

Minutes of Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting Wednesday, 10 December, 1997 at 2.00 pm

Present: Guy Brown, Tony Chilton, Mark Greenwood (Software Engineering 1st Year), John Hayes (Software Engineering 2nd Year), Dan Khan (Software Engineering 4th Year), Tim Longson (MSc Faculty of Pure Science), Steve Maddock (chair), Gordon Manson, Phil McMinn (Computer Science 2nd Year), Siobhan North, John Ottiwell (Computer Systems Engineering 3rd Year), Christine Parkes (minutes), Fiona Pugh (MSc Information Systems), Mark Pybus (Computer Science 3rd Year), Devrim Unal (MSc Telematics), George Wilson.

Apologies: Martin Overton (Software Engineering 3rd Year).

1. Minutes of previous meeting

1. There was an action on all reps to ask for volunteers as committee reps. Despite much subsequent email traffic, only the following volunteered:

Dept. Board Undergraduate Rep: Martin Overton

Fac. of Eng. Undergraduate Rep: Mark Greenwood

Academic Council Postgraduate Rep: James Kistruch

This still leaves five posts unfilled. Tim Longson volunteered as postgrad rep on Departmental Board, Mark Pybus as rep on the University's Academic Council and Devrim Unal as postgrad rep on the Faculty of Engineering.

2. Student support and guidance

This item will go forward as part of the Department's Teaching Review submission to the University.

3. New departmental CD Rom

Gordon Manson has received two replies to his email.

4. Printing

A new notice has been put up by Support.

5. Updating of web pages

Done - comments welcome on other issues. Comments were also received from Tim Longson and were acted upon.

6. Drinks machine

Tony Chilton advised that this be done through the Computer Society directly with the suppliers.

**ACTION FIONA PUGH
MARTIN OVERTON**

7. Reports on Intro Week

Not yet available. To be presented at next meeting.

**ACTION MARK DUNDON
JON NEWTON**

8. COM234

Extra help has been provided.

9. Reading Weeks

Teaching Committee are to look into this and put relevant information in the handbook.

10. MSc Reps Reports

Tim Longson gave a short verbal report supported with some statistics. Written reports to be presented at the next meeting.

ACTION TIM LONGSON

11. Publicity of Computer Society

No feedback available as Martin Overton was absent from the meeting.

2. Chairman's statement

1. New equipment is now in place in the labs - the next four year's equipment grant has been spent on student equipment.

In subsequent discussion the students suggested that they would formally thank the HOD for this at the next Departmental Board Meeting.

ACTION STUDENT REPS

2. There have been complaints from the cleaners about the state of equipment - sticky marks from spray when opening drinks cans, etc. Tony Chilton pointed out that it was not the cleaners job to clean equipment. It was suggested that notices be put up to reinforce the 'no eating or drinking' rule near computers and warning of suspension of accounts for persistent offenders. It may be necessary to tighten up in all areas. Offenders could be reported to Support and the necessary action taken. In the light of (i) above, student reps are to email the student body warning them to take better care of equipment.

ACTION STUDENT REPS

3. Public phone

This has been purchased and it hoped it can be installed in G25 before Christmas. G25 can be left open if there is a porter in the building.

4. State of Labs

Covered in Chairman's statement, item 2. (ii).

5. Past exam papers

This has been discussed at Teaching Committee. The University does not have a policy on providing past exam papers by electronic means. Teaching Committee will put forward a proposal to the department for the next academic year. Past exam papers are kept in the library

for those who do not wish to pay for copies. Steve Maddock to email student body informing them of this.

ACTION SM

6. Departmental CD Rom

This is unable to be produced before the beginning of semester two.

7. Team Teaching

Student reps had been asked to gather views on team teaching. Examples of instances were given by students such as lack of communication between lecturers, e.g. lecturers giving differing advice on the same assignment. It was pointed out that the person concerned has subsequently corrected the problem. Students noted that the division of modules into two separate halves worked well in most cases.

8. Non-CS students using departmental facilities

This is in regard to facilities provided by the Department in the Lewin Laboratory. Support will help students who are prepared to 'inform' on other non-CS students. Students and staff should challenge people. Random spot checks will be made by Support.

ACTION SUPPORT

9. Assignment deadlines

1. Assignment handout

There was a complaint from first year students that assignments were being given out before the relevant work was covered in lectures (COM129). Steve Maddock pointed out that students should not just rely on lectures. They should read the recommended text books and other material.

