



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

Department  
Of Physics &  
Astronomy.

# A Guide for Undergraduate Students 2009-2010

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*Course structure; teaching and learning; calendar of project deadlines*

## **Preface: About this Guide**

*On behalf of the all members of the Department I would like to welcome new students to the Department and also to welcome back existing students following the summer vacation. We hope that you will enjoy your time with us and that you will find your degree programme enjoyable and stimulating.*

*The University of Sheffield's Department of Physics and Astronomy is an active and long-established department with over 30 academic staff members who pursue research in a wide variety of fields from active galaxies to organic thin film and from the search for dark matter to semiconductor nanostructures. The Department has a strong commitment to teaching and we pride ourselves on the friendly relations between staff and students and on the number of our undergraduates who choose to remain in Sheffield for postgraduate work.*

*This Guide contains a brief summary of the teaching aims and objectives of the Department and those aspects of the way the Department is run which may be important to you as a student, along with brief details of each year of the main degree programmes. More details about your particular course can be found in the attached Year Information sheets, and in the material posted on Undergraduate Information notice boards around the Department. You should read this material since it contains important information.*

*It is important to stress that, as well as the information contained in this guide, we want you to feel that you can talk to tutors, lecturers or advisors about any matter that may concern you. In addition you can contact a representative of the Staff/Student Committee, or a member of the office staff; the University has many mechanisms of support that you can use.*

*Professor David Mowbray  
Head of Department  
September 2009*

## WHO'S WHO IN THE DEPARTMENT

<b>Role</b>		<b>Room</b>	<b>Ext no.</b>	<b>Email address</b>
Head of Department	Prof David Mowbray	E35	24561	D.Mowbray@shef.ac.uk
Head of Teaching	Prof David Mowbray	E35	24561	D.Mowbray@shef.ac.uk
<b>Year Tutors</b>		<b>Physics</b>		
Foundation Year				
Year 1	Dr Tim Richardson	D21	24280	T.Richardson@shef.ac.uk
Year 2	Dr Vitaly Kudryavtsev	F09B	24531	V.Kudryavtsev@shef.ac.uk
Year 3	Dr Chris Booth	D24	23541	C.Booth@shef.ac.uk
Year 3 & 4 MPhys	Dr Ed Daw	D28	24353	E.Daw@shef.ac.uk
<b>Year Tutors</b>		<b>Astronomy</b>		
Year 1	Dr Susan Cartwright	D22	24572	S.Cartwright@shef.ac.uk
Year 2	Prof Vik Dhillon	E40	24528	vik.dhillon@shef.ac.uk
Year 3 and 4 MPhys	Prof Paul Crowther	E45	24291	Paul.Crowther@shef.ac.uk
<b>Year Tutors</b>		<b>Medical Physics</b>		
All Years	Dr Rodney Hose		13921	D.R.Hose@shef.ac.uk
<b>Dual Degree Contacts</b>		<b>Physics</b>		
Theoretical Physics	Prof David Whittaker	E12B	23537	D.M.Whittaker@shef.ac.uk
Chemical Physics	Dr Martin Grell	D30	23598	M.Grell@shef.ac.uk
Physics/Maths	Prof David Whittaker	E12B	23537	D.M.Whittaker@shef.ac.uk
Physics/Med.Phys	Dr Ed Daw	D28	24353	E.Daw@shef.ac.uk
Physics/Philosophy	Dr Chris Booth	D24	23541	C.Booth@shef.ac.uk
Physics/Comp Sci	Dr Lee Thompson	E41	24577	L.Thompson@shef.ac.uk
Physics/Enterprise	Prof David Lidzey	D18	23501	D.G.Lidzey@shef.ac.uk
<b>Dual Degree Contacts</b>		<b>Astronomy</b>		
Astronomy/Maths	Prof Clive Tadhunter	E37	24300	C.Tadhunter@shef.ac.uk
Director for Nanotechnology	Dr Mark Geoghegan	D19	23544	M.Geoghegan@shef.ac.uk
PhD opportunities	Prof Mark Fox	E14	24527	Mark.Fox@shef.ac.uk

<b>Role</b>		<b>Room</b>	<b>Ext no.</b>	<b>Email address</b>
<b>Erasmus Tutor</b>				
Dr S Cartwright	Europe, America, Canada, Australia (see page 8)	D22	24572	S.Cartwright@shef.ac.uk

#### **Lab Heads/Project Coordinators - Physics**

Year 1	Prof John Cockburn	E15	23507	J.Cockburn@shef.ac.uk
Year 2	Dr Stathes Paganis	D29	24352	E.Paganis@shef.ac.uk
Year 3 Standard	Dr Chris Booth	D24	23541	C.Booth@shef.ac.uk
Year 3 Group	Dr Martin Grell	D30	23598	M.Grell@shef.ac.uk
Year 4	Dr Ed Daw	D28	24353	E.Daw@shef.ac.uk

#### **Lab Head/Project Coordinators - Astronomy**

Year 1 (Semester 1)	Dr Richard de Grijs	E12	24532	R.deGrijs@shef.ac.uk
Year 1 (Semester 2)	Dr Susan Cartwright	D22	24572	S.Cartwright@shef.ac.uk
Year 2	Prof Vik Dhillon	E40	24528	Vik.dhillon@shef.ac.uk
Year 3	Prof Paul Crowther	E45	24291	Paul.Crowther@shef.ac.uk
Year 3 Tenerife	Prof Vik Dhillon	E13B	24522	Vik.dhillon@shef.ac.uk
Year 4	Dr Ed Daw	D28	24353	E.Daw@shef.ac.uk
Year 4 in La Palma	Prof Vik Dhillon	E40	24528	Vik.Dhillon@shef.ac.uk

#### **Lab Head/Project Coordinators - Medical Physics**

All Years	Dr Rodney Hose	I106	Ext.	D.R.Hose@shef.ac.uk
			13921	Within Hallamshire Hosp.
			813921	other parts of University

#### **Secretarial Staff**

Year 1 and 2	Mrs Tracy Hilton	E34	24546	<a href="mailto:T.Hilton@shef.ac.uk">T.Hilton@shef.ac.uk</a> (to 18.12.2009)
Year 3 and 4	Mrs Linda Simmons	E34	24278	L.Simmons@shef.ac.uk
Webmaster	Mr Richard Webb	E30	24275	R.Webb@shef.ac.uk

**Full Postal Address:**  
 Department of Physics and Astronomy  
 University of Sheffield  
 Hicks Building  
 Hounsfield Road  
 Sheffield S3 7RH

**Fax Number:** 0114 222 3555

**Web page:** <http://www.shef.ac.uk/physics/>

## Central Support and Welfare

### University Health Service -

Telephone: 0114 22 22100 (24 hours), NHS direct 0845 46 47 (24 hours)

Email: [health.service@shef.ac.uk](mailto:health.service@shef.ac.uk).

Website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/health/> including up to date information on swine @flu

### University Counselling Service

Provides a free and confidential service. The counsellors will not discuss your case in any way with any academics unless you ask them to do so.

Telephone: 0114 22 24134. Email: [ucs@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:ucs@sheffield.ac.uk)

Website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/counselling/>

### Financial Help

The website gives information on short term emergency financial assistance, hardship loans, and student financial support. The Student Advice Centre can provide overall financial advice.

Website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/finance>

### SSiD (Student Services Information Desk)

Information on Council Tax Exemption, loss of UCard, on-line personal information, module correction, examinations, Students' Charter, etc.

Website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/services.html>

Website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/faq>

### Women's Safety and the Women's Minibus

If you have any worries about safety, or would like help solving any problems you or your friends are facing, please contact the Women's Officer at the Sabbatical Office, Level 4, Union of Student's Building, tel: 22 28608.

Email: [womens.officer@shef.ac.uk](mailto:womens.officer@shef.ac.uk)

A Women's minibus service operates every evening from the Union of Students (St George's and Crookesmoor libraries) to your door (within a 2 mile radius). See timetable on Union web pages.

Website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/union/advice/safety-and-security/out-and-about/womens-minibus>

### Drugs Information/Council Tax/Harassment, etc.

Website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/welfare/advice.html>

### Disabled and Dyslexia Support Service

The website gives information about services and support available within the University for visually impaired student, hearing impaired students, students with impaired mobility, additional support for students with specific learning difficulties including dyslexia.

Departmental contact: Dr Luke Wilson(room E17)

Website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/disability/>

The University of Sheffield's online study skills website for dyslexic students is available at:

Website: <http://dyslexstudyskills.group.shef.ac.uk>

### International Students

This website gives information on re-entering the UK, extending leave to remain (short period, visa extension, opening a UK bank account).

Website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/international>

### Mature Students

Website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/welfare/mature>

## Nightline

This is a confidential listening and information service which is manned by trained student volunteers between 8.00 pm and 8.00 am during term time. In addition to providing a listening service it also provides information ranging from phone numbers of taxi services, exam dates etc. It can be called free from the Halls of Residence or (0114) 22 28787 for the listening services and (0114) 22 28788 for information. These numbers are also listed on the back of your U Card.

