



University of Glasgow | Student Learning Service

Providing academic support and improving transition into university using Facebook groups

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University of Glasgow



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Part 1

Academic Support



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Retention Initiative

Remit for Retention Officer: Implement Peer Assisted Learning for first year Maths and Computing Science

Problems with implementing despite demand

- Large classes
- 3 subjects \Rightarrow timetabling problems
- Room bookings
- Expense, etc.

Very difficult to get students in the same place at the same time



Decided to experiment with Virtual PAL

Facebook/Moodle?

Looking at the Digital Natives survey 2011 (2065 respondents)

- 97.6% have a Facebook account that they access at least once a month
- 96.8 % at least once a week
- 89.2% at least once a day

Facebook

- Closed groups
- Initiated and moderated by support staff
- Senior students invited to join



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Benefits

Academic and social interaction

Sharing resources

Always available (including holidays)

- No need to wait for next week's session/tutorial
- Can come back to old threads later

Everyone has equal voice

Clear articulation forced



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The Empire Expands

Due to success:

- Groups renamed and rolled over to level 2
- New groups created for level 1 Maths and Computing
- Introduced groups for level 1 Physics/Astronomy and Engineering

Eventually:

- Groups introduced for all subjects in College of Science & Engineering



I'm pretty confused over where to go next, vectors aren't my strong point. Have I messed up here or...?

3. Find the equation of the plane that contains the line

$$\frac{x}{-1} = \frac{y}{-2} = \frac{z+1}{1}$$

and is perpendicular to the plane with equation

$$x - 5y + 2z = 1.$$

Q3. $\frac{x}{-1} = \frac{y}{-2} = \frac{z+1}{1}$, Let $\vec{a} = (-1, -2, 1)$ $\vec{b} = (1, -5, 2)$

$x - 5y + 2z = 1$

$\vec{c} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{d} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{e} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{f} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{g} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{h} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{i} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{j} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{k} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{l} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{m} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{n} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{o} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{p} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{q} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{r} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{s} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{t} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{u} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{v} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{w} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{x} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{y} = (-1, -2, 1)$

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$\vec{aa} = (-1, -2, 1)$

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$\vec{ad} = (1, -5, 2)$

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$\vec{ah} = (1, -5, 2)$

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$\vec{ba} = (-1, -2, 1)$

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$\vec{bq} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{br} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{bs} = (-1, -2, 1)$

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$\vec{bu} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{bv} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{bw} = (-1, -2, 1)$

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$\vec{cs} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{ct} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{cu} = (-1, -2, 1)$

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$\vec{cw} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{cx} = (1, -5, 2)$

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$\vec{cz} = (1, -5, 2)$

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$\vec{dl} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{dm} = (-1, -2, 1)$

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$\vec{dz} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{ea} = (-1, -2, 1)$

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$\vec{eo} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{ep} = (1, -5, 2)$

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$\vec{ez} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{fa} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{fb} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{fc} = (-1, -2, 1)$

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$\vec{fk} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{fl} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{fm} = (-1, -2, 1)$

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$\vec{ft} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{fu} = (-1, -2, 1)$

$\vec{fv} = (1, -5, 2)$

$\vec{fw} = (-1, -2, 1)$

<

11 April at 17:33 - Like -  1



Examples of conversations

16 October 2014

...what?

+ 0/8 points | Previous Answers SCalc7M A.H.025.

Write the number in polar form with argument between 0 and 2π .

$$-7 + 7i$$

$$\left(7\sqrt{2}, \frac{3}{4}\pi \right)$$



Like · Comment

✓ Seen by 238

you need to enter it in the form
16 October 2014 at 16:07 · Like

$r(\cos(x) + i\sin(x))$
16 October 2014 at 16:07 · Like

So polar form and polar coordinates aren't the same?
16 October 2014 at 16:08 · Like

nope
16 October 2014 at 16:08 · Like · 1

Shazia Ahmed Polar coordinates are coordinates in the form (r, theta) and polar form of a complex number is what said

18 October 2014

Just woke up this morning to realise I never did the last question on the webassign, the one with the declaration of originality. Is that a problem?

