

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTING ~ MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
Minutes of the 100-Level Liaison Committee Meeting
15 September 2010 1pm

Present:

Student Representatives	Units	Student ID
Colin Coker	INFO111,ISYS114, COMP125	
Claire Gibson	ISYS100	
Michelle Fox	ISYS114, COMP125	

Staff Representatives	Units
Anthony Tsui	INFO104
Bernard Mans	Head of Department
Christophe Doche	COMP125
Debbie Richards	ISYS114
Manolya Kavakli	ISYS114
Matthew Mansour	ISYS100
Michael Hitchens	INFO111
Mike Johnson	Chair
Richard Miller	Science IT, Labs
Ros Ballantyne	COMP125
Melina Chan	Executive Officer
Fiona Yang	Minutes

Apologies:

Meeting started at 1:05pm

MJ welcomed all for attending the meeting.

UNIT MATTERS

ISYS100: Unit Convenor – Matthew Mansour

Lectures:

- Student rep commented that there were no particular issues or problems regarding this unit.

Assignments:

- Students have been required to complete a group assignment. Generally, students understand the importance of group work.
- MM would like to know if students had any issue forming into groups.
- Student rep reported that in her class, there was no particular issue. Groups were formed naturally. However, it would be greatly helpful if students were assigned into groups, rather than left alone to form groups on their own.
- MJ asked about the nature of the assignment
- Student rep advised that the assignment required students, in groups of four, to set up a blog with at least five updates, and allow others to post comments. She further explained that her group's choice was a gossip blog that would talk about sports, music etc, and completing this assignment was great fun.
- RB asked how the assignment would be assessed.
- Student rep replied that they were required to update status on tweeter, and their log on details would be recorded on wiki on the blog, so everyone's input would be recorded.
- MM further explained that students also needed to generate reports so that tutors can assess the interaction level of each person. This assessment approach worked well in teaching of this unit last semester, and hopefully it will work just as well this time.
- MM commented that this group assignment was designed for continuous learning, as it relates to later assignment, and the final presentation at the end of semester, where student in groups would present their projects regarding their blogs.
- Student rep agreed that it was great that they were able to incorporate java script into their project.

General:

- MJ summaries that this unit has been well presented, interesting, and it keeps everyone focused.

COMP125: Unit Convenor – Christophe Doche

General:

- Student rep advised that people enrolled in this unit had very extreme comments about the unit: some love it, while the others do not.
- MJ commented that this might be a sign that the unit was moving along the right track and the responses were diverse.
- CD disagreed and he was concerned that there was a wide range of ability levels within this unit. It seemed that some students already had more than enough knowledge to be attending this unit, while some others simply could not cope. He believed that although students were required to pass COMP115 before enrolling into COMP125, there seemed to be huge gaps in students knowledge level. He wondered if it would be a good time to break this unit into two separate ones to cater for different needs of students.
- RB suggested that in the past catch up classes were offered to help those students who might have difficulty with the unit.
- CD believed that he might also organise some catch-up classes during the semester break, and he would e-mail students regarding these classes.
- MJ commented that although students level varied, this unit still would offer a chance for them to try out their interest or ability in IT, or otherwise they could move into IS instead. MJ asked if this idea would be possible that students were able to pass this unit, and still gain enough understanding that IT was not their best option.
- CD could not provide an affirmative reply to MJ's question. However, he still believed that if there were a bridging course between COMP115 and COMP125, students would find out if they had enough programming skills to move onto COMP125 earlier.
- MH raised the concern that the bridging course would delay student's study by another semester.
- Student rep suggested that after he spoke to a few who struggled with the unit, they did not think the challenge was the language programming itself, but rather the concept and implementation of problem solving.
- CD wondered if these students had trouble understanding the syntax of this unit.
- MM suggested that students should probably attend some logic related courses, which would be greatly beneficial to their understanding of programming.
- MH pointed out that if the logic courses could be however so theoretical that the students might simply give up.

Lectures:

- Student rep believed that out of the eight units he enrolled in, COMP125 would be one with most essential knowledge. He thought the lecturers were great and he noticed that changes were

made regarding suggestions from last meeting about break time.

Assignments:

- Student rep referred to the assignment as challenging but interesting, and she thought it was a good thing.
- Student rep mentioned that some of the students still have issue with Mahara.
- CD hoped that during the break, people would start submission in Mahara by creating and submitting portfolios and he would allow extra time for this during semester break.
- RB added that she was having connection problem with Mahara compared to Moodle.
- Student rep did not think there was any performance issue; however, he believed the Mahara forum interface might be a problem. He noticed some confusion among students regarding location of test to be held Thursday.
 - Action: CD would send out email to students to clarify test details. He also confirmed that all related details were published in unit homepage already.

