



**School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences
Department of Physics and Astronomy
Student Handbook 2020-2021**

Welcome

I am delighted that you have chosen to study Physics at Sussex. I hope that you will enjoy your time here and emerge in three or four years' time with an excellent degree that will open up many job opportunities in different fields from scientific and industrial research to working in the City.

The Department of Physics and Astronomy is based in the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS), whose current Head of School is Professor Philip Harris. I am the Head of Physics and Astronomy and the Head of Mathematics (the other department in MPS) is Professor Michael Melgaard. Both departments are based in the Pevensey 2 and Pevensey 3 buildings.

This booklet contains links that I hope you will find useful for information about your course and modules, together with information about learning and teaching resources, assessment, and general information about the School and Department. We have also set up an "All MPS Students 20/21" page on Canvas, our virtual learning environment <https://canvas.sussex.ac.uk/courses/15312>. This should be your first source for up to date information about your studies.

Your feedback on your experience as a student is important to us and can be given informally through workshops, laboratories or academic advisors, or through your student representatives. Student representatives usually meet several times a term. Physics and Astronomy student representatives also discuss academic matters at the termly School and Department Meetings. Formally, feedback can be given via the questionnaires which will be available on Sussex Direct towards the end of each term. The results of these feedback questionnaires are considered by the Department Curriculum Committee once a term as well as by the Physics Staff Student Committee (PSSC). Elections to PSSC posts are held early in the Autumn Term; do make sure you that you vote, as well as nominate and elect good representatives! This is an excellent way for you to influence things.

Details are given later in this handbook about assessment and the conditions for progressing from one year to the next. These conditions depend upon both coursework submitted during the year and on your achievements in the end-of-semester examinations. It is important that you work steadily throughout the year and that you seek help from a Student Advisor anything interfere with your studies.

I look forward to meeting you and wish you every success with your time at Sussex.

*Professor Jacob Dunningham
Head of Department*

Physics and Astronomy Department Key Contacts

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| Head of School | Prof Philip Harris |
| Head of Department | Prof Jacob Dunningham |
| Head of Assessment | Prof Xavier Calmet |
| Director of Teaching and Learning | Prof Peter Thomas |
| Senior Tutor | Prof Fabrizio Salvatore |
| Deputy Senior Tutor | Prof Iacopo Vivarelli |
| Careers Tutor | Prof Kathy Romer |

Physics & Astronomy Lecturers

All lecturers in MPS have offices in Pevensey 2 or Pevensey 3.

For a full list please see here

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/mps/internal/people>

MPS School Office

The School Office is located on the ground floor of Pevensey 2 in the foyer.

The office is open Mon-Fri 10:00-15:00 during term though many staff may be working remotely this year.

Details of the office staff can be found here:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/mps/internal/people>

Telephone number: 01273 873254

Email: mps@sussex.ac.uk

Term Dates and assessment periods

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/about/term-dates>

Overview of the Physics Degree Course

Information on the Department's Degree Courses can be found at:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/mps/internal/departments/physicsandastronomy/ug/ugcourses>

Your lecturers and academic tutors:

- These are the best people to approach in the first place if you have difficulty with understanding a particular lecture module, obtaining books, accessing information and so on.

Your laboratory demonstrators:

- Their job is mainly to help you with the laboratory experiments, but you can also approach them informally about other academic or organisational questions.

Accreditation

All degree courses are currently accredited by the Institute of Physics. The most recent accreditation was in May 2017.

Choosing Options

Students who have optional modules will be asked to make their choices in the Spring Term online via Sussex Direct. You can change your option in the first two weeks of term. You should contact the School Office about making a change. You will only be allowed to change if you have done any required pre-requisites and there is space on the module.

Opportunities to study abroad

Information on Study Abroad opportunities can be found at

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/study-abroad>

Teaching is in English at all the overseas universities, and students will take modules which match (as far as possible) the modules they would have taken at Sussex. Their choice of modules needs to be approved by the Head of Physics and Astronomy, with advice from the Visiting and Exchanges convenor Prof Xavier Calmet. Permission to go may be withdrawn from applicants who perform unsatisfactorily in the examinations at the end of their second year.

