School of Physics and Astronomy

Guidance for Tutors

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Guide to academic tutoring

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Calendar and Timetable:

The University operates a two-semester system. Semester one is preceded by Welcome Week. In Semester one, there are twelve teaching weeks before the Christmas vacation. Week six is "independent study week" for the first, second and third years; lectures, lab and tutorials are suspended in this week. The purpose of independent study week is for students to undertake mid-semester tests, lab write-ups and interviews etc. Semester one resumes in mid-January for two weeks of exams.

Semester two follows immediately, with another twelve teaching weeks interrupted by the Easter vacation. Exams follow immediately after the end of teaching. Examiners meetings follow the end of semester.

Teaching is from 9am-1pm on Wednesdays and 9am-5pm on other weekdays. Lectures and tutorials start on the hour and finish at 10 minutes to the hour. Tutorials may not be scheduled for Wednesday afternoons (1pm onwards). Tutorials should not be scheduled on Mondays, in order to leave time for students to attempt the problems and hand them in for marking.

EVENT	DATES	NOTES
WELCOME WEEK	18th-22nd September 2017	Attend tutorials.
SEMESTER 1	25th September – 15th December 2017	Semester 1 teaching
IND. STUDY	30th October – 3rd November 2017	Independent Study Week
VACATION	18th December - 14th January 2018	Christmas break
EXAMS (SEM1)	15th January - 26th January 2018	2 weeks Exams (no tutorials)
SEMESTER 2	29th January -11th May 2018	Semester 2 teaching
VACATION	26th March – 15th April 2018	Easter break
EXAMS (SEM2)	16th May - 6th June 2017	4 weeks Exams (no tutorials)

Aims of tutorials:

As stated in the Undergraduate Handbook http://www.physics.manchester.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/undergraduatehandbook/ the aims of tutorials are:

- To promote effective learning by providing feedback and guidance.
- To enhance understanding of physics and mathematics.
- To develop problem solving skills.
- To develop skills in communication.

In particular, academic tutorials are designed:

- To consolidate understanding of material presented in lectures by: *asking questions; explaining concepts to tutors and to other students*; *solving problems and having them marked by tutors; obtaining feedback on their current level of understanding.*
- To extend and deepen knowledge of physics by: *combining ideas and knowledge from different parts of the course*; *solving general problems in physics; discussing topics in advanced physics*.
- To improve communication skills by: *discussion; asking and answering questions; writing essays; and giving talks.*

Structure of Tutorials

All students in first and second year attend weekly tutorials in groups of five with an academic tutor who is a member of the academic staff or a PDRA. First year students also have a second tutorial (with a postgraduate tutor) and attend workshops to support the more mathematical core courses.

Tutorials are designed to support the core courses:
Y1/S1: Quantum Physics and Relativity, Dynamics Y1/S2:
Vibrations and Waves, Electricity and Magnetism

Y2/S1: Introduction to Quantum Mechanics, Electromagnetism, Mathematics of Waves and Fields
Y2/S2: Wave Optics, Thermal and Statistical Physics, Fundamentals of Solid State Physics

The additional first year tutorial (with a postgraduate tutor) covers:
Y1/S1: Mathematics 1, Introduction to Astrophysics and Cosmology
Y1/S2: Properties of Matter, Mathematics 2

Course Syllabuses and much other useful information can be found online here http://www.physics.manchester.ac.uk/media/eps/schoolofphysicsandastronomy/undergraduate/APPENDIX-1-Syllabuses-Course-Unit-details.pdf

Examples sheets

Weekly examples sheets are issued to students online via Blackboard.

The students hand in their examples sheets to their tutors for marking (further details below). The examples sheets are important. However, the students do get model answers later, so there is no particular need to go over every last detail of the examples. The key point is to ensure feedback is provided to students on the quality of their solutions, whilst clearing up any common areas of misunderstanding.

What students say about their academic tutorials

From previous student surveys, it is clear that the vast majority of students rate their tutorials as "helpful" or "very helpful". The most common positive comment is that tutorials really helped students to understand course material.

However, the most common complaints are:

- Tutor did not know enough about the course material to help us.
- Tutor seemed to be reading from the model answers and did not add anything to them.
- Tutor talked too much about other things
- Tutor inhibited interaction
- Tutor did not mark work
- Tutor was late/did not turn up

Ideally, a tutor should:

- Put the students at ease, strongly encouraging them to work for the tutorial but understanding if they get stuck.
- Communicate an enthusiasm for the subject being discussed.
- Be prepared! Tutors must mark the students' work beforehand so they can decide where to focus their efforts e.g. on the background, basic principles or any common areas of misunderstanding or difficulty.
- Focus on the specific core courses for that tutorial and where possible not be entirely driven by the examples sheet.

