

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

Present:

Student Representatives	Units	Student ID
Kedar Malgaonkar	COMP115	
Samuel Marks	COMP115	
Doug Shearman	COMP115, ISYS100	
Evan Van Cuylenburg	COMP125	

Staff Representatives	Units
Mike Johnson	Chair, COMP188
Ros Ballantyne	COMP125
Matt Cabanag	Science IT/Labs
Matthew Mansour	ISYS100, ISYS104
Tony Sloane	COMP115, Acting Director of Teaching
Dominic Verity	COMP115
Jian Yang	ISYS104, Acting Head of Department
Melina Chan	Executive Officer
Rosemary Elliott	Minutes

Apologies:

Professor Bernard Mans, Dr Christophe Doche.

Meeting started 1:05pm

The Chair welcomed all and invited members to introduce themselves at the meeting. MJ said the liaison meetings provided an opportunity for staff and students to discuss 100-level units in an open atmosphere, and encouraged student representatives to canvass fellow students on issues relating to lectures, tutorials, practicals and assignments for future meetings. Feedback received will assist with improving the units.

UNIT MATTERS

COMP125: Unit Convenor- Ros Ballantyne

Lectures:

- EVC said the lectures were going very well and were easy to understand. The two hours of theory followed by a one-hour practical worked well and the basic exercises were very helpful, particularly for students who had not undertaken COMP115.

Tutorials and Practical:

- EVC commented that the tutorials were very good. The Thursday class was very busy with almost every computer being used and so EVC had rescheduled his tutorial to Tuesday which had approximately 10 students in the class.
- RB explained that Thursday's full class may be a result of the Diagnostic Test which was due in the second week. She will encourage students to return to their original tutorial time so that students will be spread more evenly over the week.
- EVC commented that the two-hour mixed classes included feedback on homework tasks and group efforts on algorithms. It was recognised that students in COMP125 had varied backgrounds.
- The evening offering of 6:00pm – 8:45pm was tiring but satisfactory for students.
- In summary, EVC considered that fellow students were progressing well in the unit.

Labs:

- There was no evidence of any gaming abuse.

Assignment:

- EVC said the assignment was reasonable as long as students commenced it in time. Students had been warned not to start the assignment the night before it was due. It was noted that the automatic submission process was helpful.
- RB commented that she was running some extra previews and encouraged students to take advantage of this.

Diagnostic Test

- RB said the tests were to provide an indication of students' ability to handle components in the unit, eg, calling functions, logic puzzles, and exposure to C++ syntax, and to highlight areas which required further work. Students who did not do well could be identified early in the semester.
- TS asked about the material covered in lectures. RB said the first two hours of the lecture covered the core material, and the third hour provided examples, eg filling in gaps in syntax, extra quizzes in calling functions.
- JY asked if there had been any problems with late enrolment. RB advised that there had been a few late enrolments, and it was noted that a supplementary diagnostic test had been organised.
- There was general discussion about use of C++ in COMP125. MC commented that he and other staff would be running a programming competition on 27th March and would notify students in COMP125 and COMP225 about this event. Teams would be formed, with the goal to represent Macquarie at the ACM programming competition. MJ highly recommended student involvement in these activities.

Action Points:

- *RB to advise students to adhere to original tutorial times so that numbers are spread more evenly in tutorials over the week.*
- *JY and MM to encourage students in ISYS100 and ISYS104 to attend future liaison meetings for input and feedback from fellow students.*

- *MC to notify students about the programming competition on 27th March 2010.*

ISYS100: Unit Convenor – Matthew Mansour

Lectures:

- DS said the lectures were vibrant and easy to understand.
- DS commented that the cancellation of the evening offering of the unit had caused some problems for students. TS said the evening lecture had to be cancelled because it was not economically viable to run the unit. It was regrettable that short notice had been given – this is extremely rare - however, the introduction of the new curriculum had posed some new administrative challenges and processes will be improved for next year.
- MM reported that he had gone to the first evening lecture and as approximately 30 students had attended he had showed them what would be covered in the lecture.
- There was some discussion about whether the unit had been a designated People and Planet Unit for IT students. Some students had chosen INFO104 because they were uncertain about this.

