DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTING ~ MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
Minutes of the 200-Level Liaison Committee Meeting

4th April 2011 1pm

Present:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Representatives</th>
<th>Units</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colin Coker</td>
<td>ISYS254, COMP225, COMP249</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samuel Marks</td>
<td>COMP225, COMP247, COMP249</td>
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<th>Staff Representatives</th>
<th>Units</th>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Johnson (MJ)</td>
<td>Chair of the Committee</td>
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<td>Bernard Mans (BM)</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
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<td>Igor Shparlinski (IS)</td>
<td>COMP225</td>
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<td>Len Hamey (LH)</td>
<td>COMP247</td>
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<td>Rajan Shankaran (RS)</td>
<td>COMP247</td>
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<td>Diego Molla-Aliod</td>
<td>COMP249</td>
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<td>Yan Wang (YW)</td>
<td>ISYS254</td>
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<td>Guanfeng Liu (GL)</td>
<td>ISYS254</td>
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<td>Richard Miller (RM)</td>
<td>ScienceIT</td>
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<td>Darius Taslim (DT)</td>
<td>ScienceIT</td>
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<td>Melina Chan (MC)</td>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
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<td>Fiona Yang (FY)</td>
<td>Department Administrator (Minutes)</td>
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Apologies:
- Christophe Doche (Director of Teaching)
- Steve Cassidy (Unit Convenor of COMP249)
Meeting started at 1:05pm

MJ welcomed all for attending the meeting and asked the unit lecturers to remind students of the upcoming semester break.

Unit Matters

COMP225: Unit Convenor – Igor Shparlinski

Lectures:

- MD will be starting teaching from next week.

Assignments:

- Student Representative: Enjoy the unit more and both assignments have been great, although challenging.
- Stu Rep asked why there was a long break between two assignments, and IS advised that was because he was asked to allow more time for students to complete the first one.
- Stu Rep also raised concern that the assignment results were not provided as soon as they expected. IS apologised that due to time restraints, there was some delay. He also mentioned that all assignments were good.
- Stu Rep suggested that a few students dropped the unit because they found the unit too mathematical and they did not enjoy it as much. They are mostly BIT students.
- IS asked the Stu Reps if the students have picked partners for assignment two. Stu Rep confirmed yes. MJ asked if assignment two would be a group assignment and if IS had provided any guidance to students regarding how to work in groups. IS suggested this was a group assignment and there should be two students in each group. He did not actually provide much guidance regarding how they should work in groups, but this would not be the first time they were required to work this way. However he would send an email to students to provide some guidance, not to make the assignment easier, but to make the learning experience better. Stu Rep also believed that they would be able to help each other to complete the group assignment.

Labs:

- Stu Rep also asked if standard XML library could be installed. RM confirmed yes and further advised that students could put in specific requests to recommend what other libraries need to be installed.
Practicals:

- Stu Rep raised an issue that during the last quiz many students had trouble subnetting. He believed that they may need some instructions before the quiz.
- LH explained that this topic was covered in lectures with and he also provided guide to students too. As lots of time has already been spent on this topic, it will be a repetition if this is to be discussed again during quizzes.
- Stu Rep suggested that the tutor of the Thursday night class gave a ten minute brief explanation, and most students got the idea straight away. LH will acknowledge the positive comments to this tutor.

Lectures:

- Stu Rep commented that the lecture room – T3 was not a comfortable room to sit in. LH agreed but although request was put in to change the venue, no bigger lecture room could be provided. It would not be easy to accommodate all requests at the same time. Unfortunately T3 was not an ideal lecture room, regarding seating arrangements, as well as position of data projector ect.
- MJ suggested that lecturers could probably offer more break times, which might help in some way.
- Stu Rep wondered if the worksheet format could be changed. Currently the work sheet has 16 pages of questions, rather than problems that students could work on. RS explained that configuring Cisco was difficult, which was why a trouble-shoot sheet was provided to help students learn to configure. LH commented that what the students wanted was good, however he also agreed with Rajan that doing this with Cisco command was not possible. Any little mistake would fail the whole process, which was why it must be very hand-holding to show students how things were done in the right way.
- MJ added that there were always the choice of teaching method of either by showing “here are the steps”, or “here are what you need to solve”. Personally he would prefer a combination of both methods, but for this unit it probably only allowed one to be adopted.
- RS further added that as this unit did not focus on teaching CISCO, and in order not to cut short in lecture time, with 170 students and 90% no prior experience with CISCO, lecturers could only offer a step-by-step instruction.
- As the discussion was about the desire to teach concepts and not focus in lectures on teaching a particular router configuration language, therefore although Stu Rep suggested doing two languages – CISCO and one other, LH pointed out that teaching two different router languages in one unit would not be a good idea. However the work-through in lab sessions should give students a fairly good chance to understand what was taught in lectures. Maybe in the future they would use less complicated
exercises, but offer more chances for students to work with sequence.