Learning outcomes of degree courses

The award of a qualification in a given degree course recognises that you have been judged to have achieved a set of specific learning outcomes. The learning outcomes for your course, as defined for your entry cohort, are published on the departmental teaching pages:

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/mps/internal/departments/physicsandastronomy/ug/ugcourses>

As you progress through your course, you are provided with opportunities to be assessed, and so demonstrate, that you have achieved the learning outcomes. You should read them at the start of your studies and reflect during the course on how you are gradually acquiring them.

The modules which make up your course are also listed in the specifications. Details of the individual modules are accessible through the links on each of the course specifications on the departmental teaching pages: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/mps/internal/departments/physicsandastronomy/ug/ugcourses>

The Examinations and Assessment Regulations Handbook

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/standards/examsandassessment>

This is a useful reference for such things as progression criteria and regulations surrounding late work and exceptional circumstances

Student Progress and Assessment Office

You can also find information on assessment on the

[Student Systems and Records Office web page](#).

Assessment and Attendance

Apart from the formal examinations and assessments which contribute to students' final degree results, there are less formal ways in which progress is monitored. Most important are the exercise and problem sheets marked and checked in tutorials, exercise classes and workshops. In many cases, the only check on whether a student has understood a particular point is their ability to solve a related problem. Usually, answers to problem sheets are the only way for a tutor to tell whether the student is coping with the module.

This makes the handing in of problems and discussion of solutions a very important part of the learning process, even for the modules for which the exercise sheets are not part of the formal assessed work. Both formal and informal assessed work is recorded and engagement is checked.

Student progress is monitored each term by the grades achieved and recorded on Sussex Direct (and from attendance data). It is important for each student to complete the work for the module, not just to obtain the marks, but also because there is a strong correlation between achievement on work and achievement on exams. End-of-year marks also correlate strongly with engagement.

Feedback on your modules

You will have the opportunity to give feedback for each module in a mid-term feedback survey. Towards the end of each term you will also be asked to fill in an online *course evaluation questionnaire*. The link allowing you to do this will appear on your Sussex Direct page. Student responses to both of these surveys these have led to many positive changes in the method, content and organisation of our modules.

Sussex Direct

Go to <https://direct.sussex.ac.uk/mle/page.php?realm=home> and login with your username and password. Sussex Direct contains your timetable, curriculum and module marks to date. Throughout your time at Sussex you can track your progress and results here.

Canvas

Go to <https://canvas.sussex.ac.uk/> and login with your username and password. Canvas is your online resource for lecture notes and other information about the modules you are taking. You should consult the "All MPS Students 20/21" Canvas page for up to date information about your studies <https://canvas.sussex.ac.uk/courses/15312>.

Communication

We will use e-mail to send you messages always using your **University email address** or will contact you directly through Canvas. Please check regularly.

Students' Responsibilities

Just as faculty have the responsibility to provide teaching, so students have the responsibility for their own learning. Study for a degree should be regarded as occupying as much time as a full-time job: around 40 hours per week. You should make sure that you do enough work each week to keep up with all your modules. This includes submitting all the work set for each module, whether assessed or not.

Lectures are the definitive guide to what you should be learning and also provide opportunities to ask questions. Use them. But real understanding can only come from reading around the subject from the books recommended by the lecturer, and you are expected to take responsibility for your own learning.