Tutorials and Practicals:

- DS said his tutor is very knowledgeable and gives clear instructions to students about what is required from them. The sessions are informative and fun. The topics for tutorial presentations had run reasonably well and included: The greening of IT and how mobile phones have changed the way we communicate in society.
- MM reported that the unit is doing very well. There are currently 150 students enrolled for second semester and he expects this to increase to over 200.

Assignments:

- There were no issues raised.

Labs:

- There was some discussion about whether the Platypus server was being used for web publishing. MC reported that the issue relates to the complexity of setting the permissions. COMP249 and COMP348 students are expected to be able to undertake the steps required which involve logging into Unix using SSH and entering a series of commands. MC will investigate whether we can make this easier for ISYS100 students.

Action Points:

- *MC to follow-up on setting the permissions for ISYS100 students.*

ISYS104: Unit convenor- Jian Yiang

- SM commented that he had undertaken this unit for one week but had then changed to a Japanese unit. He commented on the first assignment which included marks for changing fonts and highlighting text.
- MM explained that the first assignment was a diagnostic test used to flag students who are having difficulty in the unit. Convenors should emphasise that the first test is diagnostic and not intended to challenge

students. The second assignment includes exercises in pivot tables, combining functions etc.

- DS also expressed concern that first-year students had been unaware that they would need to select a major during the enrolment period and that many students had been uncertain about this process.
- DS said it had been difficult to get general advice about People and Planet Units during the enrolment period. It was noted that the actual selection of People and Planet Units was entirely up to the student – academic advisers had been told not to prescribe units for students. It was recognised that issues relating to transition had made enrolment difficult for students this year and will be improved for future sessions. TS said his understanding was that there had been a general advising session on People and Planet Units during enrolment. SM also asked if information on People and Planet Units on the website could be set out in a more user-friendly way.

Action Points:

- *MJ to consult with the Faculty Office re issues relating to student selection of majors during the advising session.*
- *RE to follow-up with appropriate staff regarding the possibility of making People and Planet Unit information on the website more easily accessible to students.*

COMP115 – Tony Sloane, Dominic Verity

Lectures:

- KM commented that from his discussions with fellow students it appeared that lectures were proceeding well.

Tutorials:

- The tutorials are informative and running smoothly.
- DS commented that course notes were well explained. A few students had commented that the work seemed a little easy, but it was recognised that some students did not have a background in computing.
- TS commented that this year's tutors were enthusiastic and most had previously taught in COMP115.

Labs:

- Two hours is adequate time to cover the material in practicals.
- KM commented that access to student account numbers in some labs seemed to be an issue. MC advised that there are first, second and third year separations in place to avoid overcrowding in labs. The first year labs are E6A110 and E6A112.

Assignments:

- Recognising that students come from very different backgrounds, DS asked about the basic set of standards that needs to be adhered to in assignments.
- TS commented that rather than prescribing a set of standards, convenors of first year units prefer students to be creative and develop their own style.

- DV pointed out that consistency in the use of standards rather than use of a set of standards is important for students. If convenors require a particular standard to be used, they will advise students.
- MJ said students will have the opportunity to engage in independent learning of new languages in units such as COMP226 and COMP342.
- It was noted that the second assignment will cater for the varying level of skills of students; it is likely that for the High Distinction section (85 - 100 marks), students will be invited to devise a task/topic.

General:

- TS asked about students' views on Processing in COMP115 this year. SM considered it to be a level of abstraction. DS said he understood the theory because of his business background; the actual playing with graphics is hard. TS said the idea was to make Processing more accessible to students by using animations etc. Students will be able to apply concepts such as syntax and loops to other 100 and 200 level units.

MJ thanked the student representatives for attending the meeting and reminded members that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 20th April 2010 (the week that classes resume). Student representatives were encouraged to canvass their fellow students regarding any issues relating to 100-level units. A useful checklist of points for consideration is available at: http://www.comp.mq.edu.au/undergrad/info/liaison/100-level/Student_Liaison_Rep_Checklist.pdf

The meeting closed at 2:00pm.