ISYS254: Unit Convenor – Yan Wang

Practical:

- Stu Rep said that there had been lots of improvements regarding the feedback provided in the last meeting. There has been a fantastic turnaround with practical results publication, although some still got the results a bit later than others.
- GL explained that the first assignment was done in three stages. With more than 180 students, it took 10 minutes to mark each submission. There was an understanding that marks were to be provided before student could start on the second stage of their assignments. He would ask the other practical demonstrator to make sure that results were to be released in time.
- Stu Rep advised that they would like to be able to use Power-Design as a case/design tool rather than a drawing tool.

General:

- MJ asked if students would need more advice regarding the outlook of this unit.
- Stu Rep advised that many students might not know what they would do with their degree when they graduate. Some feel a bit disconnected during study, especially on the administration side. MJ acknowledged this comments and agreed that the department may need to offer students options regarding where they are heading.

COMP249: Unit Convenor – Steve Cassidy

Lectures:

- Stu Rep did not think that the video lectures were working as well as live lectures. The videos need to be downloaded, and then to be watched. Many students struggled to find time to watch the videos in their own time. The general concern is that many might plan to watch all videos in two weeks time, which would not be a good practice.
- MJ commented that usually the lecturers would deliberately split teaching, and the lapse time between lectures would be very important for student s understanding of what was taught. LH also added that students would need time to allow information to settle from short-term memory to long-term memory.
- However the students of this unit do understand that the video were available.
- DM added that he did notice that many students were not prepared well
enough before they attended the tutorials.

- BM explained that due to a lack of resources, the department could not have both live lectures and video lectures. However the general feedback from previous semester regarding video lectures was very positive.
- MJ further commented that psychologically students would watch a lecture video if they ever miss an actual class. However they might not do so if only video lectures are available.

Assignment:

- BM wanted to find out how the students would be doing with their assignments. Stu Rep mentioned that they would most likely spend the recess weeks to complete the assignment. Another Stu Rep also suggested that the assignment was quite difficult, and many might have not realized this if they planned to do everything in two weeks time.
- Stu Rep wanted to find out when the results of assignment one would be published. DM will check with SC.

Other Matters:

General:

- MJ expressed appreciation to the two student representatives for being at the committee meeting, and brought along valuable comments and suggestions. He would also like to see more student representatives from the 200 level units at the meetings, and more comments from different aspects were welcomed.

Unit Offer:

- Stu Rep asked if COMP226 would expand in size in following semester. MJ confirmed yes as the plan to expand this unit was already approved by the teaching committee. Therefore more students would be allowed to enrol and maybe next year it would be opened to ISYS123 students as well. MJ expressed some concern regarding how to advertise this unit and would consider giving a brief talk in the last lectures of related units.

Labs:

- Stu Rep reported that for some when they logged onto the lab computer, their profiles were not loading properly. Some computers did not seem to be working either. DT explained that ScienceIT already were aware that some student profiles were corrupted, which might explain why they were not loading properly. However would like students to report any issues or concerns to ScienceIT team, or the lab support officers as soon as they could in order to fix the problems in time.
- RM advised that a survey was to be carried out each day regarding how
lab computers were functioning. BM commented that the biggest issue at the moment was that problems were not being reported. DT also advised students to provide feedback online if they prefer reporting issues this way.

The meeting closed at 2:00 pm