Logistics

Tutorials are organised by the year tutors:

Mark Hughes in first year (Mark.Hughes@manchester.ac.uk)
Paul Campbell in second year (Paul.Campbell-3@manchester.ac.uk)

NOTE: First year tutors (for the quantum & relativity/dynamics & vibrations & waves/electricity & magnetism tutorials) are also personal tutors for that group of students for the duration of their course. You will be asked to meet your tutees in your office in Welcome Week. It is imperative you attend, or if there is some unavoidable reason you cannot attend, that you arrange for a suitable well-briefed stand-in and let the Teaching & Learning team know who this is.

In both first and second year, tutorial sheets covering core courses are issued weekly via Blackboard. This sheet should be attempted by the students and handed in for marking at least 24 hours before the next tutorial, the deadline being agreed between tutor and tutees beforehand. The tutor then marks the work, making clear where the problems lie but not assigning marks. At the subsequent tutorial the tutor discusses the sheet that the students have just done. Tutors are asked to follow this system strictly.

Tutors also complete a weekly attendance spreadsheet, as 5% of the marks for core courses are based on work and attendance for tutorials. Please note, work is not assessed to a numerical scale, but simply on whether or not an adequate attempt has been made; a student's ability should be taken into account in deciding what constitutes a genuine attempt. Tutors should also make time in tutorials for students to talk about their courses and the subject in general.

As a guide it is expected that every tutorial will be accompanied by an hour's preparation and marking.

Attendance at tutorials is compulsory for students

Tutors must make all reasonable effort to make and maintain contact with their tutees, and should notify the Year Tutor and the Teaching & Learning team (physics@manchester.ac.uk) urgently if a student's work or attendance is persistently unsatisfactory (they should not rely on the work and attendance forms which are primarily for assessment purposes). Please remember that tutors are an extremely important point of contact between the School and our students.

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Guide to personal tutoring

For guidance on "academic" tutoring please see the guide to academic tutoring

What is a personal tutor?

- A member of academic staff who will be a new student's primary contact.
- One of the student's first year academic tutors.
- Usually, the personal tutor will remain the student's tutor until they graduate.
- The personal tutor may provide an academic reference once the student graduates.

A small number of meetings will be scheduled each year. However the Personal Tutor should be the person a student first turns to for academic advice or if they have problems affecting their studies, so extra meetings will take place for many students.

Please inform the Teaching and Learning team as soon as possible if your student requires pastoral care or additional support physics@manchester.ac.uk

Keeping records:

- Please keep a written note of all significant discussions with your personal tutees.
- This can be in the form of a hand-written note, an email containing the relevant issues, including advice and referral to other people or agency, or other electronic record (stored in accordance with the University's requirements on storage of personal data http://www.dataprotection.manchester.ac.uk/howdoi/maintainfilesonindividuals/) including obtaining consent of the student for the details recorded.
- Please email the Teaching and Learning team if you require advice on your student if you have any concerns.
- In cases where students make appeals citing procedural irregularity, it is helpful to have dated records of discussions.
- You can access the academic records for your tutees by selecting Campus Solutions from the My Manchester webpage and clicking on Advisor Center, then My Advisees. Please note: The records will be entered by the T&L Team and should be available by the end of week 3.

The first meeting of the year – *Important!*

- The first meeting of the year is during Welcome Week.
- Monday 18th September 2017 for years 1-2.
- ***Tuesday 19th September 2017 for years 3-4.***
- You should make every attempt to be in Manchester for this first meeting.
- If there are unavoidable reasons why you are unable to attend your first personal tutor meeting, you should find a colleague to stand in and brief them about your tutees and let the Teaching & Learning team know who this is. You should arrange to meet them as soon as possible, at a time which should be communicated to the students by the stand-in.
- If you have any other issues regarding this first meeting with your tutees, please contact the Teaching and Learning team as soon as possible at physics@manchester.ac.uk.

