

The University of Sheffield
Department Of Computer Science

**Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting
Wednesday 12 December 2012**

G22 Regent Court
13:15

MINUTES

Present:

Staff:	Present: P, Apologies: Ap, Absent: Abs		Undergraduate Year 2		
Chair	Mike Stannett [MPS]	P	Computer Science	Matthew Shaw [MS]	Abs
Secretary	Kathryn Roden [KMR]	P	Artificial Intelligence	Thomas Allen [TA]	P
Dept Administrator	Zoe Fletcher [ZCF]	P	Software Engineering	Andreas Tsiapalis [AT]	Abs
Year 1 Tutor	Amanda Sharkey [AJCS]	AP	Computer Science with Maths	Simou Wang [SW]	Abs
Year 2 Tutor	Noel Sharkey [NES]	Ap	Enterprise Computing/ITMB	Oliver Grayson [OG]	Abs
Year 3 and 4 Tutor	Daniela Romano [DMR]	Abs	Undergraduate Year 3		
Director of Teaching	Mark Stevenson [RMS]	P	Computer Science (Student Union Councillor)	Sam Brown	P
MSc Director	Mark Hepple [MRH]	Ap	Artificial Intelligence	Lianne Meah [LMB]	P
Head of Department	John Derrick [JD]		Software Engineering	Rob Spick [RS]	Abs
Technical Support Manager	Dave Abbott [DJA]	P	Computer Science with Maths	Wing Hang Vince Yeung [WHVY]	Ap
Senior Programmer	George Wilson [GAW]	Ap	Enterprise Computing/ITMB	Yineng Zeng [YZ]	P
Faculty Librarian	Helen Moore [HM]	Ap	Undergraduate Year 4		
Students:			Software Engineering	Vaclav Hudec [VH]	P
Student Chair	Joe MacMahon		MSc		
Undergraduate Year 1			SSIT	David Steele [DS]	P
Computer Science	Andrew Southon [AS]	P	ASE	Rouran Zhang [RZ]	P
Artificial Intelligence	Christopher Winward [CW]	P	ACS	Wanchun Zhang [WZ]	Abs
Software Engineering	Matthew Handisides [MH]	P	SLP	Alvin Pastore [AP]	P
Computer Science with Maths	Joe MacMahon [JM]	P	PhD	Sina Shamshiri [SS]	Abs
Enterprise Computing/ITMB	Andrew Robertson [AR]	Abs			

1. Welcome and apologies

Noted: MPS welcomed the committee and acknowledged the apologies.

Noted: The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a fair and accurate record.

2. Matters arising from the last meeting

Noted: (item 2 on previous minutes) Action Removed: Tom Crayford to speak to DJA about setting up a student Wiki. This action point is no longer relevant.

Noted: (item 3.1.1 on previous minutes) MPS asked the student representatives to review how they felt working in groups where the teams had been chosen for them and where they got to choose the team members. AS commented that he felt people who got to choose the team worked better together and that for some teams where they didn't get to pick you often get one or two team members who don't respond to emails or contribute. JM commented that he felt it would be better to be pushed out of the comfort zone as all his course mates (CS/Maths) are in the same group. AS suggested it would be good to allow students to have more time to pick groups. The student representatives wanted to know that if the groups were chosen for them that marking would be fair – 'if I work hard I will succeed and won't be dragged down by those who don't do the work'. It was suggested that students could get together in pairs and then groups of pairs are allocated at random.

Noted: MPS asked student reps to carry on with this discussion and to get ideas outside of this meeting as they are coming up with lots of good ideas.

Noted: It was suggested that it would be a good idea to have a group skills session and to make it not computer science related. RMS commented that this sounds like the GEC week.

Action: MPS to take comments to the Teaching Committee (TeachCom).

Noted: (item 3.1.1 on previous minutes) MPS confirmed that he let the lecturer of COM1003 know that students would like the lecture notes to be made available before the lecture. The student reps confirmed that the lecture notes are now being made available.

Noted: (item 3.1.3 on previous minutes) ZCF confirmed that she emailed all the first year computer science students to let them know the Lewin Computer Room opening times. AS commented that some students have not been able to swipe in to the building after 6pm. DJA explained that he does a bulk update of all the UCards with swipe access information at the start of the academic year. If there are individuals who still can't swipe in they should get in touch with someone from the support team.