Elistening: [nightline@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:nightline@sheffield.ac.uk)

Website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/nightline>

## Members of staff with special responsibilities

- *Tutor for Theoretical Physics*

Professor David Whittaker (room E12B) has overall responsibility for the BSc and MPhys degrees in Theoretical Physics. You should talk to Professor Whittaker if you have any queries or comments which relate specifically to this degree; alternatively, you can always discuss the matter with your Advisor or your Physics Tutor, who will then consult Prof. Whittaker if it seems necessary.

- *Tutor for Medical Physics*

The Medical Physics side of the BSc and MPhys degrees in Physics with Medical Physics is run by Dr Rodney Hose who is based at the Hallamshire Hospital, but in the Department of Physics Dr Ed Daw (room E28) is responsible for liaison with Dr Hose and for ensuring that the Physics side of the degree is running smoothly. Again, you can transmit comments to Dr Daw either directly or through your Advisor or Tutor.

- *Tutor for Chemical Physics*

Dr Jamie Hobbs (room D16) is responsible for students taking the single honours degree in Chemical Physics. Dr Hobbs acts as liaison to the chemistry department and oversees the physics part of the degree.

- *Tutor for Students with Disabilities*

If you have a disability which may have implications for your studies - for example, dyslexia, mobility problems, impaired vision or hearing, or photosensitive epilepsy requiring you to avoid computer display screens etc. - you should talk to Dr Luke Wilson in room E17. Dr Wilson will co-ordinate any special arrangements that have to be made to accommodate your problem, such as providing written transcripts of lectures or organising an alternative to computing courses.

- *Year Abroad Tutor*

As well as the ERASMUS exchange schemes with European countries (Université du Maine, Le Mans, France, Technische Universität, Dresden or Universität Kaiserlauten, Germany, Universidad die Santiago de Compostella, Spain and Aachen University of Technology), the University of Sheffield has an exchange programme with various American, Canadian and Australian universities allowing MPhys students to spend the third year of their course overseas. Places on this scheme are awarded competitively each year. If you are interested, you should see Dr Susan Cartwright *early in your second year*. Placements are agreed in January of your second year. Dr Cartwright also has responsibility for any American students using this exchange programme who may be taking courses in the Department of Physics and Astronomy during their stay in Sheffield.

- *Women's Issues*

If you are a woman student and you have a problem that you would rather not discuss with a male member of staff, please feel free to consult Dr Susan Cartwright. (You can also speak to Tracy or Linda in the Departmental Office, E34)

## Finding your way round the Department

The Department of Physics and Astronomy is housed in the lower part (floors C–F) of the Hicks Building on Hounsfield Road. Entering the building by the main entrance at the top of Hounsfield Road brings you to floor D.

### Floor C

Research laboratories which you may use for projects in Years 3 and 4, see Floor D.

### Floor D

Through the doors on your left is the corridor leading to the First Year and Foundation Year Physics Laboratory (D17) and the offices of a number of academic members of staff (D10–D30). Immediately opposite you is a bridge leading to lecture rooms 3 and 4 and also the Student Common Room (D13). Part of floor D house research laboratories which you may use for projects in Years 3 and 4.

Taking the stairs on your right down two flights lead to lecture room 1 and 2 on Floor B.

Taking the stairs up one floor bring you to **Floor E**.

Across the bridge immediately opposite the top of these stairs are lecture rooms 5–7. Along the corridor to your left are further academic offices (E12–E24). Towards the end of this corridor another corridor branches off to the left. Along this corridor you will find the Meetings Room (E28), the Departmental Office (E34), the Head of Department's office (E35), the Second Year Physics Laboratory (E32), the IT Laboratory (E33), Astronomy Laboratory (E36), the Media Room (E39), the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Year Study Room, the MSc Study Room (E44) and further academic offices (E37–E49). At the far end of this corridor are lecture rooms A, B (Floor B), lecture theatres C – E on their respective floors .

### Floor F

Smaller lecture rooms (F20–F41), which may be used for problem classes and academic offices opposite the lecture rooms. There are also further academic offices over the bridge which is opposite the top of the main stairs.

### Floor G

In addition to computers in the Undergraduate Laboratories there are a number of open access computer rooms on floor G (G25, G29 and G39A) of the Hicks Building. These are open in term time 8.00 am to 8.45 pm Monday to Thursday, Friday 8.00 am to 7.45 pm and Saturday 8.00 am to 12 noon, in vacation periods Monday to Friday 8.00 am to 6.00 pm, Saturday 8.00 am to 12 noon. Apart from when they are booked for classes, the latter are available at all times when the building is open.

The Hicks Study Room, G34/G34A with computers linked to the library system is open in term time 9.00 am to 8.45 pm Monday to Thursday, 9.00 am to 7.45 pm Friday, 9.00 am to 12.00 noon Saturday, 9.00 am to 6.00 pm in vacation periods.

Please note that it is not possible to use floor D to get directly from the main entrance to lecture rooms A–E at the far end of the building. This is because the far end of floor D corridor is a restricted research area (as is all of floor C). To reach lecture rooms A–E from the main entrance you need either to go via floor E or to leave the building and re-enter it via the entrance towards the bottom of Hounsfield Road.

**Summary:** All lecturer rooms designated by a number are at the main entrance end of the building, those designated by a letter are at the far end of the building and lecture rooms with F plus a number are on floor F.

## 1. Aims and Objectives of the Department of Physics and Astronomy

The Department of Physics and Astronomy aims to provide high quality education to students from a wide variety of educational and social backgrounds, consistent with the University's Mission "to maintain the highest standards of excellence as a research-led institution, whose staff work at the frontiers of academic enquiry and educate students in a research environment".

### Aims

The Department aims to:

- provide teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels that is informed and invigorated by the research and scholarship of the staff and is stimulating, useful and enjoyable to students from a wide variety of educational backgrounds;
- sustain a culture of teaching and research that is able to foster the free pursuit of knowledge and the rigorous analysis of information;
- meet a wide diversity of student interests and aspirations through degree courses which furnish a well-rounded understanding of the subject;
- encourage and develop the students' desire for learning and support their development of appropriate interpersonal and transferable skills;
- produce graduates with well-developed practical, analytical, communication and problem-solving abilities, who readily find employment in industry, the professions and public service;
- provide, through the Foundation Year, access to degree courses for all those with suitable levels of academic ability even if lacking the usual school qualifications.

Particularly for the 4-year MPhys degrees, the department also aims to

- prepare students for a professional career or research degree based on physics, astronomy or medical physics;
- allow students to extend their knowledge and understanding in particular areas of interest.

## Objectives

In pursuit of the Department's aims, the Department offers a Foundation Year and a number of 3-year and 4-year undergraduate degrees. Objectives which are common to all our degree programmes are that students should:

- gain a sound grasp of the fundamental principles of physics and/or astronomy (as appropriate to the degree programme);
- be able to tailor their studies to match their interests and abilities, by choosing from a range of Single and Dual Honours degree programmes, with the possibility of internal transfer in the first year, and by selecting appropriate optional courses later in their degree programme;
- develop an appreciation of logical analysis and scientific method and the knowledge, skills and attitudes expected of a professional scientist;
- become equipped with the mathematical, scientific and technical skills to apply physical principles creatively to the solution of problems and the acquisition, analysis and interpretation of data;
- be trained in sound laboratory techniques so that they can plan and perform experiments accurately, efficiently and safely, with due regard for the limitations of the equipment;
- acquire effective study habits and the ability to work efficiently both individually and as members of a team;
- develop the ability to communicate scientific results, ideas and arguments in a clear, logical and concise way, both orally and in writing;
- acquire computing skills to aid in data analysis, problem solving and report presentation;
- experience active learning through independent study, in addition to formal lectures.
- become acquainted with both traditional and modern methods of information storage, retrieval and dissemination.

The objectives of the MPhys degrees are to enhance and extend the BSc, in that students should also:

- have the opportunity to conduct a challenging research project in a research environment, and to develop their ability to carry this out, present and defend it orally;
- acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to proceed into postgraduate research and advanced study, if they have the aptitude and desire to do so\*;
- take advanced courses relevant to modern research.

For the Foundation Year, the objective is to:

- bring students up to the appropriate academic level in Physics to enable them to pursue degree courses in the Faculties of Pure Science and Engineering.

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\* It is possible to proceed to postgraduate research after a good BSc degree, but students with a BSc are indubitably disadvantaged when applying for PhD positions compared to similarly able students with an MPhys. Students intending to pursue a research career should therefore normally plan to complete the MPhys.