Purpose of the first meeting and key points:

- Check that the students have made suitable option choices.
- Discuss the possibilities if the students are uncertain about their choices.
- If you are unsure, please refer to the *Undergraduate Handbook* http://www.physics.manchester.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/undergraduatehandbook/

- Please note that there may be substantial changes from year to year so make sure you refer to the current version of the *Blue Book*.
- Inform your students of how they can contact you if they have a problem.
- Alternatively, personal tutors may leave their phone numbers with the Teaching and Learning team.
- Students should be reminded that in a tutor's absence they can take academic queries to their Year Tutor, Programme Director, or Director of Teaching and Learning as appropriate.
- Alternatively, the Teaching and Learning team can be contacted physics@manchester.ac.uk

Advice regarding pastoral and additional support:

- The School has a dedicated Student Support and Welfare Officer, Géraldine Garrabet (geraldine.garrabet@manchester.ac.uk) who can assist.
- Or you can email physics.support@manchester.ac.uk
- Most problems that students bring to their tutor can be dealt with by the tutor.
- In some cases the student will have to be referred to another agency; **Student Services, Counselling Service, Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS), Occupational Health**.
- For more information on supporting students please visit http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/supporting-students/
- Please contact the Teaching and Learning team as soon as possible if a student requires the support of an agency as listed above physics@manchester.ac.uk
- Note the advice above concerning keeping a record of significant discussions.

Advice regarding the programme and options:

- If a problem concerns an unusual option choice or varying the requirements of a programme, the tutor should seek advice from the Programme Director.
- If there is a problem with an academic tutor, the Year Tutor should be contacted.
- Please take students seriously if they express dissatisfaction with their interactions with another member of staff.

Advice regarding examinations:

- Students in years 1 and 2 must pass 80 credits above 40% (including lab) and have marks of 30% or above in all courses to pass the year.
- Students in years 1 and 2 must pass 60 credits at the first attempt to be allowed resits (unless they have mitigating circumstances).
- There are no resits in years 3 and 4.
- Make clear to students there is an opportunity to have their exams re-checked (see Blue Book) but there is a time limit and a potential cost.
- Opportunity to view their scripts at a later date. The purpose of this is to see how the script was marked and there is no opportunity to question the marking. Students should note that there is little if any detailed feedback in the scripts.

Advice regarding appeals/interruptions/withdrawals:

- Students can only appeal if they have grounds under the appeals policy.
- Students can only interrupt if they have exceptional circumstances or to take advantage of a placement opportunity.
- Any student wishing to withdraw must complete a student withdrawal form.

Please contact the Year Tutor, Programme Director, Director of Teaching & Learning or the Teaching & Learning Team if you are unsure and note the earlier advice on keeping

FAQs for Personal Tutors

Student Support and Welfare

Q: Who should students contact if they have personal issues?
A: The Student Support Team on physics.support@manchester.ac.uk
Q: What should students do if they have mitigating circumstances?
A: Complete a mitigating circumstances form and submit appropriate evidence by the relevant deadline in each semester.
Q: What if a student tells me they have a disability or personal issues?
A: It is your responsibility to inform the Student Support Team on physics.support@manchester.ac.uk as soon as possible.
Q: What do I do if I am contacted by a student's parent?
A: You cannot enter into any discussion without the student's written consent due to data protection issues. Pass on any information to the Student Support Team.
Q: What should I do if a student does not attend tutorials?
A: Ensure all data on the CRT system is up-to-date and contact the Student Support Team.
Q: Can a student interrupt or repeat the year?
A: Only in exceptional circumstances and with appropriate evidence. Always check with the Student Support Team.

Teaching and Learning

Q: Can students change option at any point?
A: No, only within the first two weeks of each semester. Changes after the first two weeks must be approved by the year tutor.
Q: How do students change degree programme?
A: They should contact Karen Rogers (karen.rogers@manchester.ac.uk) by the relevant deadline (which is programme dependent).
Q: Can students take options outside the programme structure?
A: Only with approval from the year tutor by completing a 'Change of Options' form (available on Blackboard).
Q: Can students take more than the required number of credits?
A: No.
Q: Can students take an option which clashes with another module?
A: Only in 3rd and 4th year by completing an 'Option Clash Approval' form (available on Blackboard).
Q: What happens if a student fails some units?
A: 1st and 2nd years will be allowed resits providing they pass 60 credits at the first attempt (including lab).
THERE ARE NO RESITS IN 3RD AND 4TH YEAR.
Q: What happens if a student fails lab?
A: They are withdrawn as there are no resits.
Q: Can marks be compensated?
A: 40 credits can be compensated if a student has passed 80 credits above 40% (including lab) and has no marks below 30%.
Q: How does a student withdraw from the course?
A: By completing a 'Student Withdrawal' form (available on Blackboard) which must be signed by the personal tutor, year tutor or programme director.

September 2017