

UK PLANCKS 2020 Edinburgh PRESS RELEASE

This Sunday the 23rd of February, the UK and Ireland Preliminaries for the PLANCKS Theoretical Physics competition held in Edinburgh, came to an end. PLANCKS is an annual international theoretical physics competition at University level held by the International Association of Physics Students.; BSc and MSc students compete in teams of 3 or 4 during a 4-hour exam.

The event was spread over the three days 21-23 February, with 116 students travelling from 28 Universities in all countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. With the competition being organised by a committee of Edinburgh University students, there were many firsts: the competition was primarily student organised, it was organised outside of London and the competition was oversubscribed.

Indeed, all in all, 75 teams with 284 students had applied to compete, and although the organisation was stretched to its limits, it was not possible for more than 116 to come. The event, however, went very smoothly and participants gave very positive feedback throughout. In the words of Preshayla Varsani, from the Loughborough University team, *“As a team of mainly 2nd years coming into a competition where the average year of study of the competitors was 3.5, we were nervous but excited. We were made to feel so welcome and it was a fun and superbly run event. Much to our surprise, we ended up coming 12th!”*

The exam was generally accepted to be of high difficulty, although enjoyable and intellectually stimulating. Marios Kalomenopoulos, the Head Exam Marker, comments: *“The exam covered a variety of topics. It was more difficult this year, resulting in an average score of 13/80, with only one team surpassing the 50% threshold and no team managing to get full marks for a question. But as always, the main point of these competitions is to enjoy the physics and try to learn something new. We think that the teams managed that!”*

Besides the exam, the event included social events such as a quiz on Friday evening, as well as a formal dinner and a ceilidh on Saturday. Furthermore, as a part of the event, four public talks from top-class speakers were held. The lecturers Dr. Kristel Torokoff (Edinburgh), Dr. Gavin Hesketh (UCL), Dr. Felix Flicker (Oxford) and Professor Martin Hendry (Glasgow Head of School) all drew crowds over the three separate days, filling the lecture theatres with interested participants, students, and staff.

The event would not have been possible without the substantial funding from the Institute of Physics. Furthermore, generous support from the Edinburgh School of Physics and Astronomy enabled a much higher standard of event, with several social activities. Finally, the Edinburgh University Institute for Academic Development sponsorship made possible the lecture series and associated catering.

Congratulations to the First Place team “Merton”, from Oxford, Second Place “The Conserved Currents”, from Cambridge and Third Place “The Worksheet” from Imperial College London. See <http://www.plancks.uk/edinburgh> for more information.

*PLANCKS Edinburgh Local Organising Committee,
Ethan van Woerkom, Christos Kourris, Matthaios Chouzouris,
Mike Chatzittofi, Fedra Antoniadou, Marios Kalomenopoulos.*

