Computer Science
Student Staff Liaison Committee

Tuesday 1st May 2012, 1pm, 2.19a MVB

Present:
Staff – Ian Holyer (IH, Chair), Lesley Watson (LW, SSLC Co-ordinator), Rob Thomas (RT, IT rep),
Students –
1st Year: Charlie McNeill (CM), Andrew Pryde (AP)
2nd Year: No Reps present
3rd Year: James Ansell (JA), Rajitha Ratnam (RR), Shyam Balu (SB – CSE)
4th Year: Luke Drury (LD), Jonathan Finerty (JF)
MSc: Barry Laffoy (BL), Ruthie Hambley (RH), Long Pham (LP), Tony Xu (TX), Xiaochuan Wu (XW)

1. Apologies
   Miranda Aperghis (2nd Year) & Chris Bainbridge (2nd Year CSE)

2. Minutes
2.1. RT noted that discussions regarding DropBox are ongoing. There are security concerns, especially with Windows.
2.2. Minutes approved.

3. Department Matters
None noted.

4. 3rd Year
4.1 RR raised the issue of coursework in the few weeks before exams – there are many pieces of coursework with high weighting to be handed in at the same time. Is it possible to spread this out? Could coursework only units be in TB1? Would it be possible to have a coursework-free week before exams?
SB noted that CSE students had the same issue, especially with their 40cp project and another 2 pieces of coursework due on the same day.
   IH stated that it would be difficult to move the coursework only units to TB1, but that he will ensure coursework level at this time of year will be looked at in the unit review.

4.2 Choosing options – students were given a short deadline to select units and couldn’t see all feedback for units on SAFE. Also students going into 4th year were given no information on the split of units per semester.
IH noted that the deadline was sooner than the dept expected and he will ask the Faculty to give more notice in future. He also reminded everyone that this is a planning deadline for the Uni for timetabling and that students have until the end of October to finalise units.
Post meeting note: the issue of seeing feedback on SAFE has been raised with the Faculty and they are looking at how to disseminate feedback on units more adequately.
Also in relation to split of units – this was covered in the games meeting held by Colin Dalton for current 3rd years and in an email sent on 20th April, however for next year this information will be given further in advance.
4.3 Booths in MVB – they seem to be full of non-MVB students who are not using them for work. Is there any way of putting up signs?
   ➢ LW to ask Hayley if that is possible.

4.4 Back lab – students on the Embedded Systems unit are finding it difficult to find Windows computers for coursework – the software is only on Windows.
   ➢ IH to investigate this.

4.5 AI & Logic Programming – there is not enough AI content in it.
   ➢ IH to speak with Unit Organiser.

4.6 Computational Neuroscience – appears to cater more for Psychology students and the coursework was worth so little that many students did not do it.
   ➢ IH to speak with Unit Organiser, but did note that the unit was designed to be of broader appeal.

4.7 3 assessments per unit policy – how will this work in practice? RR noted that students would rather have a greater number of smaller pieces of coursework.
IH stated that the CS dept were thinking about making an academic case for more coursework as it benefits the course.

5. 1st Year
5.1 Continuous Maths – AP raised the issue that the past papers are making the exam look very difficult and students were panicking. Would it be possible to have something sent out officially with a list of topics to look at for the exam? CM noted that the course finished 3 months ago and asked if it would be possible to have a revision lecture.
AP suggested for future that the unit is either examined in January or revision/problem classes are scheduled before the exam.
IH noted that an agreement had been made that the pace of the unit was too fast and that sections of the syllabus would be dropped.
   ➢ IH to speak with Colin Campbell to email a list of topics and to look at the possibility of a revision class.
JF added that each unit goes over the maths needed to perhaps some more content of Continuous Maths could be cut.
AP felt that more understanding of what was covered in A-level Maths was needed.

5.2 Jan Exams – students were asking if TB1 units could be examined in January.
IH replied that the Uni is planning to move towards having more exams in January. The Dept will hold off until they get official University policy.