## 2. Teaching and Learning

### 2.1 General Information

All courses in the University of Sheffield are packaged into modules, worth 20 *credits*, and or 10 credits. Most of the modules in the Department of Physics and Astronomy are worth 10 credits. A full-time student is required to register for modules totalling 120 credits in each academic year. You are not allowed to register for more than 120, even if you think you could cope with the work, and only in special circumstances – usually if you have failed several modules and have to repeat them to progress to the next year of your course – can you register for less than 120. Your 120 credits should normally consist of 60 credits in each semester, although occasionally a 70–50 split is necessary; any greater imbalance (i.e. 80–40 or greater) is not permitted.

**There is no Reading Week in semester 1**, this is part of the contingency plan for swine ‘flu.

Week 27 in semester 2 (17–21 May 2010) is, at present, designated as a “reading week”; this week is to give you more time to assimilate the lecture material – there will be no lectures or labs in this weeks unless in exceptional circumstances (e.g. if lectures have had to be postponed because the lecturer was ill).

Most modules in this Department are taught in the traditional way through 50-minute lectures, backed up by regular small-group tutorials (see section 7.3). Although most lecturers will endeavour to help you by handing out lecture summaries and copies of pictorial material, or by making material available on the WWW, **it is important that you develop the ability to take good and effective lecture notes** – this is not only crucial in ensuring that you make the most of your lectures, but is also a very useful skill to have in later life. Try to strike a balance between making notes and listening carefully – try to understand the main points of the lecture and, at the same time, try to make sufficient notes to enable you to recall each of the points afterwards. It is good practice to read through your notes soon after each lecture and highlight key points. It is especially important to highlight anything you do not understand, so that you can identify problem areas for discussion in tutorials.

Although almost every module taught in the Department has a final examination, most also include various forms of continuous assessment such as marked home works, progress tests, essays or lab work. These are intended as teaching aids as well as assessment tools, and to help you get the best from your course. Marked scripts from progress tests and assessed home works will be returned at lectures or through your tutors: take the time to read through them and consider any comments made by the marker. Ask your tutor, or the lecturer, if there is some aspect of the marking which seems unclear or wrong – if you have misunderstood something in the lectures, this is an opportunity to clarify the point, and if there really is a mistake in the marking we will be happy to correct it.

Lecture timetables are posted on various notice boards around the Department, and any alterations, e.g. if a lecturer is ill or away, will be announced in lectures and/or posted on notice boards. The times of progress tests and deadlines for submission of assessed homework will be included in the year guide where possible, and otherwise posted on notice boards or stated in lecture handouts, at least a week in advance of the date in question.

If you are having difficulty with any of the lecture material you should not hesitate to ask questions, either directly of the lecturer or in your weekly tutorial. It is often helpful to get a different perspective on difficult material, so you should make use of the textbooks on your lecturer's recommended list, and indeed other appropriate textbooks available in the main library. Copies of past examination papers are useful revision aids and can be obtained via the department web page:

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/physics/teaching/examination-papers>

or from the Departmental Office for a small charge (to cover the cost of photocopying). It is generally true that the only way to learn to solve problems is to try to solve problems – make full use of any problem sheets that the lecturer may hand out, do past exam papers, look at problems set in recommended textbooks, and so on.

## 2.2 Information for Disabled and Dyslexic Students

If you have a disability, medical condition or a specific learning difficulty, we strongly encourage you to contact the Disability and Dyslexia Support Services (DDSS). The DDSS is a confidential and friendly service which offers a range of support, including:

- Liaising with academic staff and central services about disabled students' support needs
- Helping students to apply for Disabled Students' Allowances
- Organising support workers, e.g. note takers, readers, library support, scribes, interpreters
- Advising on specialist equipment and technology
- Referring Dyslexic students for study skill support, at the English Language Teaching Centre (<http://www.shef.ac.uk/eltc/services/dyslexia>)
- Referring students who think that they might be dyslexic for diagnostic assessments with an Educational Psychologist
- Putting students in contact with local and national external agencies who offer support and advice to disabled people on specific issues
- Formalising alternative arrangements for examinations and assessments, e.g. extra time in examinations; reasonable adjustments to assessment tasks; or alternative assessment formats.

For further information, please contact the DDSS, The Hillsborough Centre, Alfred Denny Building, tel. 0114 22 21303, email: [disability.info@shef.ac.uk](mailto:disability.info@shef.ac.uk)  
<http://www.shef.ac.uk/disability/index.html>

If you require alternative examination arrangements, please make sure that you contact the DDSS at the earliest opportunity.

## 2.2 Some Important Regulations

Students admitted to the University of Sheffield are required to comply with the University's registrations procedure and will duly observe the Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations of the University.

Your attention is drawn particularly to the following:

“Every student is required (a) to attend punctually and regularly lectures and classes; (b) to complete all written assignments, practical or other coursework; (c) to keep appointments to meet with the candidate's supervisor; and (d) to attend all examinations, as appropriate in each case to the relevant programme of study or research. A candidate who fails to comply with this Regulation may be denied the credits assigned to the relevant units or other parts of the programme of study or dealt with under the Regulations as to the Progress of Students.

You are normally required to be in residence throughout the whole of each semester, and may not be absent during the normal working week without permission.”

In cases of enforced absence, a written explanation must be given to your personal tutor.

You must attend all examination unless excused in writing by the Head of Year.

Failure to observe the above Regulations may disqualify you from receiving a degree from the University.

The Student's Charter is a partnership document between the University of Sheffield and its students. The Charter sets out individual rights and responsibilities to help students and staff work together in a spirit of co-operation. The Charter sets out what is required of students, their legal responsibilities and how to get the best out of their academic studies.

The full text can be found on the University's website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/charter>

The General Regulations that apply to all students in all Faculties covering: Registration; Academic Progress; Appeals & Students Appeals can be found in Supplement 1 of the University Calendar, or in the Appendix to the University of Sheffield Academic Diary & Student Handbook or on the Web by clicking 'University Administration Information' then 'Course Information' from the University's Student Services Information Desk (SSiD) web page: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/)

The regulations regarding programmes of study can be found at:  
[www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/course/departments.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/course/departments.html)

Information on Academic Appeals Regulations, which exist for appeals regarding decision of examiner or Faculty Boards can be found from the Calendar on the following web site:  
[www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/procedures](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/procedures)

Also the University has a procedure for making complaints, whether about the delivery and quality of services received, or about the delivery and quality of teaching, tutorial/supervisory provision or any other matters relating to your programme of study. Please see page 33 of this handbook. Information can also be found on the SSiD:

[www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/faq/complaints.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/faq/complaints.html)

General Regulations governing fees for the programmes of study can be found on:  
[www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/faq/fees.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/faq/fees.html)

### 3 Your responsibilities as a Student

The department expects the following of you:

- **attend all lectures, labs and tutorials appropriate for the modules you are taking;**
- **complete any written assignments you may be given and hand them in promptly;**
- **have proper regard at all times for the interests and the safety of other members of the department (this applies particularly to working in the labs and the observatory).**

The Department takes non-attendance of lectures/laboratories seriously and if you have not attended three consecutive lectures for a specific module without documentary support (medical note, etc.) a letter will be sent asking you to see the relevant year tutor. If you fail to attend this meeting the Department will ask you attend a Progress of Student's meeting.

#### **Absence from the Department**

During your undergraduate career there may well be occasions when you cannot attend lectures because of illness, urgent personal business, etc. If you have to be away from the university for longer than a day or so, it is important that you *let us know* as soon as possible, and provide documentary evidence where appropriate. This will ensure that we do not start disciplinary procedures for poor attendance, and it will also let us make due allowance for any elements of continuous assessment that you may have missed or handed in late as a result of your absence. The general guidelines are as follows:

- *Absence of less than a week*  
If you have had a minor illness, you may want to fill in a self-certification form (available from the Student Services Information Desk or Physics office) – but please note that we do *not* regard these as providing adequate documentary proof of illness if you miss a test or exam (see below). If you know in advance that you will miss a tutorial, for instance to attend a job interview, it is common courtesy to let your tutor know beforehand.
- *Longer absence, or failure to complete an item of assessment (test, homework or exam)*  
In this case we need formal documentation of the problem – a note from the University Health Service (*not* a self-certification) if you have been ill, a letter from your family in the case of a family bereavement or similar serious personal problem. We recognise that this may seem like unnecessary bureaucracy when you are in pain or distress, but in fairness to your fellow students we must have some way to be sure that the problem is real. Please try to make sure that the documentation reaches us as quickly as possible, since it is always easier to make suitable adjustments before the grades are formally approved than to amend them later.

If your illness does not prevent you from taking a test or examination, but will disadvantage you relative to other students – for example, if you break your arm the week before an exam – let us know as quickly as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. We can also arrange for you to sit exams in private if you find that the environment of the exam hall causes you severe psychological distress – again, advance notice and a letter from Student Health or the Counselling Service are needed so that we can organise this.

