

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

Present:

Student Representatives	Units	Student ID
Colin Coker	INFO111,ISYS114, COMP125	
Claire Gibson	ISYS100	
Michelle Fox	ISYS114, COMP125	
Rosemarie Scarano	ISYS100	
Samuel Marks	ISYS114, COMP125	
Yolanda Tedjakusuma	ISYS100	

Staff Representatives	Units
Bernard Mans	Head of Department
Christophe Doche	COMP125
Debbie Richards	ISYS114
Jian Yang	ISYS114
Manning Li	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:

Anthony Tsui

Meeting started at 1:05pm

MJ welcomed all for attending the meeting.

UNIT MATTERS

ISYS100: Unit Convenor – Matthew Mansour

Lectures

- This is a very good unit, which is interesting and well structured. It is society based, rather than computer based and appeals to students with non-computing background.
- Matthew has been a great lecturer and done a wonderful job as the lecturer.

Practicals and Tutorials

- On the other hand, Kristi and Louise are also very good tutors and offer great help to students.
- Students hope that prac class can be two hours instead of one as many students were asking for instructions in first two classes, which took a large part of the class time for actual practice.
- MM advised the duration of prac was actually reduced from 2 hours to 1 hour according to feedback from similar units. He believed that 1-hour prac would be sufficient for following weeks as assignments would be different, and suggested students to make full use of the consultation hour following tutorials to seek assistance.
- MM pointed out that this is the second time the unit is running and has grown in numbers. He is very positive that this unit is a genuine Planet Unit as it caters to all types of students.

General

- There is a good mixture of student backgrounds and the student representatives for this unit present today were from Museum, International Studies, and Visual Arts background.

INFO104: Unit Convenor – Anthony Tsui

- No student representative of this unit was present.

INFO111: Unit Convenor – Michael Hitchens

Unit Matters

- This is an interesting unit and is more than just computer games.
- However, some students found it a bit difficult to see the direction of this unit or clear objectives. MJ agreed that clear and often reiterated context and goals for each unit has always been a concern to the department in teaching and much appreciated the feedback.
- MH commented that this unit was in summary a broad introductory course to computer games, and not a game design course. This unit is designed for people who like computer games. He addressed that it was not possible for the lecturers to go into depth but rather to provide a context for students to understand games.

Practicals

- Regarding the question raised about the gaming engine in use, MH explained that due to the mixed background of students, a lower version of gaming engine instead of a full style one was selected so that media students were able to work with it and all students could work at home using the current one.
- A student reported that the licence for Call of Duty seemed to be missing and Science IT will be working on this to resolve the issue.
- Another comment was that the lecturer did not follow the order of slides during lectures. MH addressed that it was not necessary for lecturers to follow the exact order of slides, and students should sit in classes prepared.

Lectures

- MH would prefer a longer time for lecture each week if possible. It is suggested that Computing Dept could have some discussion with Department of Media to discuss the possibility of extending the lecture time each week.
- A student commented that this unit was good, but not as interesting as ISYS100. MJ asked if anything could be changed to make this unit more interesting and the student advised that this unit could increase the level of difficulty to make it more interesting but this might not be the case for all.

Assignment

- A student asked if the submission page of assignment in Moodle could be re-designed as currently there are 24 submission points and not easy to use. MH explained this was because for the eight tutorial classes, each tutor has extremely limited time to mark the assignment each week. Therefore, 24 submission points were set up to allow each tutor to locate the assignments for their class quicker and there are only three assignments to be submitted for each student.
- CD suggested to create groups in Moodle to resolve this issue.

ISYS114: Unit Convenor – Debbie Richards

Lectures

- Students felt that there are too many slides for the lectures. For the first two weeks, there were approximately 90 pages per lecture. In addition, the slides were texted oriented with little image. However, students noticed some increased interactions in the last lecture. Students also find the lecture component heavily based on the textbook, which may not be the best-written textbook to begin with. Students feel there is a lack of practical skills in this unit.
- It's also mentioned that there were many jargons used in first few lectures, but in preparation of assignments, students were advised not to use jargon, which was confusing.
- MJ explained based on his understanding of the issue that for assignments students should try to avoid using unnecessary jargon and ML confirmed this understanding was correct.
- DR further explained that the first assignment is a Requirement Document that needs to be in the user's language, rather than using technical jargon. However, the first three weeks is an introduction and covers many general concepts with unavoidable jargon, terms and concepts that are foundational to provide the big picture for the rest of the unit. As many chapters were covered in the first three lectures in order to set the scene for students, many slides were used, and she would expect the slides to reduce in number for following weeks depending on the lecture content.
- DR agreed that the textbook chosen did not include all of the content that was to be covered but that publishers had been unable to provide any book or collection of books that had material covering the four areas to be introduced in ISYS114.
- MJ asked if the situation could be diversified that textbook was heavily used in slides. DR responded that textbook should be fully used especially when students paid a large amount of money for it. Also when there are four topic areas and lecturers, the textbook provides a focal point and resource that all parties can refer back to.
- Students should regard the slides as a summary of important points from the chapter discussed each week. Attending the lecture can help students see the important points but unfortunately, only 60 students were present when there should have been 250 for the first two lectures.
- MJ asked if it would be possible to prepare two sets of slides – one with comprehensive details, and the other for use in lectures/ilectures. DR confirmed there was discussion about this among the lecturers but it was decided that students needed to engage with the material and make their own notes and observations about what slides and concepts were more important and which ones we skipped over

Practicals

- A student commented the practicals were a bit confusing and disorganised.
- Also the Hyper Case experience provided by the textbook publisher was very out of touch and not engaging.
- DR clarified that the Hyper Case was not a game but uses hypermedia. The idea is to provide students with an opportunity to gather and analyse requirements information from an organisation like they would in real life rather than having the final material given to them. The lecturers are considering whether Hypercase does add value and further feedback of its more current usage in practical is invited.

COMP125: Unit Convenor – Christophe Doche

Lectures

- This unit has a slow start but picked up really well. Christophe was fantastic lecturer and did a great job. However, the time of this unit is the last three hours of a day, which makes it a bit hard for some students to concentrate.
- The transition from COMP115 into COMP125 was smooth.

Assignments

- Many people do not like the different location of information in Moodle and Mahara. Moodle when used for COMP115 has a great sense of community while now in Mahara for COMP125 there are smaller groups and do not feel as cohesive. Some students experienced technical issues accessing Mahara at the beginning and felt a bit left out when finally connected.
- CD advised that he intentionally left the forum for this unit in Mahara and set up assignment submission via Moodle. It was suggested maybe Mahara could be integrated into Moodle in the future.
- Student also pointed out that the assignment instructions were difficult to follow and CD confirmed that it was designed this way to test students' ability to understand the requirements.

Practicals

- Some students found it a bit confusing during first practical when advised to use either Processing or C++ for their algorithm. CD explained that both languages have similar syntax but different ideas. For the first practical, it was a diagnostic practice, and students were allowed to use either language of their choice to draft the algorithm. This will help tutors to determine the students' knowledge level for future practice.

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

The meeting closed at 2:10 pm