Minutes of the 200-Level Liaison Committee Meeting
16th May 2013 at 1:00 pm

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTING ~ MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Student Representatives (SRs) | Units
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Christopher Jones | COMP225, COMP249, COMP260; DMTH237
Sarah Heimlich | COMP225; DMTH237
Harish Ravi | COMP247
Rebekah Coote | ISYS254; DMTH237
Mohamed Omran | ISYS254, COMP249, COMP247
Ronald Hancock | COMP249, ISYS254

Staff Representatives | Units
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Michael Johnson (MJ) | Chair
Annabelle McIver (AM) | COMP225
Mark Dras (MD) | COMP225
Michael Hitchens (MH) | COMP260
Rajan Shankaran (RSh) | COMP247
Steve Cassidy (SC) | COMP249
Stephen Smith (SS) | ISYS254
Ian Joyner (IJ) | COMP247, COMP249
Rolf Schwitter (RS) | Director of Teaching
Garry Lawson (GL) | Mathematics Department
Bernard Mans (BM) | Head of Department
Camille Hoffman (CH) | Department Administration
Melina Chan (MC) | Executive officer
Nader Hanna (NH) | Minutes

Apologies:

Meeting started at 1:00pm- E6A357

The chair welcomed everyone to the last 200-level liaison meeting in this semester. In addition, the chair welcomed Garry Lawson the Learning and Teaching support for Math in the university. After describing the aim of the liaison meeting to Garry, the chair invited him to hear from the students about Math unit that is taught to computing students.
Unit Matters

COMP225 – Annabelle McIver/Mark Dras

Lectures/Tutorials

- Student reps said they are happy with the unit and there are no surprises.
- Student rep said having the tutorial/practical before the lecture can be confusing. MJ replied this is a general issue and could happen with other units. MC said if unit convenors provide the comment, the Timetable team would try to manage it.
- MJ asked how lectures are going and Student reps replied lectures are really good.

Assignments

- Student Rep has not yet received marks for assignment portfolio. MD replied it has taken longer to upload on online; should be online soon. AM said that marks should be available before the second assignment is due.
- MJ asked about auto marking and SR replied getting better and especially the second assignment.
- MD asked re: current assignment. SR replied that it took about an hour to get a ‘P’ mark so understand it will take more time to get an ‘HD’ mark.

COMP247 – Rajan Shankaran/Ian Joyner

Lectures/Tutorials/Practicals

- Student Reps said lectures and tutorials are all good.
- A Student Rep asked if lectures could be consolidated from 3 hours to 2 hours which would make the lectures more engaging for students. Some topics are easy and could be covered quickly.
- RSH mentioned that students from non-computer background are enrolled and keeping this in mind more time is spent on the topics to make sure things are not too difficult for students.
- RSH asked about the equipment in network lab and SR replied that it is fine.
- SR mentioned that because Fri pracs were a bit crowded it took a while for the prac demonstrator to resolve issues.
- The issue of practicals mentioned in the last liaison meeting was resolved.

Quizzes and assignments

- SR commented on the second assignment that he can answer 80% of questions easily and 20%, he may need to get back to his notes.
COMP249 – Steve Cassidy/ Guanfeng Liu

Lectures/Tutorials

- Student Reps said they are enjoying the unit. Concerning the impression of the other students, some are struggling while others think it is easy. Student Reps believe the variation may be due to different background of computing subjects.
- SR commented that they are only learning Java this week; asked if it could be covered earlier in the semester? Python and HTML are going well.
- Student Reps asked if there is prerequisite for programming. SC answered that it is COMP115 but noted that the prerequisite used to be COMP125 and then it was relaxed. It seems there are students who are not very familiar with programming; this may explain why some students are struggling.
- SC commented about following the progress of the struggling students. If the problem seems to be with those who have only taken COMP115, prerequisite may be changed.
- SC is still providing extra student support, trying to determine students’ backgrounds in computing topics and what are the gaps in learning.
- SR said that in the beginning he was struggling (even with COMP115 and COMP125 background), but now the unit is getting easier.
- Student Reps drew attention to the topic of testing and debugging in COMP125 but not for web, SC commented that this is a good point and there could be a module for this.
- Student Reps answered the question of MJ why have selected this unit that the unit is related to IT designation.
- BM mentioned that a third major of Web Design Development will be offered next year and students could transfer to this new major or have double major. BM said info session about the new major will be held.

