Theoretical Physics Committee Meeting

Minutes of the TP Committee meeting held at **2.00pm on Wednesday 13th of February 2013** in the Faculty Conference Room.

Present: Dean – C. Williams, P. Eastham, S. Frolov, G. Harper, J. Lunney, S. Ryan, R. Timoney,

In Attendance: K O’Doherty

The minutes of the last meeting of the TP Committee held on Friday 21st September 2012 were approved.

1. **Matters Arising**

The Dean questioned the committee on whether or not a policy on taking non-EU students had been agreed. S. Frolov was not convinced that many would come to TCD to do Theoretical Physics. He asked members if the TP course would be willing to accept extra non-EU students and all agreed that it would. It was mentioned that maybe there should be a quota for accepting non-EU students on top of the original quota. A suggestion of 5 was made.

The Dean has offered to fund the reception for JF TP students and it was agreed that this should be done before Christmas.

2. **Student Transfers**

S. Frolov provided members with a graph which showed years 2005 to 2011 and where the students are dropping out. There seemed to be a considerable drop and typically half of students do not get to final year. A discussion took place with many questions being highlighted. It is important that we try to get information as to where these students go to. There is a presumption that students go to either Maths or Physics and that TP students generally find the subject difficult. There is a worry that we are losing more than we used to. Is it realistic to increase the quota? Freshman labs are full at the moment. There is not enough data to make conclusions and the data is slightly misleading.

J. Lunney suggested meeting with students to see why they are leaving. One cohort does not like labs and experiments. Maybe we should start to track students and numbers. It was agreed that the next action is to research when and why students leave. Would it be possible to get the statistics in other institutions/countries?
3. **Student Projects**

S. Ryan provided some information on projects with the School of Maths. A compulsory project was proposed. There is a difference between Schools in the way that the projects are organised. Maths is much less formal. A discussion about ECTS ensued.

The problem with this approach is that the project is combined with a paper to have a 25 credit module. There was a suggestion that we could top slice 10 credits off the top and then the students would be left with 50 credits to choose modules from. Students reps did not like to idea of a 10 credit project.

Physics project is 17.5 ects and 9 weeks, but 10 weeks is preferable. Students are not keen which is disappointing. There is a worry about how this would be allocated or distributed.

There is also a concern that staff are being overloaded. There were a total of 42 students doing projects last year. We need to be careful as to what is a TP project. More recently under the School of Physics review it was suggested by the Provost and faculty Dean that the School of Physics should have more projects. The TP feedback was good this year for Physics. R. Timoney stated that the students were helping each other in latex classes. S. R raised her concern of how we would handle 40 or more in a class that want to do projects. How do we handle these large numbers and how do we find people to supervise? We need to have people who are willing. Maths teach a normal load and the projects are extra on top of this. The Dean mentioned that he may fund a Post-Doc to help. There is more input needed from the student reps. Maybe we should run a 10 credit module and define it a bit better. We should encourage students to put these projects on a list.

4. **A.O.B.**

(a) **BC Courses**
There was a short discussion on Board Curriculum courses. In Physics BC is allowed in JS year and in Maths BC is allowed in SS year. Is there any pressing need to change it? Should BC be moved to JS year only? It was agreed that we should review this again. It was agreed that it doesn’t seem feasible at the moment.

(b) **Prospectus changes**
The committee members review the prospectus and agreed that there were no changes to be made.

(c) **International Students**
A brief discussion took place regarding international students. At the moment there are 4 students from Kazakhstan and they are doing well. The Dean talked about possible travel to India in the future. He suggested 1 Maths and 1 TP person to India to give a series of talks.

**Next Meeting 16th October 2013 at 3pm in the FEMS Conference Room**