Notes of a New Lecturers Meeting, 20th January 2000

Present

John Goff, Tim Greenshaw, Dave Milstead (Rodi Herzberg sends apologies from Finland!)

Review of activities so far

Courses attended

John and Dave attended the University's Induction Course for New Lecturers. Dave reported that the session on audio-visual aids had proved useful, as had the discussions of the videos of the participants delivering short lectures.

Teaching activities to date

John and Rodi have had tutorial groups in the first semester this year (1999/2000). Rodi has supervised in the first year Lab. classes and John in the third year. Dave has had less contact with our students as yet.

Preparation for lecture courses this semester

John Goff has attended some of Dominic Dickson's lectures and one of Tim Greenshaw's lectures.
Rodi Herzberg has attended one of Tim Greenshaw's lectures and also a Problems Class.
Dave Milstead has sat in on one of John Dainton's lectures and held two lectures using material prepared and discussed with John.

Exam questions

Dave Milstead reported that writing his first exam paper had proved time-consuming. He suggested that it might be helpful if the section in the mentoring document on exam questions were expanded. He thanked Paul Booth for his help in the preparation of this year's exam. Tim agreed to find out if there is any tuition available in this area, e.g. Staff Development courses.

Support for lectures this semester

Paul Booth will sit in on the first few of Dave's lectures and help with any problems that arise. Dominic Dickson will do the same for John who has also had an offer of help from Ian Hall. Tim will sit in on the first few of Rodi's lectures. It was pointed out that Paul Rossiter can help with demonstrations. He has helped Rodi locate a ripple tank, for example.

Computing provision

It was universally agreed that programming skills should be developed as part of the M.Phys. course. The course being introduced for this purpose by Mike Houlden was discussed and was considered excellent. Opinions were divided as to the advisability of teaching programming to B.Sc. students, as opposed to teaching them how to use various standard packages, such as Word, Excel and MathCad, as is currently done in Robert Page's course. It was agreed that typical career paths following the B.Sc. should be investigated; would our B.Sc. students be likely to benefit from programming experience in their chosen careers?

Comments on experiences to date

John commented that he thought the tutorials were very well organised. The fact that model answers were provided increased the efficiency with which they could be run, in marked contrast to his previous experience in Oxford. His main problem so far has been with marking

in the Lab. classes. The model answers available there are old, some dating from the sixties, and he has found judging what mark to give difficult.
Dave asked how his and John's teaching loads related to those of other members of staff. (Tim has agreed to take on the supervision in Mike Houlden's course that had been foreseen for Dave to enable Dave to maintain a reasonable level of research output with the load he has.) Dave also commented that it was still unclear exactly what his role would be in the second year Lab. classes, preventing him from doing any preparatory work. Ronan McGrath has promised to get this organised for the end of the week.
Both John and Dave were of the opinion that the teaching load they had was heavier than had been suggested in their interviews.

Future meetings

It was agreed that the people present, plus Rodi and Dominic Dickson, would meet once a week for lunch probably on Wednesday. This should give us adequate opportunity to discuss any developments or problems during the coming semester.