Assignments

- In terms of the second assignment, Student Reps said it is different from the first one. The assignment required them to write a report about legal/ethical issues in regards to releasing a webpage. Some students are enjoying the change and others finding it challenging.

COMP260 – Michael Hitchens/ Timothy Lambert

Lectures/Tutorials

- Student Reps said lectures are very good. Highly interactive, playing lots of games to assess how to improve.
- Some students have taken other video gaming units and that makes COMP260 easier.
- MH commented that by inviting someone from industry he wanted the students to get a better understanding of the game industry.
The chair (MJ) asked if the equipment and the tools are suitable. SR say they use Unity3D and they are happy with using it.

Assignments

- MJ asked how the assignments differ from COMP225. SR said that there is more writing and less programming involved which he didn’t expect.
- SR said the last assignment did not specify what to do and more description would be useful. MH remarked that he put some clarification about the assignment on the student forum.
- MH noted that marking criteria for the assignment was posted online. SR agreed that marking criteria are very helpful.
- MH noted that the first assignment had not yet been returned but was expected to be released later that week.

DMTH237

Lectures/Tutorials/Practicals

- The chair (MJ) invited students to talk about all the issues regarding Math unit as this is the only meeting to discuss DMTH237.
- MJ asked Student Reps how they find the unit. Answers varied - some said hard, others said easy. Answers seemed to be linked to student’s math background.
- Student Reps said some students are struggling with group theory and relations because they were not covered before.
- Student Reps said DMTH136 did not cover inclusion/exclusion and GL noted their comment.
- BM asked Student Reps if DMTH137 prepared them for DMTH237. SR commented that some material was covered but quickly. They suggest students should take MATH135/MATH136 to understand material better.
- SR commented on attendance: MATH135/136 students in tutorial; approx. 25/30 students but only 10 regularly attend tutorial. Another tutorial has DMTH137 students or students who failed DMTH137 and out of 30 students, attendance has dropped from 15 to 10 regular attendees.
- SR noted that students who do not attend regularly ask questions that consume the time of the tutorial; thus, the tutor could not cover all the questions from all the students.
- GL suggested students to attend more than one tutorial or practical to assist with learning; students said this is difficult schedule-wise.
- SR requested that practicals should reflect the assignment more. The assignment would be easier if they could find examples in the textbook. SR also commented that practical tutors are not teaching according to student level/need.
- MJ asked students if they understand the relevance of DMTH237 to computing; answers varied.
Assignments

- In response to a SR explaining the amount of time spent on researching the assignment topic, MJ recommended the Numeracy Centre. SR replied it was not always helpful; very dependent upon who the tutor is. Additionally, NC is helpful with understanding broad ideas but not necessarily how to solve a particular math problem. GL recommended student to see Frank in the NC.
- SR remarked that Jeff (tutor) used an analogous example to assist with understanding assignment question and this was extremely beneficial.
- Student Reps said the first two assignments were hard but the next two assignments were easier.

**ISYS254 - Stephen Smith/Matthew Mansour**

Lectures

- Student Reps said the unit is going well, the focus is on the assignment. The labs are full of student groups that are collaborating to do the assignment. They commented on the busy labs that students usually come in close to time to finish the assignment and that makes the lab busy.
- SS prompted the students to come and talk with him if they have any issues or problems with the unit.
- Students Reps asked if the final exam would include question from the assignment. SS noted that the final exam is based on lectures.

Assignments

- Students commented the assignment is not difficult yet some groups are doing well, while others are struggling.
- SS said ISYS and COMP students are allocated in assignment groups so they can accomplish the case task and programming task efficiently.

Student Reps asked why the rubrics for the assignment were not released earlier as they had to update some work to match the criteria in the rubrics. SS indicated that this is a deliberate teaching decision to withhold the rubrics to permit student creativity and to make the assignment more authentic (closer to industry practice). SS noted comments and said his intention would be to release rubric earlier next year which would allow for a different flow of creativity.

**General Matters**

- SR commented that computers in the labs are working better than last semester, while others stated that they stopped using lab computers and they prefer using their personal laptops.
- Students commented that some PCs in labs does not log off and keep showing a message to remove flash memory, although there is no flash memory attached.
- SR mentioned that profiles are being reinitialised (due to corruption on PCs). RM replied Science IT are working to provide stable profiles.

MJ thanked everyone for attending the final 200-level liaison meeting for Semester 1, 2013.

The meeting closed at 2.10 pm.