

Physics Joint Consultative Committee

Department of Physics, University of Oxford

MT25-1: 13:00 on Wednesday, Wk 2 MT25
Mendelssohn Meeting Room

1 Attendance

1.1 Present

- Nick Lang (NL) — Chair, 2nd Year Rep
- Arda Kurtoglu (AK) — Webmaster
- Laila Ahmed (LA) — 2nd Year Rep
- Kiefer Lim Yi Heng (KLYH) — 3rd Year Rep
- Milton Lee (ML) — 3rd Year Rep
- Hans Kraus (HK) — Head of Teaching
- Jenny Barnes (JB) — Teaching Laboratory Manager
- Carrie Leonard-McIntyre (CLM) — Assistant Head of Teaching
- Liana Warren (LW) — Teaching Office
- Georg Viehhauser (GV) — Academic Committee
- Michael Barnes (MB) — Academic Committee

1.2 Apologies

- Hazel Crescent (HC) — 3rd Year Rep
- Helena Bhattacharya (HB) — 4th Year Rep

1.3 Absent

- Yikuan Yan (YY) — 2nd Year Rep
- Naiqi Zheng (NZ) — 4th Year Rep

2 Minutes

2.1 Minutes of last meeting (Wednesday, Wk 2 TT25)

2.2 Committee business

2.2.1 Chair

- **Academic committee**

NL reported that the main relevant points discussed were the lab move over the next couple of years and implementation of the changes to the fourth year. The department aims to implement the new structure in AY 2026–27, but this is now beyond their control. Academic committee thanked the students for their feedback on these changes, which will be addressed.

2.2.2 Secretary

- **Election of a new Secretary**

The PJCC noted their thanks to HB for her work as Secretary. A new Secretary will be elected this term.

2.2.3 Webmaster

- **No business**

2.3 Year reps' business

2.3.1 First year

- **Election of new first year reps**

NL will follow up with CLM regarding the election of new first year reps this term.

2.3.2 Second year

- **Practical commendations**

NL raised the issue of broken links on the practical commendations Canvas page. He asked CLM when Prelims practical commendations for the 2024–25 year will be published. CLM noted the issue and will publish the list soon.

- **Lecture timings**

NL reiterated the ongoing issue of lectures (particularly in second year) starting too early and ending late. GV suggested a light or visible signal when the lecture is meant to start and stop. HK pointed out that such a light is already present on the lecturns but has not solved the issue. CLM will remind lecturers to stick to the agreed start and finish times. NL suggested it may be necessary to encourage students to leave at the proper finishing time but notes this is not a viable solution when there are back-to-back lectures. CLM may go and remind lecturers in person at the proper times.

2.3.3 Third year

- **Publicising PJCC minutes**

In her absence, KLYH and ML reported that HC requested that PJCC minutes be published and shared with the student body before the next meeting. NL said this generally does happen, though the absence of a Secretary delayed this at the end of last year. NL will ensure AK has the minutes from this meeting to upload to the website well in advance of the next meeting.

- **Computing lab marking in TT25**

KLYH and ML raised the issue of slots for computing lab marking being opened at random times in TT25. JB suggested reminding the student body that marking is less busy early

in term. NL questioned the need to have bookable marking slots if the majority of students cannot access them and are marked on a first come, first served basis. He suggested that bookable slots be abolished and all marking for computing is done first come, first served. JB will raise these issues with the head of the computing lab and try to find a solution.

- **BA course**

The low number of students choosing to take the BA course in third year was discussed. It was agreed that it would be beneficial for students if more chose the BA course at the start of third year. The issue was raised that students are often advised to consider the BA course but do not follow this guidance, sometimes because they believe they can 'make up' for lower performance in earlier years in the fourth year, despite the data showing the opposite. The introduction of a hurdle at the end of third year, as is planned when introducing the new fourth year, was discussed, but it was noted that this would not solve the issue of students not choosing the BA course at the appropriate time.

2.3.4 Fourth year

- **Large MPhys year group**

CLM reported that the fourth year is a very large cohort this year. Class sizes in major options will be larger than in previous years as a result. Most MPhys projects have been allocated, but there will still be some movement. CLM said she would ensure all students have a project to work on by third week.

2.4 PhysPhil business

- **Next meeting of Joint Standing Committee**

CLM reported that the Joint Standing Committee (JSC) would meet the following week. CLM will liaise with NL to ensure one of the JSC student reps is invited to the next PJCC meeting.

- **Philosophy and the new fourth year**

NL asked how philosophy would fit into the new fourth year structure. CLM said that the aim would be to give PhysPhil students the option to do physics for as long as possible.

2.5 MMathPhys business

- **Representation on the PJCC**

GV raised the issue of MMathPhys faculty representation on the PJCC. MB confirmed he teaches on the MMathPhys course.

2.6 Practical course business

- **Feedback**

The PJCC discussed how to increase practical feedback. It was agreed that physical slips handed out at the end of practicals was the most effective means by which to get feedback. JB will remind demonstrators to give students feedback forms when marking.

2.7 Any other business

- **Lecture feedback**

The issue of lecture feedback was discussed. It was noted that fourth years in particular do not give enough feedback. LA suggested adding feedback QR codes to lecture recordings. CLM will enquire as to the possibility of this.

- **Third year coordinator**

NL asked whether a third year coordinator had been appointed. CLM confirmed Alex Lvovsky would take on the role.

- **Examination timings**

CLM reported that it would no longer be possible to guarantee that physics exams would be confined to seventh week and eighth week in Trinity Term. From this academic year, exams may start as early as Friday of sixth week and finish as late as Friday of ninth week. It may not be possible to confirm the final dates until as late as May. NL noted the need to communicate this very clearly to the undergraduate body as they may otherwise make professional or personal plans in ninth week. CLM will communicate the new exam window to the undergraduate body.

3 Action points

- 2.3.1** NL to follow up with CLM regarding the election of new first year reps.
- 2.3.2** CLM to publish the list of 2024–25 practical commendations on Canvas.
- 2.3.2** CLM to remind lecturers to stick to the agreed start and finish times.
- 2.3.3** NL and AK to ensure minutes are uploaded to the website before the next meeting.
- 2.3.3** JB to raise issues of computing marking with the head of lab.
- 2.4** NL and CLM to ensure PhysPhil reps are invited to the next PJCC meeting.
- 2.6** JB to remind practical demonstrators to give out feedback forms when marking.
- 2.7** CLM to enquire as to the possibility of adding feedback QR codes to lecture recordings.
- 2.7** CLM to communicate the new exam window to the undergraduate body.