

The University of Sheffield
Department Of Computer Science

Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting
Tuesday 13 December 2011
G22 Regent Court
13:15

MINUTES

Present:

Staff		Undergraduate Year 2	
Chairman	Tony Simons [AJHS]	Computer Science	Carl Clegg [CC]
Secretary	Kathryn Roden[KMR]	Artificial Intelligence	Lianne Meah-Brabbins [LMB]
Dept Administrator	Zoe Fletcher [ZCF]	Software Engineering	Rob Spick [RS]
Year 1 Tutor	Amanda Sharkey [AJCS]	Computer Science with Maths	Wing Hang Vince Yeung [WHVY]
Year 2 Tutor	Mark Stevenson [RMS]	Enterprise Computing	Nick Ross
Year 3 and 4 Tutor	Mike Stannett [MPS]		
Director of Teaching	Siobhan North [SDN]	Undergraduate Year 3	
MSc Director	Richard Clayton [RHC]	Artificial Intelligence	Kyle Milner [KM]
Technical Support Manager	Dave Abbott [DJA]	Software Engineering	Vaclav Hudec [VH]
Senior Programmer	George Wilson [GAW]		
		Undergraduate year 4	
Students		Enterprise Computing	Ian Morrissey
Undergraduate Year 1			
Computer Science	Matthew Shaw [MS]	MSc	
Artificial Intelligence	Thomas Allen [TA]	SSIT	Joseph Kempka [JK]
Enterprise Computing/ITMB	Oliver Grayson [OG]		

Apologies: John Derrick [head of department], Helen Moore [faculty librarian], Tom Crayford [L3 Software Engineering].

1. Welcome and apologies

Noted: AJHS welcomed the committee and acknowledged the apologies.

2. Matters arising from the last meeting

Noted: Two amendments have been made to the previous minutes. Point 3.1.1 (second paragraph) the word 'codes' was changed to 'solutions'. In point 3.1.1 (third paragraph) 'COM1004' was amended to 'COM1003'.

Noted: AJHS confirmed that he had spoken to the lecturers of Software Hut to ask if delays could be taken into consideration when marking the project. Mike Holcombe [WMLH] explained that the reason one team were more dissatisfied with their marks is because they were marked down by the client. The client was adamant that the ordering of marks was correct when all the other teams were taken into consideration. WMLH gave the project a high mark which brought the marks up. Kirill Bogdanov [KEB] stated that the dissatisfied team actually gained more (in relation to the late start) by contacting the client more than they should.

Action carried over from last meeting: TC to send information to DJA on what is needed in the student wiki.

Noted: RHC explained that he hasn't spoken to current SSIT students to see which modules they may (in theory) be interested in taking. JK commented that he spoke to some SSIT students and they are interested in Computer Security and Forensics and that it would be good to have more choice in the second semester. ZCF commented that it may be possible to do special regulations to get the module available in the second semester. SDN asked if it would be viable for this year. JK stated that he has not checked the timetable. SDN suggested that decisions for places on the module could be considered on an individual basis as generally many SSIT students don't have very strong maths which is a requirement for the course. RHC stated he does not want to make a decision on this now.

Action: RHC to ask TeachCom by email if SSIT students would potentially be able to take Computer Security and Forensics as an optional module in semester 2.

Noted: AJHS confirmed that he contacted Cliff Alcock regarding problems with the air conditioning and heating in the lecture theatres and the noise caused by building works. SDN added that these issues have also been raised at faculty level. AJHS commented that, in general, things are better.

Noted: AJHS confirmed that he spoke to the lecturer of MGT 136 to ask them to finish on time as Computer Science students have to get to the Medical School for their next lecture. OG commented that they have a different lecturer now so this is not an issue.

3. Teaching Related Matters

3.1. Level 1

3.1.1. Course Delivery

COM1002

Noted: Some students have asked if additional (optional) maths modules could be made available as some topics cannot be fully covered in COM1002. TA confirmed that they have spoken to the lecturer after class and they have been told they don't have time to cover all topics (in class). SDN stated that COM1002 currently has as much maths in it as students can cope with and suggested that students try MASH (<http://www.shef.ac.uk/mash/homepage>). MPS asked if students are asking for extra work which is worth credits or just optional. TA responded with either/or. SDN commented that students will go into more detail in the second year; Data Driven Computing has much more maths in it. SDN also suggested contacting the Maths Department to see if

they have any interesting seminars they could go to and MPS further suggested that students could arrange their own mini seminars and teach each other.

