

**School of Physics and Astronomy  
Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Staff Liaison Committee  
22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021**

**Staff members present:**

Dr Jon Hays	Director of Education
Harvey Abraham-Green	Secretary (SSO)

**Student members present:**

Kavisha Eliyadurage-Fernando	First Year Course Rep
Waleed Ahmad	First year course rep
Alex Reji	Second Year Course Rep
Ryan Godden	Third Year Course Rep (Physics)
Zuzanna Kocjan	Student Chair (Third Year Astro Rep)
Takudzwa Makoni	Fourth Year Course Rep

**Apologies for absence:**

Majid Alteneiji	First year course rep
Shamimeh Askari	Third Year Astro course rep
Adil Mian	EDI student rep
Aadi Konidena	Second Year Course Rep
Luke Hasler	Third Year Course Rep (Physics)
Hadassah Sankoh	First Year Course Rep
Enzo Olivieri-Cortes	Second Year Course Rep
Tomorr Rexhep	PGT Course rep
Prof Steve Thomas	Senior Tutor
Dr David Mulryne	SSLC Chair

<b>Part 1 – Preliminary Items</b>	
<b>1(a)</b>	<b>Welcome and introduction for new members</b>
2020.001	Welcome to Kavisha and Waleed, first year reps attending their first SSLC.
<b>1(b)</b>	<b>Apologies for absence</b>
2020.002	The meeting noted the apologies from members as recorded above
<b>1(c)</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b>
2020.003	The committee did not approve the previous meeting minutes due to lack of attendance for this specific meeting.
<b>1(d)</b>	<b>Report on matters arising and actions taken</b>
<b>1(e)</b>	<b>Terms of reference and membership</b>

2020.006	The committee noted the terms and reference and membership of the Student Staff Liaison Committee.  This specific January SSLC is to discuss the recent alternative assessments of January 2021.
<b>1(f)</b>	<b>Admissions, induction and enrolment</b>

<b>Part 2 – Student Feedback</b>		
<b>Action Point</b>	<b>First Year Rep Feedback - WA and K E-F</b>	<b>Staff input/response</b>
	Sent a poll around to first year with 19 respondents about the workload level and experiences in Semester A. Broadly positive but overall, they felt the workload was probably quite high when compared to previous years due to the method of delivery.	
	Some students felt like there weren't enough revision materials or past papers for their modules.	Past paper QMplus page is available and there are at least 2 years of past papers for each module, if not more.  School policy remains to provide at least 2 years of previous exam papers.
	Students would've like a basic tutorial on OriginPro	This was covered in week 1 lecture and pre-recorded materials on QMplus.
2021.1.1	SPA4103 Scientific Measurements - students felt like the lab scripts were not detailed enough to carry out the experiment. Students would like videos that go through the lab scripts to help students understand what is required.	JH – to continue to review lab scripts. Inclusion of videos is a good suggestion but was likely not possible in time for this semester.
	<b>Second year Feedback - Alex Reji</b>	
	<b>SPA5319 QMA</b> - Section A slightly different but overall, it was fine and it took a few hour to complete. Section B was also fairly straightforward. Issue with question (Q:B1E) and the derivation issues. Exams started at 10am and finished at 9pm with limited breaks but a long period of constant stress.	JH - Whatever timeframe is granted students are likely to spend that full amount trying to achieve 100%. We do need to find a solution to this where students are not spending 11 hours on the exam.
2021.1.2	<b>SPA5219 Thermodynamics</b> - overall the paper was moderate difficulty but one question with unseen difficulty (QB1B) was felt to be incredibly difficult and unable to answer with notes.	JH - Unseen questions are part of the assessment and part of the accreditation process. Students are expected to apply knowledge on a previous unseen question that is designed to be challenging.