Noted: (item 3.2.1 on previous minutes) DJA requested that one of the student representatives come and show the support team what the problem with the Haskell Platform on the Linux Machines is.

Noted: (item 3.3.1 on previous minutes) MPS reported that he let the lecturer of 3D computer graphics know that some students were struggling to understand all the new terminology. The student reps confirmed that help had been offered to students, by the lecturer, for the second assignment.

Noted: (item 3.3.5 on previous minutes) MPS checked with the student reps to see if the lecturer of Machine Learning had responded to threads on the discussion board. The student reps confirmed that this had been done.

Noted: (item 6 on previous minutes) KMR reported that all the MSc representatives were emailed to ask if they wanted to be a Faculty Board Representative but no one volunteered for the position. No MSc representatives volunteered at the meeting.

Noted: (item 7 on previous minutes) MPS reported that he passed on the comments regarding COM1002 to the lecturer.

Noted: (item 7 on previous minutes) ZCF confirmed that she is currently working on a calendar which has assignment deadlines for students' reference. She will contact all the students when this is available.

Noted: (item 7 on previous minutes) MPS fed back comments regarding the out of date version of the Java code for COM1005 to the lecturer. The lecturer is going to have a look at the code.

Noted: (item 8 on previous minutes) JM commented that he arranged a pre-meeting for all the student representatives but it was a bit last minute. AS suggested it would be good for someone to take notes at the meeting to make it easier to compile the rep reports.

Noted: (item 8 on previous minutes) DJA confirmed that students are allowed to use the water fountain in the kitchen in Edgar Allen House. DJA also explained that he is trying to get a water cooler set up outside G22 in Regent Court for students to use.

3. Teaching Related Matters

3.1. Level 1

3.1.1. Course delivery

COM1005 (Machines and Intelligence)

Noted: AS reported that some students are unclear what they are getting marked on for essay assignments. Some students had varied results but all had positive comments so were not too sure how to improve. SB commented that last year Noel Sharkey gave examples of how to write a report for COM2005 (Bio-Inspired Computing and Robotics) which was really useful. AS suggested it would be useful to have examples of students work to look at. KMR added that there could be useful information on how to write reports and essays on the study skills website: <http://studyskills.group.shef.ac.uk/>

Action: MPS to feed back comments to the lecturer of COM 1005.

3.2. Level 2

3.2.1. Course Delivery

COM2002 (Human Centred Systems Design)

Noted: MS reported that some students feel that there is lots of content in COM2002 which has already been covered in COM1002 (Foundations of Computer Science) and that some students feel attending the lectures is not necessary to passing the module. TA commented that lecturers could be aware of how modules link up.

Action: MPS to take comments to TeachCom.

3.3. Level 3

3.3.1. Course Delivery

COM3502 (Speech Processing)

Noted: Many students felt that (for COM3502) there was too much content for a 10 credit module. There were also some issues with the assignments. For the introductory assignment they were given four weeks to complete it but many students completed it within a few hours and felt that time had been wasted since it only taught the basics and they had nothing to do for four weeks. Students have suggested that the introductory assignment should have more content and teach more than just the basics.

Students felt that only a small part of the introductory assignment actually helped with the first "real" assignment. Students reported that they really struggled with it since they only knew the basic syntax and nothing else.

Students also felt that the demonstrator didn't know how to do the assignment. Advice from the demonstrator conflicted with advice from the lecture; students were being told different things about the same problem which added to the confusion. They also felt that 1 demonstrator in a 2 hr lab class wasn't enough. Student also commented that there was no help online for Pure Data and felt using MATLAB would be better. Students feel that the work load from COM3502 affected other modules.

Action: MPS to pass comments onto the module lecturer.

COM3310 (Mainframe Computing)

Noted: Some students felt the assignments could be more clearly defined and reported that there was some confusion over the deadline and submission procedure. Students also suggested that the department could keep a closer eye on modules which are taught by external lecturers.

Action: MPS to forward comments onto the academic responsible for the module (Neil Lawrence)

Computer Science and Maths

Noted: Students would like to thank Zoe Fletcher for quickly sorting out the timetable clashes for students taking Computer Science and Maths.

3.3.2. Library and IT

Noted: Students would like to see more of the software which is available on the DCS machines on the CiCS machines. Students feel this is a problem due to the restricted opening times of the Lewin Computer Room in Regent Court. DJA explained that he has liaised with the director of IT about the software on CiCS machines. It's possible that they do send the list on but then don't check up on it. DJA also explained that as CiCS have just moved over to Windows 7 they may not have been able to keep up with demand.