Labs:

- Student rep believed everything was okay regarding labs, although in mixed classes, it was not possible to have everything covered due to the time limit.

ISYS114: Unit Convenor – Debbie Richards

Lectures:

- Student rep confirmed that there was not much feedback regarding this unit, and everything was fine.
- DR addressed the issue regarding the different slides provided during lectures, and with iLectures. She said that there were four people teaching this unit, and one of the lecturers preferred to leave a few surprises in the slides of iLectures. She thought that students should not leave all the slides till the end of semester, and they would not have enough time to go over them all.
- MM added that he noticed a lot of students chose to download the mp3 version of the iLectures, rather than the mp4 version due to the size difference.
- Student rep reported that class attendance dropped by nearly half in her class, and the tutorial attendance was not great for Friday class.
- Student rep commented that during a lecture given by MK, two

distinctively different teaching styles were involved. For the first half of the lecture, the lecture was based on the assigned textbook, and it was a bit dry. As MK moved onto the second part, when she was touching upon the materials she prepared, she was very passionate, and the whole atmosphere had a great change.

- DR asked if the student reps thought it was worth having the textbook.
 - One rep said she liked the textbook, and another said that he considered the textbook to be a filter, and the slides provided with it had lots of information straight from the textbook.
 - MM wondered if an e-book would be available.
 - DR replied that unfortunately there were not many choices of textbooks. With the current textbook, it has break-up boxes and provides case studies, and it allows students to explore in their own time. DR may consider only provide slides for this unit if no suitable alternative textbook can be located.
 - Student rep advised that most students were excited about moving into the database modules.
 - DR advised Hyper-Case was dropped according to students negative feedback.
 - MJ concluded that concerning issues raised in last liaison meeting, there was a blended outcome: students came to have a better understanding of the unit, and staff made effort to make changes.
 - Student rep also added that during Jian's lectures, she provided new sets of slides, which had 5-6 points per slides. Student wondered if there would be better ways to utilize PowerPoints.
 - Student rep mentioned that during one of Jian's lectures, she made reference to ISYS104, while some students might not have taken that unit before, and it was not a pre-requisites to ISYS114.
 - DR commented that she believed that Jian was trying to add value to those who did study ISYS104 before, while others were not expected to know and if they wished, they could self-study regarding the points related. It would be a strategy to getting knowledge across to some students and perfectly reasonable to do so. Alternatively, DR could ask lecturers not to refer at all.
- Action: DR will email Jian about this issue.

Tutorials and Practicals:

- MM added that tutorial classes were good, and he liked the timeframe provided. All in all the feedback was positive.
- MM also commented that the best thing he found about this unit was there was some alignment in the practical and tutorial classes.
- Student rep commented that there was more relevance in prac classes than the beginning of semester, and DR confirmed that moving further into database modules, it would be even more so.
- Student commented that tutorial questions for submission that week had been posted late – on Saturday

- DR advised that late submission for this week's submission had been allowed after some students had raised this issue.

Assignments:

- Student rep said that the assignment on Moodle that was due Friday was vague and there seemed to be some contradictions in the description. Students were confused by the sequence of the description and not sure what was being asked.
- DR advised that late submission during semester break would be allowed for this assignment.

(MK entered meeting room and MJ briefed MK of earlier comments relating to her lectures.)

- Student rep commented positively that they could see MK posted comments at 2am in the morning via Moodle in regards to the questions raised by students.
- MK further explained that there was a deliberate delay in provide responses so that this would not disadvantage those students who already understood the question, and went through the thinking process by detailing what their thoughts were in their posts in Moodle.
- DR added that they would respond to students individually if these students did all the thinking and seemed to be on the right direction. They would not wish to disclose all the details or share the hard work of these students to others. Also students are expected to work things out themselves.
- Student rep questioned if there was any relevance in the sequence diagram and the assumption.
- MM said that students should provide their own assumptions.
- MK also mentioned that in the Moodle forum, students would better start with their own system, compare it with Sequence Diagram, and note the difference.
- Student rep believed it would be much more helpful if the assignment would illustrate that students were expected to make their own assumptions aiming for a better outcome. Assumption based assignments always appeared vague to students.
- MJ commented that making assumptions would be part of the learning experience, especially for those students who just left school.

INFO111: Unit Convenor – Michael Hitchens

General:

- MH commented that everything was good and students were

enjoying the lectures.