5.3 Computer Architecture Coursework – the coursework went up a week later than it should have – students feel they should have automatically been given an extension – there was too much to do in too short a time. CM spoke with Simon Hollis – the deadline used to be after Easter but it changed this year. It would be better to have that time.
It was also felt that 25% is not representative for the amount of work put in for a 10cp unit.
   ➢ IH to speak with unit organiser - to be looked at in the unit review.

6. 2nd Year
No Rep present
7. **4th Year**

7.1 Business Plan – there are many concerns about this unit.  
It was a 20cp unit, reduced to 10cp this year but the level of work has remained the same.  
Students are unhappy with the content and feel it is drifting away from CS. The examples used are 
not technological and there are no case studies of modern companies.  
Slides from the 1st year High Tech course are reused.  
3 hour lectures are too long and not beneficial.  
➢ IH to speak with Neill Campbell and will bring these comments into the review of the unit.  
(The 1st year Reps noted that many feel the same about the 1st year High Tech unit)

7.2 Content on Blackboard – more unit organisers are placing content on Blackboard rather than the 
CS website and students feel the Blackboard system is not useful.  
IH: Blackboard is the Uni system and the dept is being pressured to use it instead of their own 
system.

7.3 Feedback – 4th years have not received feedback on anything submitted this year, they have only 
been given marks. (eg, Law & IT).  
➢ IH to reiterate to Unit Organisers that they should be giving feedback.

7.4 SAFE issues: 
cohort ranking – can work out who is who from the units taken  
averages are calculated incorrectly  
➢ IH to look at these.

8. **CSE Reps**  
All issues have been brought up by the year group reps.

9. **MSc**  
**Machine Learning**  
10.1 It would be useful if lecturers could introduce themselves and their current research (perhaps 
at the beginning of their lecture classes where usually all students attend). The reason for this is 
some people are not happy with their current project supervisor.

10.2 A class of cultural introduction would be helpful as most MSc students are international and/or 
coming to the UK for the first time.  
➢ LW to find out if the International Office run anything that would address this.

10.3 A class to help with academic writing would be also helpful as students have to write academic 
reports and thesis during the year.

10.4 In total 80 units for the whole project might be too much (20 for research skills and 60 for 
actual project). Perhaps 20+40 credits would be more suitable or just 60 credits with (no credit) 
research skills.  
IH replied that the University set the credit points for the research skills for every MSc student, not 
just in the Engineering Faculty.
10.5 Students feel that video lectures would be helpful and would be good for Bristol Uni as they are becoming more popular in the US. IH: the school & university are currently looking into that.

Internet Securities
10.6 Many students are worried about the upcoming exam and are spending too much time on coursework.
   ➢ IH to find out about the coursework level for MSc students.

Computer Science
10.7 Java course – RH reported that many students are finding the course too easy and would like more assignments/labs. Suggestion that the unit be structured more like the C unit.
   ➢ IH noted that it should be more like the 1st year undergrad unit – will feed that into the unit review.

10.8 Coursework turnaround – BL noted that students are not receiving marks in a timely manner.
   ➢ IH to speak with lecturers about releasing marks – should be within the 3 week time period.

10. IT Matters
RT informed Reps of the following issues:
   • MV85.01 out of use on Thurs 4th/Fri 5th May as computers being rebuilt – they will be wiped.
   • IT would like feedback from students on how the teaching labs are running.
   • Eating & drinking in labs – could reps please remind fellow students of the Faculty policy of no eating/drinking in labs (other than water in bottles)

The Year Reps feel that there are not enough lab resources and space is stretched.
RT stated that there is a rolling policy of updating equipment and the key labs would be updated.

11. AoB
Space in MVB – students would like more group workspace.
Post meeting note: the tables downstairs in the Atrium have been replaced with bigger tables and there will be more of these going in (to replace the low chairs under the stairs). The booth tables are also being replaced with better ones.
If students have any suggestions of anything else for the space, please let LW know.

12. Next Meeting
   Next Academic Year