## 4 Organisation of Courses

### 4.1 Degree Programmes in the Department

The following degree programmes are taught wholly or partly within the Department of Physics and Astronomy:

Course Title	3-year	4-year
<b>Single Honours Programmes</b>		
Physics	PHYU01/F301	PHYU02/F300
Theoretical Physics	PHYU04/F344	PHYU16/F321
Chemical Physics	CHMU03/F334	CHMU08/F335
<b>Dual Honours Programmes</b>		
Physics/Astronomy	PHYU06/FF35	PHYU11/F3F5
Physics/Medical Physics	PHYU05/F350	PHYU10/F371
Physics/Philosophy	PHYU14/FV35	No MPhys programme
Physics/Computer Science	PHYU18/F3G4	PHYU19/F3GK
Physics with Enterprise Management (no intake in September 2009)	PHYU20/F3N2	PHYU21/F3NF
Physics/Maths	MASU23/GF13	PHYU12/F3G1
Maths/Astronomy	MASU21/GF15	MASU22/GFC5
<b>Study Abroad</b>		
Physics/Europe		PHYU03/F302 (BSc)
Year Abroad (North America)		PHYU23/F305
Year Abroad (Australasia)		PHYU24/F304

The course codes are the University code, which is used in University documentation such as the degree programme regulations, and the UCAS code, which is what you put on your application form. University codes starting with MAS indicate a programme which is administered by School of Mathematics, and CHM by Chemistry. You may find that you are registered for a four-year programme even though you intend to do a BSc - this is not a mistake, but an attempt to protect you in case you change your mind - see below.

## 4.2 Relationships between the MPhys and the BSc

The 4-year MPhys and MMath courses offer an opportunity to increase both the depth and the breadth of your knowledge of physics – they include all the BSc material plus advanced lecture courses, extended research projects and individually tailored directed reading modules allowing you to explore topics of particular interest to you – while the BSc degree continues to provide a sound training in all aspects of the subject within the confines of a 3-year programme.

*Which should I choose?*

As a very general guide, the MPhys is certainly the better choice if you are intending to go on to do a PhD, and probably also if you want a physics-related career in industry, while the BSc is more suitable if your career plans are not directly physics-oriented, and especially if your plans include a specialist postgraduate training course such as teacher training, a vocational MSc course, etc. You would not be well-advised to take the MPhys if you find the material of the second year very difficult, and in recognition of this there is a *Faculty rule* which states that you must have a grade point average of at least 55 in the second year to be permitted to opt for the MPhys. **You should discuss your choice with your Advisor.**

*When must I choose?*

The degree programmes of the BSc and the MPhys are almost the same up to the end of second year, so from an academic standpoint you may delay your decision until the end of your second year. **However**, you should be aware that the regulations imposed by your grant-awarding body are more stringent than this. If you want to change *from the BSc to the MPhys*, you must do so before the 16th month of your course (i.e. before Christmas of your second year), or you are likely to lose your LEA support. For this reason we will normally register you for the MPhys initially, even if you are sure you want to do the BSc, because by doing this we can safeguard your full entitlement if you should subsequently change your mind.

If you have entered your physics degree through the *Science Foundation Year*, you should note that the 16 months deadline starts from the start of the Foundation Year. Foundation Year students are normally registered for the BSc: if you want to do the MPhys you must contact your LEA as soon as possible, since you only have until Christmas of your first “proper” year to make the transfer.

## 4.3 Choosing and Changing Modules

In the second half of the second semester you will fill out a module/unit choice form with the modules you intend to take the following year.

However, it is quite likely that at some point you may decide that you have made a wrong choice. This is not a serious problem, but you must follow the correct procedures so that the appropriate administrative actions can be taken – otherwise you may find yourself, for example, trying to sit two examinations at the same time.

What you have to do is fill in a *module add/drop form before the end of the third week of the semester* (available from the Departmental Office or SSID web pages) and take it to your year tutor for signature. Take the completed form to Student Services for your record to be amended; it is also helpful if you take a copy to the Physics Departmental Office.

## 4.4 Transferring between Degree Programmes

Before taking such a step please see your Advisor or Tutor. He or she will be able to point out any consequences of your decision that you may not have recognised, and will also be able to advise you as to whether your proposed change really deals with the issues that have prompted you to consider it. If you and your Advisor agree that a change of programme is your best course of action, you should fill in a *Change of Status* form and return it to the Physics Departmental Office or SSiD with signature of Year Tutor.

## 5 Coursework, Assessment and Progression

### 5.1 Coursework

All coursework exercises must be handed in to the Departmental Office on or before the deadline announced by the lecturer. You will be provided with an official cover sheet, which you should complete with your registration number and name. (Your registration number is the one that starts with your year of entry, e.g. 09 for 2009 entrants.) You place the work in the corresponding box in the Departmental Office. The name section of the form is removed before handing to the tutor to allow the exercise to be marked anonymously in accordance with University guidelines.

Failure to hand in work without extenuating circumstances (e.g. doctor's note) will result in a reduced mark. The standard University policy for late submission of assessed coursework is a deduction of 5% of the total mark for each working day after the submission date. Work submitted more than five working days late will receive a mark of zero. In cases where other late submission policies apply, the lecturer or course administrator should have informed you of the alternative policy. You should consult the lecturer or course administrator if you are unsure of the rules on late submission. In general, small items returned on a rapid timescale, e.g. weekly homework, carry a "zero tolerance" policy where late submissions will not be accepted.

### 5.2 Assessment

Each module of your course is assessed individually, by means of some combination of final written examination, oral exam, essay, presentation, progress tests, assessed homework, etc. Material assessed during the course, e.g. homework, lab reports and progress tests, will be returned to you after marking so that you can learn from the comments made by markers, but end of semester exam scripts are retained by the University for reference.

All end-of-semester examinations are assessed anonymously in accordance with standard University procedures. In addition, most of your assessed coursework will also be marked anonymously. However, in some cases (e.g. oral presentations and viva voce examinations) anonymous marking is not practicable, and in others, for example laboratory exercises, it is not appropriate: you will learn more from a lab exercise if you have the chance to discuss your work with a demonstrator than if your lab diary is marked anonymously outside the lab.

Although it is possible to resit the majority of Year 1 and 2 modules in August you are strongly advised not to make use of this option; you should aim to pass all modules at the first attempt. Resit exams will involve additional work and financial cost, and you will have to return to Sheffield in August (both semester 1 and 2 modules are resat during the same period). In addition, the mark for a resit Year 2 module is capped at 40%, so resitting year 2 modules may adversely affect your final degree classification. **There are no resit exams for Year 3 and 4 modules.**

It is generally not possible to resit coursework<sup>1</sup> and the module mark following a resit is composed of the new exam mark plus the original coursework mark. It is hence very important that you attempt and submit all coursework throughout the year; this will be your only opportunity to obtain the associated marks. The only circumstance in which resit of coursework is possible is when there is a well documented medical problem. Again it is important that any medical problems are supported by a doctor's note, which should be submitted to the departmental office.

The University's guidelines on assessment criteria can be found at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/tlsu/handbook>

### 5.3 Preparing for your Examinations

Examinations for semester 1 modules are held in January, those for semester 2 modules are held in May/June. Resit examinations for both semesters are held in August.

It is very important that you prepare properly for your exams, as these are the major factor contributing to your final degree classification. It is a good idea to practise timed questions from old papers. This will help you test how much you have retained and understood, and how long it takes you to answer a question. Copies of past exam papers are available via the Departmental website and also from the Departmental Office. You should ensure that you are familiar with the format of the paper and also the type and standard of questions. Your tutor may also cover past exam questions in tutorials. Model answers for examinations papers are **not** available, but tutors and lecturers will be happy to comment on questions that you have attempted.

Many lecturers will include revision lectures towards the end of their course where they may work through past exam questions – it is therefore very important that you attend all lectures. You are also welcome to contact your tutor for additional help in preparing for exams. Finally there is a data sheet attached to the exam papers. In addition to listing values of the most common physical constants, this sheet also contains a number of mathematical formulae. You should be aware of which formulae are given as this will save you having to remember them.

Check the web site [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/atoz/e.html](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/atoz/e.html) for full details of all aspects relating to exams and exam regulations, including resits and academic appeals.

### 5.4 Reporting of Marks

The University uses a 100 point scale for the reporting of module grades. The table below shows the correspondence between this scale and degree classifications.

Class	100 Point
I	70-100
II.1	60-69
II.2	50-59
III	45-49
Pass	40-44
Fail	1-39

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<sup>1</sup> Exceptions are where a single item of coursework contributes a significant fraction of the module mark, in which case it is possible to resit the course work. Coursework components that can be resat are listed in the Year 1 and 2 sections towards the end of this hand book.

The table is a guide, and not a definitive statement, because despite our best efforts exams do vary in difficulty and sometimes it is necessary to adjust the translation slightly to account for this.