COM1001

Noted: Students have noticed that some lecture slides and assignment sheets contain grammatical errors (broken English), or can seem vague. SDN clarified that the slides for this module were inherited from Daniela Romano. English is not the first language for Daniela or the current lecturers of the course (Kirill Bogdanov [KEB] and Marian Gheorghe [MAG]). MS clarified that it is the ambiguity of assignments which causes most concern. SDN explained that ambiguity is integral to the cross over project as it is like real life. If the ambiguity is to do with English then the students should tell the lecturers. MS explained that it is sometimes hard to understand what they are trying to say and they don't always understand the questions students are asking them.

Action: AJHS to raise issue with MAG.

Noted: AJHS commented that, in the past, the person who acted as a client was the personal tutor. MS responded that the clients are now PhD students and they get to meet them at an initial meeting, but then all future questions go via Marian. MS stated it could sometimes be hard to get a clear image of what was needed for each scenario due to language barriers.

Action: AJHS to speak to MAG.

ITMB

Noted: OG commented that the content for ITMB is good. However, in the first semester 70% of their assessment is group work which is not a good indication of the aptitude of each student. SDN agreed this was worrying. OG clarified that the MGT modules are 100% group work, INF are 60% and COM are 50%. OG did explain that for the COM marking they do get individual marks. SDN explained that we can't control the marks for other departments.

Action: KMR to find out who the SSLCOM chairs are in the Management and Information Schools.

Action: AJHS to feed concerns back to the Management School and Information School.

3.2. Level 2

3.2.1. Course Delivery

COM2001

Noted: Some students felt lab classed would have been beneficial, rather than just doing assignments. MPS responded that there will be plenty of lab sheets for students to use next semester.

Noted: Students would have liked the first assignment to be marked and returned before the second assignment was submitted as they were unable to use feedback from the first assignment for the second one. SDN commented that lecturers should at least specify when students will get feedback so they can plan writing future assignments and if they should wait before handing in an assignment early.

Action: AJHS to feed back comments to the lecturer (Phil Green)

COM2003

Noted: Attendance for the problem class is poor as students feel it isn't worth going to. Some students have suggested attendance may improve if problems are talked through and solutions written on the board. LMB confirmed that solutions were put online. LMB commented that there is a PhD student who doesn't really help much, but will answer questions if asked. SDN suggested that if students want a tutorial then they should feed this back to the lecturer.

Noted: RMS commented that he will be taking over this module for semester 2 and had already planned to run problem classes as suggested.

3.2.2. Library and IT

Noted: Some of the plug sockets are not working properly in the IC. It's mainly an issue with the ones in the floor as they are sunk down and you can't reach the sockets.

Action: HM to feed this to someone in the IC.

Noted: Some students have mentioned it is hard to find a desk to work at in St George's Library. SDN commented that the Portobello seems to be quite underused and that CiCS list open access compute rooms. GAW added that during exam time CiCS also open up additional computer rooms. MS commented that there is always desk space in the lower stacks of the Western Bank Library and it is very quiet.

3.2.3. Resources

Noted: Some students have asked for the Lewin Computer room to be open past 6pm. GAW confirmed that the Lewin Computer Room is open after 6pm. Some students reported that the porters came in and told students to leave if they were a first or second year and that only L3 students could stay till 9.00pm. GAW commented that he has spoken to Portering Management about this as they wanted to update their book of instructions. According to the hand book the Lewin Computer Room is open 8.00am-9:30pm during semester time and 8.00am-6.30pm during vacation.

Noted: Students are reminded that they must sign in (using the book on the porters desk in the foyer) if they are working past 6.00pm.

Action: GAW to check the information given to the porters.

3.2.4. Strengths

COM2001

Noted: Students are pleased with the lecturer's feedback, but some students would like the assignment briefs to be clearer. Some students reported being marked down for something that was apparently required, but was not mentioned in the brief.

Action: AJHS to feed comments back to lecturer (Phil Green).

COM 2003

Noted: Students have given a lot of praise for the lecturer of this module. Some students have suggested having smaller tutorial groups may be better than one large group.

Action: AJHS to feed back to lecturer (James Marshall). It was also noted that this is the first time the lecturer has taught undergraduate students.

COM2004

Noted: Students think that the lecturers for COM2004 are very helpful during the lab classes.

Action: AJHS to feed comment back to lecturers.