	<p><b>SPA52198 MT3</b> - This exam was particularly difficult and took AR over 20 hours of straight working to complete by time with zero sleep. Could see other students in their online groups that worked on the paper throughout the night. Part A was challenging and took time but was doable using your notes and revision. Section B was difficult and each question took quite a long time and we worth a lot of marks.</p>	<p>JH - There is a lot of discussion needed for how we assess students in the future and whether a traditional sit-down exam is the best route of assessment going forward. There is a big issue within assessments relating to the potential for cheating and how we manage that.</p> <p>The time-limit is necessary not only for the integrity of the exam but also a practical factor of not having everyone sat down for 12 hours. Sit-down exams have become so ingrained in the culture of education that there is a lot of discussion to be had about making improvements.</p> <p>Take-home exams have already impacted that integrity and removed the traditional time limit and invigilation. There are some potential alternatives, similar to those used in the USA/Canada, where students have a take-home exam at a very high difficulty that is expected to take up-to a week to complete.</p>
	<p><b>Third year feedback - Zuzanna Kocjan and Ryan Godden</b></p>	
	<p>Fairly positive feedback for exams. There were some issues with submission of the paper and students forgot about the method of submitting.</p>	
	<p>Feedback that students felt the exams were more difficult than previous years and students appreciate that these at take-home exams but the papers themselves are still set out to be a standard exam paper with 3 hours to complete. Many students were unable to complete the exam within the 3 hour timeframe and instead took much longer than 3 hours to finish, with some students taking up-to 11 hours to complete a paper.</p>	<p>JH - This is something that we have heard from students and part of this issue is that we believe under usual time constraints of an invigilated exam, students have little choice but to focus and tackle questions within that period, whereas from home, it is more likely that a student could leave a challenging question to return to it at a later time. That said, there has not been significant changes from the traditional</p>

2021.1.3		<p>paper exams to the take home exam. When exam papers are vetted, this is taken into consideration and questions are designed not to take hours longer than the time specified.</p> <p>JH has offered to review any specific papers where students feel that the questions were particularly challenging and ones that they feel they are much different from past papers. If they are similar to traditional exams people are going to spend more time on their answers to try and get the best answer possible.</p> <p>Going forward this is something that we are going to consider when determining how the assessments will be delivered in the future and we will be working with students to gather feedback on future implementations of alternative assessments.</p>
2021.1.4	Students feel the start of Semester B is very close to the end of the exam period and there is no break.	This is not within the remit of the school to change but there does seem to be wider movements to change the way of university applications which could have big changes for the way the semester and academic year is structured. We will continue to pass on the feedback that the end of the exam period is immediately followed by the start of semester B.
	RG - Students felt that they saw the most changes in section A and there was an increase of difficulty in the Section A parts of the papers. Section B seemed similar to previous papers but section A did seem more difficult than before.	
	Timetabling of exams was less than preferable, some students had lots of exams grouped together and when it was taken 11 hours to complete the paper this took up a lot of time and felt like a lot of overlap.	HAG - with no-detriment policy there is a large increase in the amount of trailing exams that students now have when compared to previous years.

		This means that although it looks straightforward to spread these exams out, we have to take into account the number of students that have trailing attempts this year specifically. Exam timetabling is handled centrally and we will continue to advocate to have exams spaced as much as possible.
	Other schools have reduced the exam period to 3 hours, is this something that SPA are expecting to do.	JH - Whilst we understand why some schools have gone to a 3 hour period, we do not have plans to reduce this within the school. We are happy with the provision of 24 hours and believe this offers the best balance of flexibility and focus for students. We wanted exams to be as similar as possible to past paper versions without making major changes.
	<b>Foruth Year feedback - Takudzwa Makoni</b>	
	There was some general feedback with exams taking more time than 3 hours but TM is happy with the feedback that has been provided by JH and HAG.	
2021.1.5	Some students had clashes with their IC modules and coursework and lectures due in during the January exam period. The other IC colleges started back earlier than QM.	We can feed this back to the IC board and see what discussion can be had but this is a challenge due to the logistics of scheduling term dates.
<b>Feedback from Director of Education</b>		
	There unfortunately has been some evidence of cheating and plagiarism in the January exam period which has now warranted a full investigation. There were reports of solutions and papers posted to specific websites with a view to cheating and requesting answers.	
	Suggestion to have regular town meetings with the student cohort and body to inform students about why things are structured like they are or how things work within the school. All academic and PS staff are invited to attend and there will be some frank discussion about student feedback. But there needs to be an emphasis on voicing your feedback and remaining respectful when giving constructive criticism.	
	Students would like to be more regularly be updated about the decisions taken by the university and the school, such as the reasoning behind the move away from 48hrs to 24hrs.	
2021.1.6	We would like to have more student representation in the committees that run the school. Particularly the TLC.	JH - To investigate the proposal to have a student representative on the TLC.
	Student reps enquire about the provision of a no-detriment policy for this year.	JH - The provisions that the university are going to make have been communicated by the principal and we are limited

		in the school to how far we can change that.
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## Action Sheet: Student-Staff Liaison Committee