- A grade of 0 means you did not complete all the required work for the module, and is obviously classed as a FAIL;
- NA (not assessed) usually means that you missed the examination for some good reason such as documented illness;
- DE (deferred) means that the grades for this module have been delayed, e.g. by the need to hold oral examinations, and will be returned next semester.

Credits for a module are only awarded if you achieve a pass grade (i.e. 40 or above). Therefore a student who registers for 120 credits, but fails two 10-credit half-modules, will only be awarded 100 credits. This is important because it affects your chances of progressing to the next year of your course, and also restricts your choice of options – for example, if you want to take PHY216 in year 2, you must take *and pass* PHY111 in year 1, because PHY111 is listed as a prerequisite for PHY216.

## 5.5 Plagiarism and Collusion

The University expects its graduates to have acquired certain attributes. (See the [Sheffield Graduate](#)) Many of these relate to good academic practice:

- a critical, analytical and creative thinker
- an independent learner and researcher
- information literate and IT literate
- a flexible team worker
- an accomplished communicator
- competent in applying their knowledge and skills
- professional and adaptable.

Throughout your programme of study at the University you will learn how to develop these skills and attributes. Your assessed work is the main way in which you demonstrate that you have acquired and can apply them. Using unfair means in the assessment process is dishonest and means that you cannot demonstrate that you have acquired these essential academic skills and attributes.

### What constitutes unfair means?

The basic principle underlying the preparation of any piece of academic work is that the work submitted must be your own work. **Plagiarism, submitting bought or commissioned work, double submission (or self plagiarism), collusion and fabrication of results** are not allowed because they violate this principle (see definitions below). Rules about these forms of cheating apply to all assessed and non-assessed work.

- **Plagiarism (either intentional or unintentional)** is the stealing of ideas or work of another person (including experts and fellow or former students) and is considered dishonest and unprofessional. Plagiarism may take the form of cutting and pasting, taking or closely paraphrasing ideas, passages, sections, sentences, paragraphs, drawings, graphs and other graphical material from books, articles, internet sites or any other source and submitting them for assessment without appropriate acknowledgement.
- **Submitting bought or commissioned work** (for example from internet sites, essay “banks” or “mills”) is an extremely serious form of plagiarism. This may take the form of buying or commissioning either the whole assignment or part of it and implies a clear intention to deceive the examiners. The University also takes an extremely

serious view of any student who sells, offers to sell or passes on their own assignments to other students.

- **Double submission (or self plagiarism)** is resubmitting previously submitted work on one or more occasions (without proper acknowledgement). This may take the form of copying either the whole assignment or part of it. Normally credit will already have been given for this work.
- **Collusion** is where two or more people work together to produce a piece of work, all or part of which is then submitted by each of them as their own individual work. This includes passing on work in any format to another student. Collusion does not occur where students involved in group work are encouraged to work together to produce a single piece of work as part of the assessment process.
- **Fabrication** is submitting work (for example, practical or laboratory work) any part of which is untrue, made up, falsified or fabricated in any way. This is regarded as fraudulent and dishonest.

### **How can I avoid the use of unfair means?**

To avoid using unfair means, any work submitted must be your own and must not include the work of any other person, unless it is properly acknowledged and referenced.

As part of your programme of studies you will learn how to reference sources appropriately in order to avoid plagiarism. This is an essential skill that you will need throughout your University career and beyond. You should follow any guidance on the preparation of assessed work given by the academic department setting the assignment.

You are required to attach a **declaration form** to all submitted work (including work submitted online), stating that the work submitted is entirely your own work.

If you have any concerns about appropriate academic practices or if you are experiencing any personal difficulties which are affecting your work, you should consult your personal tutor or a member of staff involved with that unit of study.

The following websites provide additional information on referencing appropriately and avoiding unfair means:

The **Library** provides online information literacy skills tutorials

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/library/services/infoskills.html>

The **Library** also has information on reference management software

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/library/refmant/refmant.html>

**The English Language Teaching Centre operates a Writing Advisory Service through which students can make individual appointments to discuss a piece of writing. This is available for all students, both native and non-native speakers of English.**

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/eltc/services/writingadvisory>

### **What happens if I use unfair means?**

Any form of unfair means is treated as a serious academic offence and action may be taken under the Discipline Regulations. For a student registered on a professionally accredited programme of study, action may also be taken under the Fitness to Practise Regulations. Where unfair means is found to have been used, the University may impose penalties ranging from awarding a grade of zero for the assignment through to expulsion from the University in extremely serious cases.

## Detection of Unfair Means

The University subscribes to a national plagiarism detection service which helps academic staff identify the original source of material submitted by students. This means that academic staff have access to specialist software that searches a database of reference material gathered from professional publications, student essay websites and other work submitted by students. It is also a resource which can help tutors to advise students on ways of improving their referencing techniques. Your work is likely to be submitted to this service.

For further information

([www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/charter/guidance\\_taught.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/charter/guidance_taught.html))

([www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/procedures/grid.html#discipline](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/procedures/grid.html#discipline))

## 5.6 Progression

It is expected that all students will pass their exams at the first sitting, hence obtaining the 120 credits required to progress to the next year of their degree programme. In addition MPhys/MMath students must achieve a minimum overall average of 55 at the end of year 2 and of 50 at the end of year 3 to remain on the 4-year course. If a lower average is obtained it is necessary to transfer to the corresponding BSc course.

### *Progression – first to second year*

The only way to **guarantee** that you progress to the second year of your degree programme is to pass all the modules you are taking in your first year, *even those which do not form part of the core of your programme*.

If you do not pass all of your modules, you *may* be allowed to progress to your second year (a “conceded pass”), provided that:

- you have obtained at least 100 credits (i.e. you have failed not more than 2 10-credit modules or 1 20-credit module);
- you have passed all your core modules;
- your overall average grade, **including** failed modules, is at least 39.5;
- *you have achieved a mark of at least 30 in the module(s) that you failed.*

Therefore, if you have failed any module with a grade of less than 30, you **must** resit that module and improve your mark if you are to progress to second year. This is a University regulation and is not something in which the Department has discretion.

You should also be aware that a conceded pass is awarded *at the Examiners' discretion*: you do not have a “right” to a conceded pass. In particular, **the Department expects all students who fail a module at the first sitting to attempt the resit examination in August**, even if their original failing grade was greater than 30. Students who do not attempt the resit examination should **not** assume that they will nevertheless be awarded a conceded pass.

You will be expected to retake any failed year 1 modules during the August resit period. If following these resits you have still dropped up to 20 credits you may be awarded a conceded pass and allowed to proceed to the next year, although this is not an automatic right. Obviously you will not be allowed to proceed if you have failed any modules which are prerequisites for core modules in later years of your programme.

The University Regulations concerning a conceded pass are as follows. ‘Progression to Level 2 with fewer than 120 credits is a concession rather than a right, and is subject to the

prescribed core units having been passed and to satisfactory progress having been made across the year. In addition to having compensating grades from other module(s), students must have made a demonstrable effort to succeed in any failed module(s), evidenced by adequate attendance and participation and completion of the relevant assessed work and examinations. Progression to Level 2 will normally be considered only where the student has achieved a grade of not less than 30 in module(s) to the value of not more than 20 credits.’

If you are not initially permitted to proceed to level 2, you have two alternatives:

1. You may resit the failed module(s) in the following year as an external candidate. This will involve the payment of a fee. You will have to suspend your LEA support for a year, since you will not be a full-time student while you are doing this.
2. You may elect to retake the whole year. *In this case **all** your module grades for the first attempt are disregarded:* in other words, you **cannot** “carry forward” passed modules, or parts of modules such as laboratory work, from your first attempt.

In years 2 and 3, you will normally be awarded a conceded pass with 100 or 110 credits if you have not failed any modules which are prerequisites for later core modules. However, as explained in the next section, dropped credits may prevent you from graduating with a degree and hence you are strongly advised to resit any failed year 2 modules in August. University regulations allow you to resit level 2 modules so if you fail the August resit you can retake the modules during year 3. However, this is not recommended as once in year 3 you should concentrate on passing the year 3 modules. If you are registered for the MPhys degree and you have failed a level 2 module, you may wish to discuss with your Academic Advisor whether you would be well advised to change to the BSc.

University guidelines on progression can be found at:

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/exams/ugexams/progression.html>

## 5.7 Your final degree class

Your degree classification is based on your performance in years 2, 3 and 4. To graduate with a BSc honours degree you must have obtained at least 200 credits. Candidates for MPhys or MMath must obtain 320 credits including not fewer than 90 credits at level M.

At the end of your programme of study, your degree will be classified on the basis of a calculation which takes account of both the weighted average of the grades you obtain in modules at Levels 2 and above and the class within which the best 50% of these weighted module grades fall.

In the calculation, grades are weighted both according to the credit value of each module (eg. grades for 20 credit modules are worth twice as much as 10 credit modules in the calculation) and according to the Level at which the module was studied (ie. your Level 3 grades are counted twice relative to those obtained at Level 2).

