1? There is some uncertainty and a feeling that the expectation differs from the outline.

IMW: we can present this question to the Head of Year 1 and Head of First Year Lab. We would want to find a balance so that if a template is provided, students do not feel restricted by this.

Post meeting note: the Head of Year 1 confirmed that students have access to a lab report template. There is also a detailed outline of what is expected in the lab guide issued by the Head of First Year Lab which is available on the Blackboard site:

https://bb.imperial.ac.uk/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course_id= 33366_1&content_id= 2524660_1 It was also reiterated that the expectation is what is included in the outline.