The University of Sheffield
Department Of Computer Science

Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting
Wednesday 28 March 2012
G22 Regent Court
13:15

MINUTES

Present:

Staff		Undergraduate Year 2	
Chairman	Tony Simons [AJHS]	Artificial Intelligence	Lianne Meah-Brabbins [LMB]
Secretary	Kathryn Roden[KMR]	Computer Science with Maths	Wing Hang Vince Yeung [WHVY]
Dept Administrator	Zoe Fletcher [ZCF]	Enterprise Computing	Nick Ross
Year 2 Tutor	Mark Stevenson [RMS]		
Year 3 and 4 Tutor	Mike Stannett [MPS]	Undergraduate Year 3	
Director of Teaching	Siobhan North [SDN]	Software Engineering	Tom Crayford
Technical Support Manager	Dave Abbott [DJA]	Computer Science	David Elston
Library Representative	Amy Collins		
		Undergraduate year 4	
Students		Enterprise Computing	Ian Morrissey
Undergraduate Year 1			
Artificial Intelligence	Thomas Allen [TA]	MSc	
Enterprise Computing/ITMB	Oliver Grayson [OG]	SSIT	Joseph Kempka [JK]
Software Engineering	Andreas Tsiapalis		

1. **Welcome and apologies**

Apologies: John Derrick [JD] Head of Department, Amanda Sharkey [AJCS] Year 1 Tutor, Helen Moore [HM] Faculty Librarian, Richard Clayton [RHC] MSc Director, George Wilson [GAW] Senior Programmer.

Noted: AJHS welcomed the committee and acknowledged the apologies.

Noted: The previous minutes were agreed as a fair and accurate representation of the meeting.

2. **Matters arising from the last meeting**

Action carried over from last meeting: (item 2 on previous minutes) TC to send information to DJA on what is needed in the student wiki.

Noted: (item 2 on previous minutes) RHC emailed TeachCom to ask if SSIT students could take Computer Security and Forensics as an optional module. Due to the

complexity of timetables and the fixed SSIT syllabus this year, having this as an optional module this year was not possible. It will be looked into for the next academic year.

Noted: (item 3.1.1 on previous minutes) AJHS fed back comments to the lecturer of COM1001 (Marian Gheorghe [MAG]) regarding ambiguity due to the wording on slides and language barriers when dealing with clients. MAG responded with the following:

- Students will be warned clearly that the crossover requirements specifications include deliberate ambiguity.
- PhD demonstrators acting as clients would take more pro-active decisions (other than simply referring to their briefing sheet) about issues not explicit on the sheets.
- Demonstrator involvement is limited by the funds available to pay them, so it is likely that further questions will still come back to Marian, who will attempt to clarify requirements when demonstrators are no longer available.
- Students will most likely have to take some late decisions themselves (especially if they're not up to speed) and then they should state clearly how they interpreted the requirement, where some decision was taken.

Noted: TA commented that the ambiguity may be because the briefs can be very similar and it can be hard to understand the differences.
Action: AJHS to feed back comments to MAG.

Noted: (item 3.1.1 on previous minutes) The SSLCOM chair in the School of Management is Linda Lewis and in the School of Information it is John Bennett.
Action carried over from last meeting: AJHS to raise concerns over high levels of group work to Linda Lewis and John Bennett.

Noted: (item 3.2.1 on previous minutes) AJHS fed back comments from students taking COM2001 to the course lecturer (Phil Green [PDG]) that they would like assignment marks back before the next assignment is due. PDG commented (via email) that he can't see a way round this due to the timing and demonstrator budget.

Noted: (item 3.2.2 on previous minutes) HM fed back comments regarding the plug sockets in the IC to the relevant people. AC commented that she will report again but also mentioned that this is an ongoing problem and has been reported at other SSL meetings.
Action: AC to feed back to the IC regarding faulty plug sockets.

Noted: (item 3.2.3 on previous minutes) DJA commented that the confusion over the opening times of the Lewin Computer Room was a mistake made by the porter on duty. He suggested that if any students are ejected from the computer room within normal opening hours that they should email the support helpdesk. DJA also confirmed that the opening hours are now on the wall in the foyer.

Noted: (item 3.2.4 on previous minutes) AJHS fed back to the lecturer of COM2001 (Phil Green [PDG]) that students would like the assignment briefs to be clearer with regards to marking. PDG responded (by email) that the marking was consistent with the brief and the pre-published marking scheme.