### Ongoing Action points from previous meetings 2016

2016:030	<p>AJM to report to TLC that Qreview is not fit for purpose and that the focus should be on improving sound quality as a minimum. <b>22/11/2017 – DM to report to JH at the next TLC. Issues have been and will continue to be reported to Timetabling and ITS.</b></p> <p>5/12/2018 - New faculty level focus group with teaching staff and Elearning team to look for improvements. Student course reps have heard the same answer since they started.</p> <p>Over last year they have upgraded all the cameras (4x as many pixels), better video software and increase in rooms that are covered. Some trial improvements have</p>	Ongoing	DM & JH	At the next TLC
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### Ongoing action points from a meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018

2018.015	<p>Investigate difficulty and ensure that students understand the concept of the module and the origins of the questions. <b>12/19 MO continuing to improve and develop module.</b></p>	Ongoing	JH/DM	As soon as possible
2018.045	<p>Investigate how is Hive space utilised for Physics students? Feedback to ITS to ensure computers are updated with relevant software and all stations are functional. <b>DM awaiting full software list as he has investigated and been told that IT regularly request software update from schools.</b></p>	Ongoing	JH/HAG	As soon as possible

### Ongoing actions points from 13 March 2019

2019.02	<p>Delays in email notification to students from QMPLus. JH to investigate with E-Learning team as a matter of priority to ensure timely cancellation of lectures. <b>Technical issues with hosting service, ongoing investigation.</b></p>	Ongoing	JH	By the start of 19/20
2019.25	<p>Lack of BAME Physics resources for students who want to further research these topics on diversity in Physics. Students would like to see an increase in books, external speakers, resources in library. <b>New BAME Physics library on QMplus being developed, student led.</b></p>	Ongoing	EDI committee to explore.	Ongoing

2019.63	Third year students would like to have more adviser-student time to be scheduled as they think it would benefit students. DM to speak with all MOs with regards to their general availability. Better advertisement of office hours and provision of academic support for students who are struggling.  Better reporting of MOs who are not helping their students to the level expected.	Ongoing	HAG/DM/JH	By the start of 19/20
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#### Action points from SSLC Meeting 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019

2019.2.4	SPA4103 - Report back to MO student unhappy with inconsistencies in lab book marking. Previous action points have now been incorporated into this action point (2018.007-2018.01, 2019.023) to reflect some improvements that have been made. <b>Still seeking more consistency in marking and JH continue to work with MO.</b>	Ongoing	JH	By start of 20/21
2019.2.7	To ensure students are aware about the impact of an unbalanced module diet in 2/3 year but that it is possible with advisor permission. More clarity during module options event in Sem B.	Ongoing	HAG	Before Module selections
2019.2.39	Intercollegiate board to review - is there a QM equivalent group of modules that could act as a sufficient pre-requisites for Standard Model Physics and Beyond (INK7032).	Ongoing	JH/ST	By start of 20/21

#### Action points for SSLC 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020

2020.1.16	JH to investigate lecture note mistakes in SPA5222 EWO	Ongoing	JH	By start of 20/21
2020.1.20	DM/JH to ensure students have support from MO.	Ongoing	JH/DM	By start of 20/21
2020.1.36	JH to speak with MO and discuss the structure of the modules for SPA7024 FMQFT or 7001 AQFT to ensure better overlap for the upcoming academic year.	Ongoing	JH	By start of 20/21
2020.1.39	DM to investigate the provision of Advanced Cosmology notes for the exam.	Ongoing	DM	By start of 20/21

#### Action points from SSLC 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020



2020.2.1	JH to review SPA4101 Our Universe section A questions to check level of detail required. <b>JH investigating issue ahead of summer exam period.</b>	Ongoing	JH	ASAP
2020.2.2	JH to follow up with executive team for update on changes being made in the school and university following the renewed BLM activism internationally and what students can do to get involved.	Ongoing	JH	ASAP
2020.2.3	JH to investigate and confirm changes made to level 7 Astro papers when they transitioned to online.	Ongoing	JH	ASAP

