

**Computer Science
Student Staff Liaison Committee
Friday 8th February 2013, 1pm, 4.01 MVB**

Present

Staff -

Lesley Jones (LJ, Chair & SSLC Co-ordinator), Andrew Calway (AC, HoD), Dan Page (DP), Syed Rahman (SR, IT rep), Anthony Croxford (ACr, Faculty rep), Donna Exon-Bartlett (DEB, minutes)

Students -

Yr 1: Sahaj Sawhney (SS), Hazel Doughty (HD)

Yr 2: Andrew Pryde (AP), Alfred Omacher (AO)

Yr 3: Ved Uttamchandani (VU), Amir Chohan (AmC)

Yr 4: Mark Wonnacott (MW)

MSc: Shannon Yew (SY), Olukunle Akinwusi (OA), Parimala Narayanan (PN), Vijay Kumar (VK), Apollos Ezeogu (AE)

1. Apologies

No apologies received.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting for approval

Minutes from previous meeting approved.

3. Departmental Matters to Report/Discuss

3.1 BCS Accreditation & School Review

BCS Accreditation is taking place on 28th February, and our School Review is taking place on 11th/12th April. We require student help for these 2 important events. Please speak to Lesley if you are able to help.

3.2 **NSS:** final year UG students have been emailed regarding completing the NSS survey. The emails come from the NSS themselves, and not from the school/department. Please forward any ideas to encourage student engagement to Lesley.

3.3 **Curriculum changes** are planned for the next academic year. The changes will mainly affect Yr1, Yr 2 and Yr 4 UG students. The department is keen to receive student opinion and input on the proposed changes. The purpose of the changes is to improve student choice and flexibility.

- *Yr 1 changes:*

- a) To introduce 20 credits of optional units. The department is planning to produce a list of recommended units.
- b) To introduce larger 20 credit units (combining some current 10 credit units).
- c) To introduce 30 credits of Maths units, as there are concerns how maths is currently taught. The plan is to teach this in house, rather than being taught by the EMAT department.

- *Yr 2 changes:*

To introduce 30 credits of optional units. These can be open units or departmental units.

- *Yr 4 changes:*

Final year project to be a full time unit in TB2, meaning all Yr 4 options will take place in TB1. Two new units have also been introduced: Interactive Devices and Cloud Computing. These changes have been motivated by student feedback. All current Yr 3 students have been consulted on the changes.

AC invited opinion from the committee:

- Concerns were raised by AP regarding making Theoretical CS unit optional. AC informed the committee there is no intention of moving away from the theoretical element of the curriculum. The changes are being put forward to offer flexibility to all students.
- AmC mentioned some units, for eg Advanced Algorithms, relied heavily upon students knowing background information. AC informed committee members pre requisites will be made clear in advance. The department is moving away from too many pre requisites being required.
- AP mentioned in Yr1 the same material is covered multiple times in different lectures, and therefore lecturer communication needs to be improved. AC mentioned although sometimes repeating material in a coherent way can be useful, this will be addressed.
- Change to University year means that from Sept 2013 all TB1 units will be assessed at the end of TB1. This is a university wide change. Concerns were raised regarding coursework workload over Christmas, combined with exams taking place. AC agreed coursework in general is high. Introducing 20 credit units is one way to deal with this issue. MW mentioned changing Yr 4 units to 20 credits. AC replied this would not offer enough choice.
- **ACTION: AC and LJ encouraged reps to gain feedback from their cohorts on the curriculum changes, and pass feedback to the department.**

4. Year 1 Reps

- 4.1 HD: no lab session was held for Principles of Programming, therefore students did not submit coursework. AC has discussed this issue with Conor Houghton.
- 4.2 SS: Issues with too long a period of time in between lectures. LJ informed the committee that timetabling is a complicated issue. However, if students have any thoughts on timetabling issues, she is happy to pass them on to the timetabling team.
- 4.3 At start of term, the lecturer for Procedural Programming did not turn up. AC has had discussions with Mike Fraser about this, as there was an issue with the uniformed timetable. AC apologised on Mike's behalf.
- 4.4 Whiteboard markers not working in lecture rooms. The school will ensure whiteboard markers are available to staff in the school office.

5. Year 2 Reps

- 5.1 AO informed the committee that the unit tutorials are beneficial, however there are issues with the current system. Students have to sign up to tutorials, even if they have no interest, resulting in students who are interested in a particular tutorial missing out as they are full up.