Like · Comment

✓ Seen by 237

happened to me once, I don't think it really matters...
18 October 2014 at 13:14 · Like

I don't think it does because you still get graded based on each question anyways
18 October 2014 at 13:48 · Like

Happened to a friend of mine last year. Started off as the odd question, then he got into crime and left Uni. Last time I heard he was in prison.
18 October 2014 at 14:16 · Like · 7



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Early Feedback

Keep going with these Facebook groups and try as hard as possible to get EVERYONE in the group as early as possible in first year. In my experience as a student who travels in, it helps feel a part of the University. Without the Facebook groups I would feel a lot more isolated and probably at lot less engaged

Personally it gives me confidence because if someone posts a question that you were stuck on also...it makes you feel less stupid because you know that other people are also struggling with some concepts in the course, its not just you

It builds a sense of community and you learn peoples faces and their names

Its like being in a tutorial sometimes.

If you're stuck / need to know some piece of information it takes literally seconds to hop on Facebook and make a post. Also, because the uptake of the groups, in terms of membership, is so high, you're likely to get an accurate response very quickly

FB groups have been invaluable



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Part 2

Transition



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Diversity of Students

Entry from:

- H-maths in 5th year
- AH-maths in 6th year
- A-level Maths and/or Further Maths
- Mature students/Access courses
- Widening Participation
- HNC(D) at College, 1st(2nd) year entry
- 2nd year direct entry after Glasgow International College
- International students



- More rigorous form of study
- Speed at which material is covered
- Unfamiliarity with formal terminology
- Gaps in knowledge
- Moving away from learning to pass exams
- Independent living & study
- Commuting (~40%)
- 3 subject issue, lack sense of belonging



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Pre-entry Support

New pre-entry Facebook group for College of Science and Engineering (CoSE)

- Conversations with each other and senior students
- Become acquainted with Effective Learning Adviser for CoSE and Maths Adviser
- Ask questions (related to course or UoG generally)
- Access to resources prior to starting level 1
- Links to subject-specific groups



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Conversations with each other



25 August 2013 · London

hellooo 😊 if anyone needs a flatmate or know a place, please let me know!

[Like](#) · [Comment](#)




Hi  there's a room available in the flat where I currently live. It's close to Kelvingrove Park and the uni campus. If you're interested, send me a private message 😊.

25 August 2013 at 20:09 · [Like](#)



Done 😊

25 August 2013 at 20:15 · [Like](#)



8 September 2013

has anyone got their SAAS payments yet?? just wondering when we should get them?

[Like](#) · [Comment](#)

Conversations with staff



16 August 2013

Hi,

I'll keep my introduction very short - I finished the first year recently and I had Mathematics, Statistics and Computing Science modules. If you have any questions about these subjects or anything else - let me know, either privately or below this post. 😊

Like · Comment

👍 Lorna Love and 4 others like this.

💬 View 21 more comments



Hello 😊

I've read though everything you've been saying and I just wondered if you thought it possible for someone who didn't study computer science (or whatever the equivalent would be) in high school, to take computing science as the additional course we have to pick? 😊

28 August 2013 at 18:00 · Like



Shazia Ahmed Hi [redacted] Lorna Love and Paul Mullen have answered a similar question in the Level 1 Comp Sci group. Here's the link if you would like to join <https://www.facebook.com/groups/163180403867836/> and have a look.



SLS Level 1 Computing Science 2013-14

114 members

2 September 2013 at 12:38 · Like · 👍 1 · Remove Preview



[redacted] thank you very much, I looked over it and it answered all my questions!

2 September 2013 at 21:26 · Unlike · 👍 3



22 August 2013

Hello! I know there have been issues with registration but I'm still not sure if I should have received my password yet? Starting to panic a little now.. xD

Like · Comment

💬 View 9 more comments



I was starting to get worried that I hadn't heard from anybody about registration, but at least I'm not the only one!

