AM Physics
May 2011 Session
Examiners’ Report

Part 1: Statistical Information

The distribution of grades awarded in the May 2011 session is given in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Abs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>15.60</td>
<td>25.60</td>
<td>21.40</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>15.20</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2: Comments regarding candidate’s performance

General:

The candidates in general achieved the same level of performance as in recent years, perhaps even slightly better. Very few questions were left unanswered or partly finished, suggesting that the level of difficulty and the time allocated were proper and consistent.

The two written papers attempted to cover as much of the syllabus as possible, with emphasis on those topics of particular importance which take up much of the teaching time. In general, candidates recalled knowledge from all areas of the syllabus, even though some specific topics remain conceptually difficult to many.

The practical paper was meant to test the candidates their skill in experimental and analytical physics. The majority of candidates tackled this paper very well, obtaining very high marks.

Examiners’ Observations that can be useful to candidates:

The following observations may be helpful to future candidates in the subject:

- When answering numerical questions candidates have a tendency to leave out the units, apparently out of sheer negligence rather than lack of understanding. This leads to loss of marks that can often alter the final grade of the candidate.

- In the practical exam, candidates are given precise instructions as to what to do with the apparatus provided to them. If they carefully follow the instructions and report their observations by simply filling the blank spaces provided they
can easily achieve good marks irrespective of the final outcome of the experiment.

- A common mistake in the practical exam is the incorrect rearrangement of a given equation to a form involving a linear relation between parameters that can hence be plotted to produce a straight line.

- The way some questions are answered would suggest that many candidates do not dedicate sufficient time to (i) understand what is expected of them and (ii) plan the answers they should give. Time spent in reading the questions carefully is time well spent.

- Some topics of Physics appear to be less popular and easy to master than others. This appears to be the case with waves and dynamics.

- Candidates are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the subject rather than recall from memory. Assumptions (such as frictionless motion) and principles (such as conservation of momentum) used in answering a question must be explicitly stated and candidates must not assume that the examiners will take it for granted that the candidates have knowledge of such.

- The majority of candidates need to improve their descriptive and language skills, especially when describing physical processes, physical equipment and experimental procedure in general. It is not unusual that such description is incomprehensible and the problem appears to be getting worse every year.

Chairperson
Board of Examiners
July 2011