Modules are weighted 1:2 in years 2 and 3 for a BSc degree and 1:2:2 in years 2, 3 and 4 for an MPhys degree. Full details of the degree classification method are given at [http://www.tlsu.dept.shef.ac.uk/handbook/29\\_Degreeclassification.doc](http://www.tlsu.dept.shef.ac.uk/handbook/29_Degreeclassification.doc)

QAA regulations do not allow the award of a degree classification below Iii for an undergraduate Masters degree (MPhys or MMath). This means that students in the 40–49 bracket will be awarded a III class BSc degree instead, despite the fact that they have completed 4 years of study. It is in fact very unusual for MPhys students to average less than

50, because of the 55 cut imposed at level 2, but it is a factor that you may need to consider if your second year average is very close to the cut-off point.

If you obtain 180 or 190 credits in a BSc degree, and your overall grade average (including the failed modules) is at least 39.5, the Examining Board is permitted to recommend the award of a Pass degree (even though you have not reached the minimum credit level). Note that you cannot be awarded an Honours degree under these circumstances even if your grade average would normally correspond to an Honours class. **This is why it is crucial to ensure that you do not drop credits, especially in your second year.**

If you fail to obtain enough credits for the award of a degree, you may resit failed modules on *one* further occasion (i.e. you may sit the August exams for any lost level 2 modules, or the following year's exams for levels 3 and 4). Multiple resits are not permitted at levels 3 and 4. However, you will then only be eligible for a Pass degree, irrespective of your grade average.

#### Extenuating Circumstances

The Department is concerned about the welfare of students and we encourage students to talk to their advisor, or a member of staff, if they have any problems. Please remember that it is easier to solve a problem as soon as it arises.

Advice on reporting special circumstances is prominently displayed on the Student Services Information (SSiD) website and a special circumstances reporting form is available from Students Services, at <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid>. The form should be used to report the following circumstances:

- Medical circumstances (sickness, injury, surgery/hospitalization etc.) which have resulted in a period of short or long term absence and/or have affected performance or examinations/assessment.
- Other personal circumstances which have resulted in a period of absence and/or which have affected performance or examinations/assessment. Examples include: personal/family problems, difficult events (e.g. bereavement), serious incidents (e.g. being affected by crime).

The TPO (Taught Programmes Office) emails all students one month before the final examination period to remind students to notify the Department of any special circumstances which should be considered by the Examiners.

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/welfare/signposts>

### 5.8 Note on Calculators

The University has restrictions on the type of calculators which can be used in examinations. The regulations are designed primarily to forbid the use of calculators which can store information, thereby (in non-“open book” exams) giving students who have them an unfair advantage over those who do not. Before you go into the examination hall with a calculator, you should ensure that it has an official University “approved” sticker on it. These can be obtained by presenting your calculator for inspection at the Student Services Information Desk in the Students’ Union. If you do not do this, you run the risk of having your calculator confiscated for the duration of the exam – although you will be provided with an approved substitute, using an unfamiliar machine will certainly lose you time and increase the risk of numerical errors.

Website: <http://www.sheff.ac.uk/ssid/exams/calculator>

## 6 Student Evaluation

### 6.1 Evaluating your programme of study

Whilst you are a student, you will have opportunities to evaluate the quality of your programme of study and its individual units. Student evaluation is an essential part of assuring the quality of departments' provision and provides us with essential feedback on your experiences of your programmes of study.

The University requires all departments to operate a system of anonymous student evaluation of programmes on an annual basis. We will inform you of the purpose and process of student evaluation, including how and when it will take place and what will be done with the results. We will ask for comments on your experience of each level as a whole in each session, in addition to commenting on individual units. At the end of your programme, you will also be asked to comment on the programme as a whole.

As an introduction, these are some of the issues that we will be asking you about:

- The overall coherence and content of your programme;
- Tutorial support;
- Assessment deadlines and feedback;
- Appropriateness of the teaching methods;
- Availability and suitability of learning resources.

The questionnaires will normally ask you for tick-only responses to most questions, and will use a rating scale, but we will also give you the opportunity to provide more detailed responses or free-form comments.

We will endeavour to provide you with feedback on the issues that students have raised through the evaluation process and how we are addressing these. It is important that we receive a good response rate to student evaluations, as your feedback is an essential part of helping us to maintain the quality of teaching and learning provision, and may benefit you and future students. Quality reviews of departments' teaching and learning consistently demonstrate ways in which student feedback often does lead to changes being made to units and programmes.

For individual modules anonymous questionnaires conducted via a web based system at an appropriate point in the course, lecturers will also distribute sheets asking for comments. It is important that you take the time to fill these in, and that you do so honestly and fairly. It is always easier for us to respond positively to comments if they are detailed and constructive – for example “the handouts for this course are useless” gives the lecturer little help in deciding what to do about it, whereas “the handouts do not make it clear which parts of the material are examinable, and there are not enough problems provided” is much more useful. The tabulated results of the questionnaires and lecturer responses are posted on the Undergraduate Students' Information board. Year questionnaires are similar and are distributed towards the end of Semester 2. Programme questionnaires are distributed towards the end of year 3 or 4. Questionnaires are considered, along with examination results, at a special meeting of the Departmental Teaching Committee in the summer.

You can also make comments about the courses in your regular meetings with your Academic Advisor, or if you do not feel comfortable doing this you can go and see the appropriate Year Tutor. Please be aware that many aspects of the course are fixed well in advance - for example, exam questions may have to be set before the lecturer concerned has even started giving the course – and so it may not always be possible to respond instantly to criticisms even if everyone agrees that they are well-founded.

In addition, the Department has a Staff-Student Committee which meets twice a semester and includes representatives from each year of the undergraduate course. Matters relating to the Staff-Student Committee are posted on the PhysSoc noticeboard at the entrance to E floor.

#### *Participating in other evaluation processes*

In addition to the student evaluation operated by the departments, you may also be asked to participate in other surveys throughout your study. Final year students are asked to take part in the National Student Survey (NSS), which seeks views from students on their overall satisfaction with their programme of study. The results of this survey, which was run for the first time in 2005, are published. The University also runs an Annual Student Satisfaction Survey towards the end of semester 2, which all categories and levels except final year students are offered the opportunity to complete. This evaluates student satisfaction with the broad range of University services, for example, library and IT facilities, and also includes questions on academic support. The University also uses these survey results, in addition to those at Departmental level, to gauge how well departments are performing.

## **6.2 Student Representation Opportunities**

The University places great value on the opinions of its students and there are numerous opportunities for you to get involved, to have your say and also to represent the views of other students. These opportunities are supplemented by a range of surveys and evaluations which you will be invited to participate in.

What student representation opportunities are available?

#### *In the department ...*

We have a Staff-Student Committee comprising of student representatives together with relevant academic staff. Getting involved will enable you to join in discussions and decision making ranging across such topics as:

- student feedback on the quality of teaching;
- inputs to the planning of curriculum changes;
- departmental/school services (e.g. hand-in arrangements, office opening times, study facilities, availability of personal tutors);
- improving channels of communication with students.

The Chair of the Staff-Student Committee will provide more information on the arrangements for the department's Staff-Student Committee.

Students are encouraged to approach any of the student representatives with any problems or suggestions relating to the Department of Physics & Astronomy. The representatives will make themselves known early on in the academic year and will be happy to help at any time.

A number of the student representatives have links to various physics related societies. Any suggestions regarding excursion, guest lectures, staff-student activities etc., are more than welcome.

The Academic Diary and Student Handbook also contains information about student representation opportunities and the University of Sheffield's Code of Practice for student course representatives provides guidance on the role and responsibilities of staff-student committee members: [http://www.lets.dept.shef.ac.uk/flats/student\\_course\\_reps.pdf](http://www.lets.dept.shef.ac.uk/flats/student_course_reps.pdf)

### *In our Faculty of Science*

There are reserved places for students on the Faculty Learning & Teaching Committee

- policy developments
- student surveys
- reviews of learning and teaching quality
- design of new degree programmes and amendment of existing programmes
- reflections on external reviews of the University.

This is rewarding work which will build your communications skills, offer you the opportunity for valuable networking and contribute to your personal development with skills to put on your CV.

#### SCIENCE FACULTY LEARNING & TEACHING COMMITTEE

(normally 4 meetings per annum, each lasting for around ninety minutes)

The terms of reference of the Committee include, to stimulate students' engagement with learning, teaching and assessment and to ensure that students' views are appropriately represented in Faculty learning and teaching discussion and to enhance the quality of the student experience. Consequently, contributions to this Committee are especially welcome from amongst the student body.