23 August 2013 at 22:02 · Like



I was feeling like that as well, so glad this facebook page exists or I would still be sitting here worrying x

23 August 2013 at 22:03 · Like



Sarah Honeychurch That's what we're here for. Glad we're helping, and remember we're always here to stop you worrying 😊

23 August 2013 at 22:59 · Like · 👍 4



Conversations with senior students

15 September 2014 - Glasgow

Hey guys, I'm having some issues enrolling for Physics 1 with Astronomy 1 as all of the Astronomy lab sessions conflict with the only available lectures for Physics. Is there someone in particular I should speak to about this to make arrangements that work? Would that be my program advisor? I'm in tomorrow for the induction and was going to see if it could be possible to sort this out whilst I'm there. Any advice would be greatly appreciated, thanks!

[Like](#) · [Comment](#)

your adviser should be able to override the conflict, the issue isn't a real one as you can just attend 9am physics on your astronomy lab day

15 September 2014 at 22:53 · [Like](#)

That's reassuring, thanks a lot for the response. I'll be sure to seek him out tomorrow if I can.

15 September 2014 at 22:54 · [Like](#) · [1](#)

no bother, let us know how you get on with it

15 September 2014 at 22:55 · [Like](#)

Try making a support call from your My Glasgow page, that's what I did when I had problems and they sorted it straight away.

16 September 2014 at 08:27 · [Unlike](#) · [1](#)

3 September 2014

Im just asking out of curiosity- can you swap any lectures once you have enrolled? Also, can you add extra lectures to it if you feel you need them?

[Like](#) · [Comment](#)

[1](#) likes this.

You can change them once you enrolled - I had to because I chose the wrong ones haha!

3 September 2014 at 18:03 · [Like](#)

Yes, you can unenroll and then enrol in the classes you want. Just make sure that you are covering what you need for your course.

3 September 2014 at 18:06 · [Like](#)

Thanks, thats good to hear.)

3 September 2014 at 18:08 · [Like](#) · [1](#)

If you can make it work in your time table and you cover your necessary classes then you can do what you like.

3 September 2014 at 19:04 · [Unlike](#) · [1](#)



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Facebook Events

Maths Film Afternoons

Maths Games Group

Create events and post on FB groups



Examples of Events



GUESTS

30
went

4
maybe

🕒 Wednesday, 12 November 2014 at 16:30–18:30
about 6 months ago

📍 Room 315 McMillan Reading Room

The next maths film will be 'Fermat's Room'. Come along for a sociable break from your studies, catch up with your classmates and have a chat about Maths over popcorn. Please 'join' the event so that we know how much popcorn to bring along!



2 April 2013 · 🌐

You know you need to get our more when you spend more time than you're willing to admit figuring out how to align the presses to build that room...



3 April 2013

Can't wait for the film and the popcorn!



Unlike · Comment · Share



like this.



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Examples of Events



27
went

3
maybe

22 January at 12:00–14:00
about 4 months ago

Room 315, McMillan Reading Room, University Avenue

Informal session with a few games on hand which people can try out in small groups. It should be fun. Please come along.



Shazia Ahmed

22 January · 🌐

Thanks to all who came along. We had a great time 😊
Look out for the next Maths Games meeting coming up soon

Like · Comment · Share



[Redacted] like this.



That was fun, and I am now a Mancala-holic.

22 January at 15:09 · Unlike · 🍷 4

[Redacted]
12 February · Glasgow · 🌐

another great afternoon, looking forward to next week's games. Shazia, you rock! 😊

Unlike · Comment · Share



[Redacted] and 6 others like this.



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Survey

Current level 4 Maths and CS students

First ever cohort where Facebook groups 'formally' introduced

CS group – 196 members, 62/330 responses

Maths group – 139 members, 38/201 responses



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Results

Most students joined in 1st year

Main reason for not joining group: “didn’t know about them”

Groups found to be very useful academically



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“Reading how people approach different problems”

“During term time things being identified in notes/exercises such as typos or mistakes were helpful”

“Getting other perspectives on topics. Collaborative exam solutions”

“A good way to create a community from a large cohort of students. Really good that it didn’t become cluttered with trivia and non-group related matters”



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Thank you

Thank you for listening

Any questions?

Contact:

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🐦 @ShaziaAhmed