Past Exam Papers

Past exam papers can be found at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/USIS/pastexams/>

QSoc/Physics Staff Student Committee (PSSC)

QSoc is a student-led society for social and academic events for students in the department. QSoc has a Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/QSocPhysics/

The PSSC is a committee of student reps and key faculty to meet to discuss any concerns regarding teaching and curriculum. If you are interested in becoming a student rep please find more information here: <https://www.sussexstudent.com/student-reps/become-a-student-rep/>

Help on Academic Issues: Your Academic Advisor & Senior Tutor

You will be assigned a member of faculty who will normally be your academic advisor throughout your time as an undergraduate. Your academic advisor is likely to be the lecturer on one or more modules, but will also be a source of advice throughout your studies and after. You will probably want your academic advisor to act as a referee when you apply for jobs so make sure that they get to know you. In Year 1 you will meet with your academic advisor every second week for a problem solving session. The Senior Tutor (Prof Fabrizio Salvatore) oversees the work of Academic Advisors and is also available to all undergraduates for consultation on academic matters.

Change of Degree Course

Your academic advisor will help you assess the merits of any change of degree course. The procedure for changing depends on the magnitude of the change you seek. Opportunities to transfer take place in the Autumn term or the Spring term before the end of week 3. Transfers may depend upon performance.

- Change from BSc to MPhys or vice versa

Transfers to MPhys will depend upon your achievement at the end of year and will be agreed by the Exam Board in June.

- Change of major to another degree course within MPS.

To change to a different Physics degree course you should arrange to see the Senior Tutor (Prof Fabrizio Salvatore).

To change to a Mathematics course you should arrange to see the Senior Tutor (Prof James Hirschfeld).

- Change of degree course to another School

You should arrange to see the Admissions Tutor of the School or Department that you wish to transfer into. They will explain the procedures and conditions or refer you to the appropriate person who handles transfers or admissions.

Academic misconduct

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/standards/academicmisconduct>

- Plagiarism: Do not copy solutions to exercises from some website or other source. Equally, when writing essays or a dissertation, do not copy it from elsewhere.
- Collusion: It is permissible to work with other students on the exercise sheets handed out by the lecturers. However, just copying someone else's solution is not permitted.

Plagiarism, collusion, and cheating in exams are all forms of academic misconduct which the University takes very seriously. Every year, some students commit academic misconduct unintentionally because they did not know what was expected of them. The consequences for committing academic misconduct can be severe, so it is important that you familiarise yourself with what it is and how to avoid it. The University's S3 guide to study skills gives advice on writing well, including hints and tips on how to avoid making serious mistakes. Visit: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/s3/?id=1> and make use of the resources there. You will also find helpful guides to referencing properly and improving your critical writing skills. If you are dealing with difficult circumstances, such as illness or bereavement, do not try to rush your work or hand in something which may be in breach of the rules. Instead you should seek confidential advice from the Student Life Centre.

The full University rules on academic misconduct are set out in the Undergraduate Examination and Assessment Handbook; see

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/standards/examsandassessment>

Help on non-academic issues: The Student Life Centre

The Student Life Team will be the first port of call dealing with:

- Personal Concerns
- Student Funding
- Access to Learning Fund
- All Scholarships, Bursaries and Vice Chancellors loans.
- Temporary withdrawal
- Permanent withdrawal
- Help with understanding University procedures

The Centre is located in Bramber House and is open Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm. Please use the contact details below to make an appointment to discuss any of the above issues with a student advisor:

Tel: 01273 87 6767

Web: www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre

Email: studentlifecentre@sussex.ac.uk.

Exceptional Circumstances

Extensions on formal assessments and submissions are not granted. If there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances for late or non-submission you need to claim for exceptional circumstances via your Sussex Direct study pages. This should be done as early as possible and in all cases before final deadlines set by the University.

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre/circumstances>

Student Hub

The Student Hub <https://student.sussex.ac.uk> contains a lot of useful University information such as: University regulations and policy, campus maps, information about the library and IT services, accommodation, finances, wellbeing and so much more. It's a great place to look for any information on things outside MPS.

Disclaimer

The information given in this handbook should prove useful to all members of the Department, although it is primarily for the benefit of new undergraduate students. We try to ensure that it is as accurate and up-to-date as possible but, as the contents are naturally subject to change, sometimes there are omissions or errors. If in doubt, check with your academic advisor.

September 2020