Current numbers are limited to 6, and this is not enough. AC informed students there are good reasons for limiting the numbers to 6.

- Action: AC to speak to Tilo about how students are allocated to tutorials, and the option of running more tutorials. A review of the tutorial sign up system may need to take place.

VU suggested maybe the tutorials could be worth 10 credits. DP informed the committee this is a wider problem, as the issue of how these are assessed would need to be addressed.

5.2 AO: No current information is available regarding next year's 3rd year Maths & CS project.

- Action: AC will speak to Bogdan about this.

5.3 AP raised the issue of poor communication between lecturers regarding coursework deadlines.

- Action: AC to investigate how to communicate these more effectively.

5.4 Concern over weightings of coursework for some units, for example, Computer Architecture, with students spending a lot of time on coursework which did not count for much. Could the scope of the coursework be reduced, or the weighting increased?

5.5 SPS: concerns raised over groups for coursework as students were randomly assigned to their groups, rather than having the choice of whom they would like to work with.

- Action: AC will discuss this with the organisers.

6. Yr 3 Reps

6.1 VU fed back that Colin Dalton's unit was very good, and interactive. However, students are unhappy with the new marking system of letter grading. AC informed the committee, the numbers are in SAFE. However, the lettering is built in to the system and is Faculty policy.

- Action: Students are encouraged to write to the UG dean to express their upset on this issue.

6.2 Computational Genomics marks have not been released. AC informed students the marks are now released, and apologised for the delay, as the unit marker has not been well.

6.3 When are marks for January exams released?

- Action: LJ to chase this up.

6.4 Can lecturers/markers link student numbers to student names on SAFE? AC and ACr informed the committee this cannot happen.

6.5 Unit feedback from last year: students want to be able to access this information. AC informed the committee this was available in previous years, however the Faculty now oversee this and have decided not to release this information. AC apologised to the students, and informed them we are aiming to have this information available within our SAFE system again in the future.

6.6 It was reported that the back lab was too hot.

- Action: LJ will liaise with our porters about this.

6.7 AP asked if we have budget available to have dual headed monitors in 2.11?

- Action: AC will think about this for the future as would like to redesign the lab.

7. Yr 4 Reps

7.1 The Union Annual Meeting - scheduled to take place at the same time as a Business Plan lecture, however the Business Plan lecture could not be rescheduled. If this is known in advance by staff then should be rescheduled.

- 7.2 The Business plan is 10 credits this year, but the feeling amongst students is it should be worth 20 credits.
- 7.3 EMAT units in Yr3 and Yr4: students are not enthused by the material, and feel the material should be more related to CS. LJ commented that the EMat dept runs student forums for their units and this should be fed back there.
- 7.4 The atrium roof needs cleaning!
- 7.5 What is the policy on lecture slides? AC informed students all slides should be available online.
 - Action: AC will speak to David May re: Computer Architecture slides
- 7.6 Systems Security unit: students thought the unit would be applied, rather than theoretical. AC will speak with the unit organiser to discuss the unit content. SR informed students the unit was going to be a practical unit however, at the last minute the university declined to give the go ahead on IT.
 - Action: AC will investigate this.

8. MSc

- 8.1 Cryptography A: VK fed back that students enjoyed the teaching of Dan Page and Bogdan Warinschi
- 8.2 Library books: there appears to be a shortage of certain books.
 - Action: students to email LJ with the names of the books and she will request the library purchase more copies.
- 8.3 Computer Graphics: PN fed back a request for lab assistants
 - Action: AC to speak with Unit Organiser
- 8.4 Communication with staff: many academic staff are poor at responding to emails and it is not clear when they will be in their offices as students cannot see their timetables.
 - Action: AC will speak with staff about communication with students.
- 8.5 Integrated Circuit Electronics – AE reported that students on the unit felt the subject areas should have been taught the other way around
- 8.6 VLSI Design – if it was moved to TB1 that unit would help with understanding of Integrated Circuit Electronics
 - Action: LJ to feedback this info to the EE Dept

9. AOB

LJ informed the committee she is leaving the university the end of February, and therefore will no longer be chairing these meetings. LJ thanked the reps for their time and engagement.

10. Date of next meeting

Friday 3rd May 2013