Information on the Faculty Learning & Teaching Committee can found on the following website

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/lets/committees/membership.html>

and details regarding student representation on

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/lets/studrep.html>

The dates of Faculty meetings are given at:

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/diaryofevents/>

More information on student Faculty representation and student Faculty forums please contact Learning and Teaching Support Unit, [a.marron@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:a.marron@sheffield.ac.uk)

Other opportunities may exist for students to become involved in Faculty Library and Graduate Research Committees.

## **7 Resources**

### **7.1 Your Personal Academic Advisor and your Tutor**

There are three or four people who have specific responsibilities towards you as a student. These are

- your Academic Advisor,
- the Year Tutor(s) and
- your Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics tutor(s).

The following sections explain just what each of these people is supposed to do for you and set out the circumstances in which you may need to talk to them. You can of course talk to other people as well – if for some reason you do not feel able to discuss a particular problem with either your Advisor or your tutor, we hope that you will feel able to approach some other member of staff with whom you are more at ease. Your welfare is important to us - if you need help, please do let somebody know about it.

### **7.2 Your Academic Advisor**

On entry to the University you are assigned an Academic Advisor (known in some Departments as a Personal Tutor). In some cases your Academic Advisor will also act as one of your academic tutors. The task of your Academic Advisor is to help you plan your degree programme so that it best reflects your current interests, your future aspirations, and your academic strengths. In addition your Advisor can be approached for help with any problem, academic or personnel. It should be stressed that your Advisor is there to provide positive and constructive support. For example, if you have not performed as well as you had hoped in a recent set of exams your Advisor will not reprimand you on your performance but will seek to discover reasons for these problems and discuss ways to avoid them in the future. Usually you will meet your Advisor once or twice a semester to discuss your progress so far and your module choices for the following semester. Your Advisor will be able to guide you in selecting optional modules: for example, he or she will be able to tell you how your choice of level 2 optional modules affects the options you will be able to take at level 3. Of course, you do not have to follow this advice – the final decision as to the course of your degree programme is always yours. Towards the end of your course you may wish to discuss possible careers with your Advisor.

Although there will be a series of scheduled meetings with your Advisor you are also welcome to contact them at any time to discuss an immediate problem. You should ask to see your Advisor if:

- you are considering changing your choice of modules or your degree programme
- you have personal problems which you believe are affecting your academic performance (such matters are treated as confidential)
- you want to discuss career issues which may have an impact on your choice of course (e.g. if you are considering whether or not to go on to postgraduate study).

In addition your Advisor may ask to see you if your Year Tutor has reported problems - if you are missing labs or lectures, for example, or if a particular lecturer feels you are not coping

academically with his/her course. If this happens, you should make every effort to arrange a meeting as soon as possible. *Your Advisor is on your side*, and will be looking for a way to deal with the problem so that it does not prevent you from completing your degree programme as you would wish. It is in your best interests to help him or her to do this!

You can make an appointment by calling in to their office or by email. If you are unable to contact your advisor because they are away from the Department, you should contact either Linda or Tracy in the Departmental office who will arrange for you to be assigned a temporary Advisor. We hope that all our Advisors are sympathetic and helpful. However if, for any reason, you wish to change your Advisor please contact Linda or Tracy who will assign you to an alternative Advisor.

### 7.3 Your Physics, Astronomy or Mathematics Tutor - Tutorials

Your Advisor is responsible for overseeing your whole degree programme, your *tutor* is there to help you with the day-to-day problems of mastering the material you are currently being taught. You will meet your tutor once a week, in a small group of approximately 6–7 students, during your first and second years. If you are studying more than one subject in the Department, for example physics and astronomy, you will have two tutors and two weekly tutorials. You will also have a tutor to cover the first year mathematics. There are no formal tutors in Years 3 and 4 but students are encouraged to contact their Year 2 tutors for help with academic questions.

Tutorial groups are normally arranged in the first week of the academic year. The time of the weekly tutorial may be assigned, or you may be left to decide it with your tutor. If your timetable turns out to be incompatible with your group, perhaps because of a different choice of options, consult the Year Tutor, who will be able to change your group assignment. It would be helpful if you could first ask around your colleagues in case others have the same problem, as it is easier to deal with a whole group of people at once than to make many individual changes, but the most important thing is that you let us know of the difficulty *quickly*. Otherwise you will be depriving yourself of valuable help in tackling your courses, and you will also run the risk of being reported for poor attendance.

Your tutor is your main source of help and advice about the academic aspects of your course. Your weekly tutorials will cover topics such as problem solving, difficult aspects of the lecture material, writing lab reports and so forth. **You are required to attend these weekly sessions.** In some tutorials you may need to submit work, **the marks for which will contribute to the module mark.** You are also welcome to contact your tutor for additional help, for example if you have additional questions, need help with a specific problem or require help preparing for examinations. You may also want to consult your tutor on topics which fall within the responsibilities of your Advisor – e.g. course changes – because you will probably know your tutor much better than you know your Advisor; however, your tutor does not have the power to countersign module add/drop forms.

The tutorial system is designed to help you assimilate information, develop problem solving techniques and prepare effectively for examinations. However you will only obtain the full benefits of this system if you prepare for and attend tutorials, and actively participate in the tutorial discussions.

## 7.4 Year Tutors

The Year Tutor is responsible for the administration and organisation of each year's courses in Physics and Astronomy. He or she deals with organisational problems such as timetable clashes, assigns students to lab classes and academic tutors, monitors students' attendance and academic performance, and oversees the final assignment of module grades.

Under normal circumstances you should have no need to contact the Year Tutor, except perhaps to deal with timetable problems if your assigned lab class or tutorial group meets at a time when you have lectures in another subject. You may wish to see him or her if you feel there is some general organisational problem – for example, if you consistently get three homework assignments in one week and none in the next – but you can equally well talk to your own physics, astronomy or mathematics tutor who will pass the information on to the Year Tutor and any other people involved.

The Year Tutor will ask to see you if some aspect of your progress has been reported to him or her as unsatisfactory. This probably means you have been missing labs or lectures or failing to hand in homework. If you are summoned to such a meeting, you *must* go, otherwise the Year Tutor will start the formal disciplinary machinery which in the worst case could lead to your exclusion from the University.

## 7.5 Personal Development Planning (PDP)

The University and Department is committed to providing a structured and supported process for all its students to reflect upon their learning and achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development. With this aim in mind, Personal Development Planning (PDP) has been developed by the University to help you think about the following questions:

- Academic learning – how does my course develop my employability?
- Career Development – what are the skills I need for my career?
- Personal – how do I learn best?

The PDP process has been designed to help you to:

- Take responsibility for your own learning and personal development.
- Become consciously aware of professional attributes (skills, attitudes and beliefs).
- Identify personal inclinations, identify where there are gaps in knowledge and understanding, and know your strengths.
- Use this self-awareness as a learner to make appropriate career choices and plan your personal development further.
- Articulate your abilities convincingly as a graduate to prospective employers.

The purpose of the PDP system is to allow you, as student users, to record your learning experiences, meetings with tutors, extra curricula activities and skills development. This can be done at a time to suit you and in a structured and supported way which allows for the diversity of departmental teaching and learning methods.

See: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/pdp/home.html>

The purpose of PDP and how to use it will be explained to you during your induction and you will be encouraged to use PDP. The information contained within PDP will be valuable for you to use when completing CVs and application forms. It also provides additional information about additional sources of support available to you, such as the careers service and student services.

If you are studying a dual degree, you will complete PDP with your 'Home Department'.

## **8 Departmental Resources**

### **8.1 The Departmental Office**

The Departmental Office in room E34 is where you can go to:

- hand in homework, lab reports, etc.;
- obtain and hand in module add/drop or Change of Status forms;
- buy copies of past exam papers (past exam papers are also on the Departmental web page);
- hand in copies of doctor's notes or other official paperwork;
- leave messages for members of staff if you can't find them, or ask when they will be back if they are ill, at conferences, on holiday or otherwise absent.

In general the staff of the office are the best people to go to if you have any sort of non-academic query relating to the Department or the university in general. In the office the departmental secretary Linda Simmons and Tracy Hilton have particular responsibility for matters relating to undergraduate teaching.

### **8.2 Information Technology**

The physics and astronomy laboratories are equipped with PCs which have various general and special-purpose data analysis software installed. In addition, the Department has installed physics-related software on the University network which can be accessed by undergraduates with IDs associated with the physics department. If you have problems in this area - for example, if you are a Maths/Astronomy student and can't access physics software because the system only associates your ID with Maths - or if you want to know more about what is available, you should talk to Dr Lee Thompson (room E41), who is the member of staff with responsibility for undergraduate computing facilities.

### **8.3 Careers advice**

The University has a Careers Service (Favell Road) but we recognise that some people may find it easier to talk to a fellow physicist first and Dr Davide Costanzo (room D27) acts as a liaison between us and the Careers Service. He will be able to discuss with you the career paths that will be open to you when you graduate, and suggest people to talk to at the Careers Service.