### Action points from SSLC 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020

2020.3.1	<b>SPA4103 Scientific Measurement</b> - To investigate and pass feedback onto MOs. General feeling from students about "I wasn't told what I needed to do to perform strongly".	Closed	JH	ASAP
2020.3.2	SPA4401 - CA to pass on positive feedback for approach to module.	Closed	CA	ASAP
2020.3.3	SPA4121 - CA to pass on positive feedback for approach to module.	Closed	CA	ASAP
2020.3.4	SPA4402 - CA to pass on positive feedback for approach to module.	Closed	CA	ASAP
2020.3.5	SPA5302 – CA to pass on positive feedback for approach to module.	Closed	CA	ASAP
2020.3.6	SPA5319 - very well delivered online and well structured. Mid-term clear and students find the module very easy to follow. CA to pass on positive feedback for SPA5319.	Closed	CA	ASAP
2020.3.7	SPA5219 Thermodynamics - CA To feedback to Jan and other MOs to advise students explicitly in what order to consume media and follow content. Some students believe videos are too short or unsure which order to follow materials.	Closed	CA	ASAP
2020.3.8	Reports of difficulty in following SPA5218 MT3 content and long length of videos. JH - Acknowledges that 40 minutes for a video is probably too long and we will take this into consideration and speak to the MO. Similarly the assumption of knowledge will be investigated with the the MT2 and MT3 MOs.	Closed	JH	ASAP
2020.3.9	Issues with SPA5307 Stars and provision of materials. <b>New MO to take over this module for 21/22 academic year.</b>	Closed	JH/CA	ASAP

2020.3.10	SPA6324 MT4 – JH to investigate workload for this module and impact that blended learning approach has had on student's ability to understand the weekly CW questions.	Closed	JH	ASAP
2020.3.11	SPA6311 strong feeling from students about the high workload and new project component. CA/JH to investigate further but also indicate that there has been a shift in CW/Exam weighting to reflect the increased CW in-semester.	Closed	JH/CA	ASAP
2020.3.12	SPA6403 – Positive feedback to be reported to MO	Closed	CA	ASAP
2020.3.13	SPA6308 – Report positive feedback but also enquire about provision of lecture notes and provide further online resources for students.	Closed	CA	ASAP
2020.3.14	SPA6328 SDA – Some confusion from students regarding whether coding skills were a pre-requisite. This needs to be clearer in the future. JH to investigate level of coding needed and ensure better communication ahead of future module information events.	Ongoing	JH	ASAP
2020.3.15	SPA6913 review project lectures are felt unnecessary. JH/CA to investigate delivery of lectures but the content remains valuable and important for writing up projects.	Ongoing	JH/CA	ASAP
2020.3.16	Alternative assessments: Some confusion with students after change to 24hrs from 48hrs for exams. JH/HAG to ensure that when SEB chair has finalised exam structure this is clearly and quickly communicated to students.	Ongoing	JH/HAG	ASAP
2020.4.17	SPA7027 Differential Geometry: Students enjoy and appreciate approach to module. CA to pass on positive feedback to MO.	Closed	CA	ASAP
2020.4.18	SPA7024 FMiQFT – CA to report positive feedback on delivery and approach to tackling challenging equations.	Closed	CA	ASAP
2020.4.19	Low turnout of MSc students on campus but rep would like to see more enrichment activities on campus outside of teaching. <b>JH/HAG to investigate the provision of on campus lectures.</b>	Ongoing	JH/HAG	ASAP

#### Actions points from SSLC 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021

2021.1.1	JH – to continue to work with SPA4103 MO to ensure lab scripts contain sufficient information and investigate the possibility of experiment videos for future delivery.	Ongoing	JH	By the next academic year
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2021.1.2	Unseen questions – there needs to be clearer communication to students that unseen questions are a standard form of assessment and why we use them in exams. JH/DM – to ensure MOs communicate this clearly.	Ongoing	JH	May 2021
2021.1.3	JH offers to review any specific papers in which students feel that there was significant divergence from previous papers. JH confirms that the school will aim to include students in future discussions about the design of alternative assessments.	Ongoing	JH	No specific date
2021.1.4	JH to pass on feedback at faculty level regarding student’s complaints that semester B is too close to the end of the January exam period.	Ongoing	JH	ASAP
2021.1.5	Timetabling conflicts between QM January exams and other IC term dates that started earlier than QM. JH will seek to raise this at the IC board, but we are limited in how far we can change this due to the complex logistics of scheduling between 4 separate institutions.	Ongoing	JH/ST	ASAP
2021.1.6	JH - To investigate the proposal to have a student representative on the TLC.	Ongoing	JH	ASAP

