



The atrium of our new £60M Alan Turing Building which houses our Photon Science Institute and our Astronomy group

Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences

School of Physics and Astronomy

Newsletter January 2009

Manchester Success in the Research Assessment Exercise

The Research Power of Manchester

The results of the latest Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) were announced on 18 December 2008. The University of Manchester as a whole, and the School of Physics and Astronomy in particular, have improved their overall rankings since the last national assessment of research excellence which was carried out in 2001. A Research Power ranking, which uses a quality score (Grade Point Average) times the number of full-time equivalent staff submitted, places this University in third place nationally, behind only Cambridge and Oxford.

Top Ratings for both Research and Teaching

Manchester has the only Physics department in the UK to be BOTH in the top five for the volume of world-leading and internationally excellent research AND to have the maximum rating for teaching as reported by the RAE and QAA government assessment panels respectively.

Other Tables

We normally do not comment on the various “League Tables” that are published by different media as they are very dependent on the particular methodology that is used. However, since we are reporting on our success in the latest RAE, it is probably worth mentioning a few other relevant surveys that have been published.

- In the latest National Student Survey, Manchester Physics students returned a near maximum 95% satisfaction score.
- Manchester University has come 5th in the world in the THES-QS World University Ranking Employer Review.
- The German Centre for Higher Education ranks Manchester second in Europe for overall quality in its “Excellence Group” for Physics.
- The Economist Intelligence Unit ranked Manchester the top UK city for “liveability”. The factors used for this rating included personal risk, culture and environment, education, infrastructure and the availability of goods and service.

Social Diary

Although we pride ourselves as being a premier department for both teaching and research, there's more to university than just studying. We have a flourishing social scene which spans the spectrum from sport and music to in-house University Challenge quizzes.

The current Physsoc football team arranged a tournament between themselves and their predecessors from 3 and 6 years ago. Old students returned to Manchester from all parts of the country for the event which was won by the “Classic Physics” team of 6 years ago. The Semi-Classical team of 3 years ago, shown below, came second.



The first year Physics undergraduates recently challenged the Particle Physics research group to a football match and inflicted a very embarrassing 13-0 defeat on them! This is even more surprising since the Particle Physicists had already beaten the Astronomers from Jodrell Bank 6-2.

The Life of Brian

Brian Cox is a man of many diverse talents. He has become the most popular presenter of science documentaries on UK TV, and is currently two-thirds through a trilogy of Horizon programmes. The first of these covered the subject of gravity, the second (shown on BBC last month) queried our understanding of time, and he has just completed filming the third on the prospects for fusion power. However, did you know that he was a semi-famous popstar and a professor in our School of Physics and Astronomy?



Brian in pensive mood during the filming of the Horizon programme on TIME

Brian started as an undergraduate student on our Physics course when he left the little-known pop group "Dare". He then went on to greater things in both fields, doing a PhD with our Particle Physics Group, and joining the much more high-profile group "D:Ream" whose most famous hit was "Things Can Only Get Better". Well they certainly did get better for Brian. He is now a Professor and a Royal Society Fellow in our School of Physics and Astronomy at Manchester; he was the main BBC anchor man for the recent launch of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, and he was (according to the Guardian) one of the top 25 Brits who intrigued, inspired and entertained us during 2008. He has also recently been voted one of the top 200 sexiest men in the world by "People Magazine" in the US. In his spare time, Brian plays football for the Manchester Particle Physics team (yes, the ones who lost 13-0 to our Physics undergraduates), he was science advisor for the recent cinema blockbuster "Sunshine", and he is co-authoring a popular book on Relativity.