Noted: Students are still noticing problems with the plug sockets in the IC. SB explained that at a Student Union Council Meeting he spoke to the manager of the IC and learned that they are currently sorting out the problems with the plug sockets. New plug sockets will be going in desks rather than on the floor.

Noted: Students on the Computer Science and Maths course would like more coordination between the two departments (Computer Science and Mathematics) when it comes to sending careers/job emails. KMR explained it would be quite hard to do as we can't always see who companies have sent emails too before forwarding them onto students.

Action: KMR to liaise with Roger Moore (the departmental Careers Liaison Officer) to ensure a common tag is put at the front of all job related emails so it is easy for students to filter them from their inbox.

3.3.3. Resources

Noted: Students would like the opening hours of the Lewin Computer Room to be extended. DJA commented that if there was enough demand they may be able to stay open for longer on a Saturday but not on a Sunday. SB suggested the students could set up a petition to extend the Lewin Computer Room opening times.

Noted: Some students have had problems with the iSheffield app for Android devices. They reported the app was not working.

Action: MPS to let CiCS know of the problem

3.4. Level 4

3.4.1. Course Delivery

Noted: Some students are concerned with the difficulty level for a couple of modules (COM4502 - Speech Processing and COM4509 Machine Learning and Adaptive Intelligence) due to the complexity of involved mathematics and availability of materials to follow while working on their assignments.

Action: MPS to forward comments onto lecturers.

Noted: Some students reported confusion and management issues in the COM4525 (Genesys) as some projects had to be cancelled. It was explained that this was the projects from the Council who did not really understand what they were asking for. However in general the students are really pleased by the support and dedication of the epiGenesys mentors.

3.4.2. Strengths of the course and areas for improvement

Noted: Students are very pleased with Guy Brown's module: COM4510 (Software Development for Mobile Devices). They especially enjoyed having guest lectures and interactive lectures and are sad the module is now over.

Action: MPS to pass comments onto Guy Brown

4. Election of TeachCom student representative and PG Faculty Student Representative

Noted: Joe MacMahon was voted in as the TeachCom Student Representative. JM also requested to stand down as the SSLCOM student chair.

Noted: LMB and SB both asked to be considered to be the Student Chair

Action: KMR to set up a vote for the Student Chair.

Noted: No PG students were interested in being the PG Faculty Student Representative

Action: MPS to find out more information on what being a faculty student representative entails.

5. NSS results

Noted: RMS explained that the NSS survey is completed by final year students in January and February. SB added that the results of the NSS are used in Unistats and UCAS course finder so it is really important that they get completed.

Noted: RMS explained that last year a lot of effort was put into improving processes relating to assessment and feedback as a result of the NSS. If the department are concerned about any of the feedback then they will take action.

Noted: The results for the Learning Resources for the department are below average and were not as good as the previous year. Some of the student representatives thought this could be due to the limited availability of some core text books. They also suggested that lecturers should check that a book is in the library before recommending it as reading. It was also suggested that students may be unhappy with the limited opening hours of the Lewin Computer Room and that specialist software is not available on CiCS computers.

Noted: The Department's score for Personal Development was lower than the University average. RMS commented that this is an area which needs to be looked at. The student representatives thought mock interviews with their tutor or an academic in the department who isn't their tutor (so less familiar) would be a good idea. They also thought it would be good to emphasise group work and effective communication skills. KMR asked if anyone went to the careers week but there were no final year students at the meeting to answer. MPS commented that the careers service do mock interviews.

Action: RMS/MPS to ask year tutors in the January TeachCom how to improve personal development and to ask about doing mock interviews for second year students.

6. Any other business

Noted: MPS asked the student representatives if they would be interested in courses offered by the library on subjects such as how to write a project or dissertation. The student representatives all said they would be interested.

Action: MPS to reply to message from the library services.

Noted: MPS reminded students about the SURE scheme where students can apply to do research style internships over the summer.

Noted: Students were reminded that they can nominate their favourite lecturer.

Noted: All members were reminded that the Computer Science Society are running a coding competition which everyone is invited to attend.

7. Date of next meeting

Noted: The next meeting will be on Wednesday 24 April 2013