- MH also provided feedback regarding several issues raised in last meeting. Regarding the game log in issue, he checked with the technical support team and found out that the error only occurred when users tried to access multiplayer mode, which was not intended for this unit. Concerning submission in Moodle, MH was convinced that the current submission mode seemed to be the best way still.
- CD suggested MH to create single submission point for each class and tutors could use advance search to locate submissions of their classes.
- MH re-assured that this unit was not focusing on one particular aspect of games. It was a general unit to ask people to think about games in every possible way. He also said that the assumption was that students enrolled in this unit would like games, have played many games, and would like to talk about games.
- Student rep questioned the above statement and he thought from the academic point of view, this unit should be presented to non-gamers as well.
- MH agreed that playing games takes time, but the two-hour prac classes each week should provide even the non-gamers enough experience with playing games. This unit runs on the concept that before coming to university the average student has spent more time playing video games than they have spent reading books. This unit provides many ways to think of games (story, social, entertainment etc.) and would only offer knowledge on a shallow level as a 100 level unit. This unit does not intent to duplicate the technology-based unit, such as the game design course offered in UTS, as they have a different approach and are more technical. At MQ, it is not just about technical knowledge; there are other ways to think about games. When lots of scripting was involved last year, there were many complaints from students. MH suggested that this unit was not a traditional IT unit to teach people how to create games, which needs all kinds of softwares to support. . This unit does have an IT component and is suitable for both IT students, and Media students.
- CD suggested that MH put the above understanding into course outline on the web. MH agreed this would be a good idea.
 - **Action:** MH will add description of nature of unit into course home page.
- MJ asked if there would be any way to attract more student reps to attend liaison meetings. MH explained that most students were probably busy with their assignment when the meeting was held, hence the low attendance rate from this unit.

Assignments:

- Student rep believed that his last assignment was marked harshly as there was confusion regarding the length of the assignment.
- MH suggested student to talk to his tutor regarding this and hopefully this issue could be resolved.
- Student rep also expressed concern that his work was not judged fairly when he was giving presentation in the second week. The tutor commented on his presentation as lack connection with fellow students. However, he thought in earlier weeks, students were still shy and had not had much involvement with the materials. While for those students due for presentation towards the end of semester, they have longer time to prepare and would have better connection with others.
- MH understood the concern. He would speak to the tutors and ensure they could take into consideration the preparation time difference when they are marking the student presentations.
 - **Action:** MH to address above issue to tutors.

INFO104: Unit Convenor – Anthony Tsui

- No student representative of this unit was present.

General:

- AT summarized the unit as one that did not require technical background while filling the knowledge gap for those who would need some IT skills for work or study. For example, one of his students in this unit is a doctor, who was never trained in IT courses, but found it necessary to learn for her workplace.
- AT also explained that this unit would be marked based on seven module tests, one mid-semester test (in class) plus a group assignment. The tests are all close-book tests and are extensions of basic concepts in IT. There are multiple-choice questions to test the real ability of students. So far, the test results were good.
- MJ asked if this unit offered the ICDL assessment items.
- AT confirmed that this unit was built on ICDL test basis and accreditation would be granted to those who pass the test.
- AT said that most students found the modules straight-forward

Lectures:

- Given the time needed for tests, AT found the time allowed for lecture a bit rushed. He would possibly re-structure the unit with extended classes if needed.
- AT confirmed that students provided positive feedback in general. A number of found the unit more challenging than they expected.
- AT also advised that as the UK body that looked after the ICDL

licensing changed their desired textbook recently. The change in syllabus did not allow enough time for the publishers to make other arrangements and AT would have to put in extra work and use available materials to fill the gaps.

Assignments:

- AT explained that the group assignment was an IT based research in the business environment, as the practical supplement to the module tests. Students were divided into four groups of four and will provide a report and presentation based on the research on some common questions. In week 13, the students will need to hand in the report and present their work. AT expects to have good outcome from the group work.

Practicals:

- AT advised that the prac classes were conducted on campus this semester where MS Suite 2007 was available. AT therefore migrated practicals to MS version 2007 as well.
- AT confirmed that students were happy with the arrangements.

Other Issues:

- AT addressed the need of training for MS Suite (especially excel) from many people, including uni students. He believed that there were more than enough capable teachers who could offer training of this sort.
- MJ commented that the Computing Department would not focus on pure technical training.
- AT added that in the past ISYS123 covered the content regarding the use of MS softwares; however as this unit was no longer available and such component had not been offered in other units any more.
- MJ believed that this unit might not be a specialised course for IT students.
- CD suggested advertising this unit for more enrolments.

MJ thanked everyone for attending the meeting again and for the valuable input.

The meeting closed at 2:15 pm