Noted: (item 3.2.4 on previous minutes) AJHS fed back to the lecturer of COM2003 (James Marshall [JM]) that students were very happy with the course. He also fed back the suggestion that smaller tutorial groups may be better. JM responded (by

email) that when he taught this course in Bristol he did so with problem classes of 10 to 12 students. He will ask for more teaching support which may enable this to happen.

Action carried over from last meeting: (item 3.3.1 on previous minutes). Choi Wa Yee [CWY] to confirm which module her report is referring to so it can be discussed at the next meeting.

3. Teaching Related Matters

3.1. Level 1

3.1.1. Course Delivery

Noted: AT commented that the lecturer of COM1002 stops the lecture if someone comes in late and then tells the student to come and see them at the end of a lecture which wastes time. AT also commented that for COM1005 there were errors in the code. AJHS responded that we need more of an idea of how many students have raised these issues before they can be discussed at SSLCOM.

3.1.2. Strengths of the course and areas for improvement

Noted: There were many positive comments from students regarding the teaching of COM1003 and COM1004.
Action: AJHS to pass comments on to lecturers.

3.2. Level 2

3.2.1. Course Delivery

Philosophy module (AI course)
Noted: Students have asked for more support if they choose to study a module out of the department. Students from our department were not aware that deadlines for assignments were detailed in the course hand book and only found out a week before the deadline. Students would like some prior warning about this.
Action: AJHS to contact the chair of SSLCOM (Rosanna Keefe) in the Philosophy department.

3.2.2. Resources

Noted: The vending machine in the Common Room in RCW is rejecting coins
Action: AJHS to feed back to ScHARR (scharr.reception@sheffield.ac.uk).

3.2.3. Strengths

COM2005
Noted Students wish to give the lecturer of COM2005 a lot of praise.
Action: AJHS to feed comments back to the lecturer.

MAS276

Noted: Students feel that the lecturer of MAS276 (Dr Eugenia Cheng) teaches with lots of passion and provides students with an interactive learning environment. Students feel that the tutors in the tutorials are also really helpful.
Action: AJHS to feed comments back to lecturer.

3.3. Level 3

3.3.1. Course Delivery

Intelligent Web
Noted: Students have reported problems with the Tomcat server crashing.
Action: DJA to identify over the summer which academics will need to use Tomcat and to make sure they configure it in the same way. This will ensure that it is easier for the support team to provide a good service to students.

3.4. Level 4

3.4.1. Course Delivery

Genesys
Noted: IM reported that many students are unhappy with Genesys, although the module is well received and, in general, it's a great module. The issues arise when lecturers get involved with the marking.
Firstly, the earliest feedback received seems to come quite late in semester 2. Students would like interim feedback much sooner for work completed in the first semester. However IM did comment that, compared to last year, the feedback received this year is much better.
Secondly, there are conflicts of interest between the academics and the epiGenesys staff when students are asked to record their working practices. IM commented that some work is duplicated; the students write up minutes which the lecturers could use, but instead they (the students) have to produce a different document.
IM also pointed out that it would be good to have an agreed checking deadline for the lecturers to read these documents, as sometimes the students put them up online and the lecturers don't read them.
IM felt it would be good to give more control of the module to epiGenesys as students seem to respect their views, believing that the epiGenesys staff have a better idea about what is really going on; and leave the academic control to the lecturers involved with the module (Phil McMinn [PSM] and Marian Gheorghe [MAG])
Action: AJHS to feed back comments to PSM and MAG.

3.5. MSc

3.5.1. Strengths of the course and areas for improvement

Noted: Some students feel the assignment is quite stressful. Although some think it is a good challenge and practice on what they have learned so far.
Action: CWY to clarify which assignment she was referring to in her report.

4. Staff responses to the student evaluation

Action: AJHS to feed back the following comment to Cliff Alcock (Teaching Space Manager).
COM1003 SDN
I strongly support the students' comments about the inadequate lecture theatres plagues by noise of with a screen too small for the data projector. I hope SSLCOM will refer these issues, which much affect other courses too, to the Department if Estates.

5. Any other business

Noted: TA asked if the clickers were going to be used any more. He commented that SDN used them really well and that students really enjoyed using them.
Action: AJHS to encourage lecturers of L1 modules to use the clickers more.

Noted: TA asked how much lecturers talk to each other about what topics they are teaching. Some students feel there is overlap and repetition of lecture modules in some of the modules. ZCF commented that some staff members have started having cohort meetings and RMS suggested that they bring this up at the next meeting in May.

Noted: OG suggested that it would be good to have objectives set out at the start of each class or lecture; he also commented that PSM is very good at doing this.

6. Date of next meeting

Noted: The next meeting will be on Wednesday 02 May 2012.