2. Weeks 11 and 12 of Semester 1

It was felt that weeks 11 and 12 could have been used to spread out the assignment deadlines more in Semester 1. However, Gordon Manson pointed out that there were no deadlines after week 10 so that lecturers could try to get work back to the students before Christmas.

3. Moving deadlines

Some deadlines had been moved by lecturers. The second years didn't see the point of drawing up a schedule if the deadlines were to be changed. Gordon Manson had in the past responded to student pressure to move a deadline (COM237) and had received quite a lot of thanks but it also caused him extra work and pressure to do so. The first year students felt that deadlines should not be moved since some students had worked hard to meet them.

It was felt that there shouldn't be two hand-in deadlines on the same day of a week.

4. Splitting assignments into pieces

COM603/217 were cited as good examples of breaking an assignment into smaller pieces. Tim Longson felt that breaking an assignment into smaller pieces would decrease the risk of plagiarism, but it might mean more marking.

Dan Khan said that breaking assignments into smaller pieces didn't help with assignment deadlines for the pieces all occurred at the same time.

5. Computer Systems Engineering

The CSE reps felt that there should be closer liaison between CS and ACSE in setting assignments. It was felt that a lack of co-ordination between the two may be causing some students not to choose CS modules.

6. Assignment Workload

George Wilson suggested that the assignment workload might be too heavy and this, perhaps, was the main problem in meeting deadlines: Are students spending too much time on assignment work or are lecturers underestimating the work?

7. Teachcom Survey

Gordon Manson then said that Teachcom would be doing a survey on course assignments and how much time students spend working on assignments. Dan Khan suggested that a student be on the survey team.

All the above comments, together with Dan Khan's suggestion will be put to Teachcom.

ACTION SM

10. Printing

The printers on the Department undergraduate network will cost too much to repair so the facility will be withdrawn. Misuse of printers has added to the problem. CICS provide network printers which students will have to use. There was a discussion on the problems of downloading, saving files, reformatting, etc. George Wilson will email all students reminding them how to use the CICS network printers.

ACTION GEORGE WILSON

11. General report by reps from each degree year

1. 1st year (Mark Greenwood) - the main complaint was assignment deadlines.
2. 2nd year (Phil McMinn) - the main complaint was assignment deadlines.
3. 3rd year (Mark Pybus) - complaint regarding large assignments but on the whole everyone was fairly happy.
4. 3rd year (John Hayes) - there had been no feedback.
5. 4th year (Dan Khan)
 1. COM242 Prolog - happy so far.
 2. COM307 - Thanks to MF who was very helpful out of hours with reasonable extension to deadlines.
 3. COM321 - Lectures well explained, Colin Smythe helpful.
 4. COM451 - Two of the three parts students enjoyed but the third was difficult to follow.

Overall, undergraduate students were generally happy with the courses.

6. MSc (Fiona Pugh) - Jim McGregor has given extra programming tutorials which were very much appreciated.
7. MSc (Tim Longson) -
 1. COM603 - very well laid out, lecturer approachable. Thanks to Guy Brown for his humorous tutorials.
 2. COM637 - students didn't like it. They would have preferred to have done OCCAM to Z.

3. For semester 2 Tim Longson asked if it would be possible for a timetable change to COM658 as it was the only course on a particular day. If it was moved it would give a completely free day for students to organise their own study. Gordon Manson said it may not be possible to move the lecture as it is also a second year course. Steve Maddock pointed out that the students could discuss it with the relevant lecturer who may be prepared to move it.

8. MSc Telematics (Devrim Unal) - general complaints that there was not enough practical work and that it was mainly essays. Only one module in semester 1 gave practical work. They also suggest that the assignments be split into pieces as they find them easier to manage. Students would like to be able to find lecturers in the student vacation period. Steve Maddock suggested that they email lecturers and ask for appointments.

12. Any Other Business

1. Dan Khan asked if lecturers were available during the exam period. Steve Maddock said that the lecturers will, in general, be available.
2. Mark Pybus queried why the hand-in day for the third year dissertation project was Monday in week 12 and not later in the week. Many students would prefer to use that week and would like an extension until the Friday. Steve Maddock will consult with Steve Renals (the dissertation project co-ordinator).

ACTION SM

3. Dan Khan asked if the minutes could be put on the SSLCOM www pages.

ACTION SM