For those of you who are considering taking a PhD, the Department has a Research Prospectus available on request from the office, and your Advisor will be able to explain the various topics and suggest who you should talk to if you want to find out more.

## 8.4 Seminars and Colloquia

Much of the physics you learn in your degree programme is necessarily well-established, long-understood material. But physics is an active field with exciting research going on in numerous areas ranging from pure curiosity-driven study to important industrial applications. To give some flavour of this the Department hosts a variety of seminars and colloquia throughout the academic year, some organised by the department, some by the Yorkshire branch of the Institute of Physics, and some by the various research groups. Many of these, especially the departmental and IoP colloquia, are designed specifically to be suitable for undergraduate students and are advertised by notices around the department.

More social events, such as trips and the annual Physics Ball, are organised and advertised by the Physics Society or PhySoc.

## 9 University Resources

### 9.1 Libraries

Some lecturers will explicitly require you to do some reading in the research literature as the basis for an essay, or to prepare a presentation, but even where this is not the case you will always benefit from doing some background reading around your lecture material – different authors will present the topic in different ways, some of which you may find easier to grasp than the approach favoured by your lecturer, there may be useful background detail or interesting extensions into more advanced material, textbooks will usually offer additional problems to practise on, and so forth. The libraries you will generally find useful as a physics student are the Information Commons, Western Bank Library near the Arts Tower and the Applied Science Library near Blackwells bookshop on Mappin Street.

The Information Commons is the University's state-of-the-art study hub which is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Here you will find undergraduate text books, a large number of computers, wireless networks for your laptop, printing facilities and a café. The Western Bank library may contain more specialised books and research journals which you may need to consult for more advanced modules and projects in years 3 and 4. Note that many journals are now available electronically. The Applied Science Library also holds many books useful to physics students. The *Star* electronic catalogue, accessible through the University web site, tells you where any particular book is held, how many copies there are, and whether they are out on loan.

If you need a book which is not in any of the university's collections, it can be obtained by Inter-Library Loan. This requires authorisation by a member of staff: consult the Departmental Office for details. If you feel that the book is sufficiently relevant to one of our courses that it really should be in the main library, you should contact Dr Stathes Paganis, room D29, the Department's library representative.

### 9.2 Computing Facilities

University Computing Services provide an extensive campus network of PCs, including several public PC rooms in the Hicks Building. All first-year students will be allocated an username allowing them to make use of this service – if you don't have one, see Dr Lee Thompson in room E41. The software provided includes general-purpose facilities such as

word processors, spreadsheets, graphics and Internet access, as well as some specifically physics-related interactive packages which are accessible to those with “physics department” username. Most students in this department will learn to use these packages in the introductory computing course which forms an integral part of the first-year physics laboratory work. For further information on courses, services, etc., see <http://www.shef.ac.uk/cics/services>.

If you have your own PC, you should be aware that the university has site licences for several useful pieces of software, so it may be possible for you to purchase copies for a nominal cost. For details ask Computing Services (e-mail [advisory@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:advisory@sheffield.ac.uk)).

### **9.3 Student Services**

A convenient way to get general information on many University resources is the Student Services Information Desk located in the Students’ Union next to the Student Advice Centre. The Information Desk has stocks of useful forms, including Module Add/Drop and Change of Status forms, assorted financial forms, immigration documents, calculator approval for examinations, and so on. This service is open from 9 am to 5 pm on weekdays.

## **10 Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures**

We pride ourselves on providing a friendly and open learning environment with close contact between staff and students. If problems do arise, we endeavour to sort them out informally within the Department, through our system of Advisors, Tutors and Year Tutors. Usually this is by far the best way to deal with such issues, because it allows them to be resolved quickly. However, it is of course necessary to have formal procedures which can be invoked if the initial informal approach fails to produce a solution satisfactory to all parties.

### **10.1 Disciplinary procedures**

Occasionally for some reason a student does not adjust well to university life, and therefore does not make the academic progress we expect of them. Unfortunately it is necessary to have a formal procedure for identifying such students and, in the last resort, applying sanctions. This section summarises the procedure, and you can ask your Advisor for more details if you wish.

- The person responsible for dealing with disciplinary matters within the Department is the appropriate Year Tutor. You will be reported to the Year Tutor if your attendance at lectures, labs or tutorials is unsatisfactory - that is, if you have missed a significant number of lectures, labs or tutorials - or if you consistently fail to hand in homework, lab assignments, or any other compulsory written work.
- If you are reported to the Year Tutor, he or she will arrange for you to be interviewed by the Departmental Progress of Students Committee. The committee will explore with you the reasons for your unsatisfactory performance, and will set milestones that you must reach in future. The interview and its conclusions will be entered on your student record, and you will be sent a written copy of its findings.
- If you fail to reach the milestones set in your interview, or if your academic performance gives some other cause for concern, you will be reported to the Faculty Progress of Students Committee, which is part of the University’s formal disciplinary mechanisms. In the worst case, this can lead to your being expelled from the University altogether.

We hope that by identifying students at risk of this early in their courses we can help them to get back on track and achieve their career objectives.

At this point it may be useful to repeat that we do *not* wish to cause further stress to students who are missing lectures because of illness or a serious personal problem. If you are sick, please get a doctor's certificate and send it to the Departmental Office as soon as possible; if there is some other serious problem, see your Academic Advisor. This will not only prevent your being reported as absent; it may also permit the Year Tutors to make allowances for the time you have missed, for example by adjusting your lab and homework marks.

## 10.2 Grievance procedures

If you think that you have been treated unfairly in any respect, and you feel unable to raise the matter informally with the member of staff in question, the first thing you should do is to discuss it with your Advisor and/or the relevant Year Tutor. They will then investigate and either rectify the problem or, if they are satisfied that there is no real cause for concern – for example, if you have queried the mark you received in an examination, but having looked at your script they are happy that the mark given does properly reflect your performance – then they will explain to you what steps they have taken and why they do not believe that there is a problem. If you are still unhappy, you should make a formal written complaint to the Head of Department, setting out clearly the nature of your complaint, the evidence that you have to support it, the actions that have been taken so far and the reason that you remain unsatisfied. It is University policy that such a formal complaint must have a response within ten working days (though if the case is complicated this response may only be a description of the steps currently being taken to investigate it, rather than a complete answer to the complaint). If you are still unhappy after this, you can take your complaint beyond the Department to University level. For academic matters, i.e. disputes about module grades or degree classifications, the University has a published academic appeals procedure, details of which are available from the Student Services Information Desk. There is also a formal procedure for dealing with accusations of personal harassment, and a leaflet explaining the University's policy on this is also available from Student Services. For any other type of complaint, you should write formally to the Registrar and Secretary of the University, setting out your case as you did in writing to the Head of Department.

## 11 Safety

The University is committed to ensuring a safe working environment for both students and staff. To this end you must obey any safety instructions, either written or verbal. In particular:

- Smoking. Smoking is not permitted within any part of the Department. This includes the entrance of the Hicks Building.
- Food and drink. You are not permitted to consume food or drink within any of the teaching or research laboratories.
- Fire. You must familiarise yourself with the local fire procedures. If you discover a fire you can contact the emergency services by calling 4444 from the internal phone system. If you hear the fire alarm then you must leave the building immediately via the nearest safe exit. You must not congregate near to the entrances of the building but move towards the concourse in front of the Students' Union building. The fire alarm is tested every Monday at 3.00 pm and there will be practice evacuation of the building early in semester 1.

## Dates of Standard Semesters - 2009/10

### Autumn Semester

	[Intro Week 21 September – 27 September 2009]	
Monday	28 September 2009	
Saturday	19 December 2009	total 12 weeks
	[4 weeks Christmas vacation]	
Monday	18 January 2010	
Saturday	6 February 2010	total 3 weeks

### Spring Semester

Monday	8 February 2010	
Saturday	20 March 2010	total 6 weeks
	[3 weeks Easter vacation Easter Day 4 April 2010]	
Monday	12 April 2010	
Saturday	12 June 2010	total 9 weeks

## Dates of Standard Semesters - 2010/11

### Autumn Semester

	[Intro Week 20 September – 26 September 2010]	
Monday	27 September 2010	
Saturday	18 December 2010	total 12 weeks
	[4 weeks Christmas vacation]	
Monday	17 January 2011	
Saturday	5 February 2011	total 3 weeks

### Spring Semester

Monday	7 February 2011	
Saturday	9 April 2011	total 9 weeks
	[3 weeks Easter vacation Easter Day 24 April 2011]	
Monday	3 May 2011	
Saturday	11 June 2011	total 6 weeks

*If you have any suggestions how we might improve the material presented in this guide please contact Linda Simmons or Tracy Hilton (undergraduates secretaries in room E34, email [l.simmons@shef.ac.uk](mailto:l.simmons@shef.ac.uk) or [t.hilton@shef.ac.uk](mailto:t.hilton@shef.ac.uk)).*