Theoretical Physics Committee Meeting

Minutes of the TP Committee meeting help at 2.00pm on Wednesday 13th of November 2012 in the Faculty Conference Room.


In Attendance: K O’Doherty

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

1. Matters Arising

The Dean asked the committee on whether or not a policy on taking non-EU students had been agreed. Another query to the committee was would they be able to encourage Indian students etc. would the course be willing to accept and all agreed. 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 Retention

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 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 concern that we losing more students 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. Projects

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

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. Student representatives did not like the idea of a 10 credit project.

There is also a concern that staff is being weighed down. 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. Ryan raised her concern of how we would handle 40 or more students in a class that want to do projects. How do we handle these large numbers and how do we find people to supervise these students? We need to have people who are willing to do this. 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.

The Dean mentioned to the committee that he would be travelling to India a lot over the next number of months. If he encouraged at least 5 Indian and Kazakhstan students to come to TCD to student TP would we be willing to take them? The committee agreed to this.

Next Meeting 13\textsuperscript{th} February 2013 at 2pm in the FEMS Conference Room