Noted: Some students on Computer Science and Maths feel the course is harder than pure Computer Science as each semester they have to attend six modules. SDN confirmed that Computer Science students also have to attend six modules.

3.2.5. Other

Noted: The rep for Computer Science with Maths felt it was hard to find other students on his course and would like some events or gathering just for students on this course. It was suggested that the rep could email all2nd@dcs.shef.ac.uk to try and get in touch with other students in his cohort. He could also look at tutor groups on line. It was also suggested that maybe the Computer Science Society may be able to help with arranging events.

3.3. MSc

3.3.1. Course Delivery

Noted: More clarification is needed on the students feedback form.

Action: Choi Wa Yee to confirm which module her report is referring to so it can be discussed at the next meeting.

3.3.2. Library and IT

Noted: Some of the computers in the Lewin Computer Room can be a bit slow when running large amounts of data. The student reps present at the meeting confirmed that the computers are much improved from last year.

3.3.3. Resources

Noted: Students felt it would be more convenient to have classes in the same building so they don't have to run from one building to another. SDN commented that the department is aware of this issue, but they don't have much control due to the way the timetables are done. ZCF added that many rooms were taken out of action this year as they were being refurbished.

3.3.4. Strengths

Noted: Students would like to have more than one lecture a week for COM6516. RHC agreed this would be good as one lecture is not enough, but it

has been impossible to fit more lectures into the timetable this year. ZCF confirmed that there are not enough hours in the week to fit all the lectures for MSc modules in.

Noted: Some students felt the course should be extended or the amount of assignments decreased as they think the course is very stressful. Because they are so busy they can't experience life in the UK. SDN explained that this is always an issue, but MSc courses are hard.

Noted: Students would like to see a timetable of all assignments at the beginning of the semester. SDN and RHC agreed this would be a good idea. However currently the MOLE hand-ins (electronic) do not show on the Google calendar (cal-assignmnet@dcs.shef.ac.uk). SDN stated that the Department are going to try and show all assignment hand-ins on the calendar for L1 and L2 students next semester.

3.3.5. Other

Noted: Students would like to have answers of past exam papers, and for lecturers to spend one or two lectures going through the answers. SDN commented that she is against publishing answers, but that doing past papers and getting them marked is different. AJHS clarified that some past papers are published on the web. RHC confirmed that he spends time in lectures and tutorials going through past papers. MS added that Georg Struth goes through past papers at the end of semester and explains how he would expect questions to be answered. RMS confirmed that he also does this.

4. Feedback

Noted: SDN asked the student representatives what they considered to be feedback and what kind of feedback they find most useful.

MS commented that the feedback for COM1001 and 1005 is brief. SDN responded that if students want fast feedback then it will be brief. MS explained that he thought some students would prefer to wait longer in order to have more in depth feedback. Sometimes it is better to have more in depth feedback and other times it's better to have fast feedback. MS explained that they did get helpful feedback for COM1005 for example; you did well at, you could do better... He said it would be useful to get feedback where marks had been lost.

SDN said she will rethink the speed verses length of feedback.

RHC asked if students would see an example solution as useful feedback. The student reps agreed this would be seen as feedback. SDN commented that we would label it as feedback and let students know when they are available on the web.

SDN asked if students saw problem classes as feedback. Some students weren't too sure about this, but SDN explained that this is an example of feedback as they allow you to assess how well you are doing.

OG explained that many students will be used to getting very detailed and individual feedback from teachers at school. SDN explained that feedback is anything you use

to learn. SDN also clarified that Lab Classes where you go through worked solutions and when you compare your work to someone else's are examples of feedback.

Noted: SDN commented that one of her first year tutees goes to senior students when they get stuck and they have never turned down when asking for help. SDN commented that she is grateful for the help provided by these students.

Noted: MS stated that some students are concerned about anonymous marking, or rather the lack of it. He confirmed that in other departments work is marked entirely anonymously. MOLE is of concern as it identifies students by name and not registration number. SDN stated that she is not aware of any system that would allow students to upload code anonymously, but suggested that maybe the new MOLE 2 may allow anonymous marking. SDN also clarified that academics don't have access to registration numbers.

Noted: MS commented that he (and helpers for the module) felt the assignments for COM1003 are much harder this year than they were last year. SDN responded that last year the marks fell dramatically in the second semester which was an indication that the first semester was much easier. SDN also commented that the marks do not suggest that students are struggling this semester.

5. Date of next meeting

Noted: 14 March 2012 (AJHS commented that he may be out of the country so the date of the meeting may change).