Minutes of the 300-Level Liaison Committee Meeting

16th October, 2012 1pm

Present:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Representatives</th>
<th>Units</th>
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<tr>
<td>Samuel Marks</td>
<td>COMP329, COMP344</td>
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<td>Robert Sciver</td>
<td>COMP347</td>
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<td>Colin Coker</td>
<td>COMP344, COMP365, COMP329</td>
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<td>Doug Shearman</td>
<td>COMP344, COMP365</td>
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<td>Deniz Goncalves</td>
<td>ISYS301</td>
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<td>Christopher Walker</td>
<td>COMP329</td>
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<th>Staff Representatives</th>
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<tr>
<td>Len Hamey (LH)</td>
<td>COMP347</td>
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<td>Peter Busch (PB)</td>
<td>ISYS301</td>
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<td>Bernard Mans (BM)</td>
<td>HOD</td>
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<td>Ian Joyner (IJ)</td>
<td>COMP347, ISYS303</td>
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<td>Abhaya Nayak (AN)</td>
<td>COMP329</td>
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<td>Les Bell (LB)</td>
<td>COMP344</td>
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<td>Christophe Doche (CD)</td>
<td>Director Of Teaching</td>
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<td>Tony Sloane (TS)</td>
<td>COMP332</td>
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<td>Mehmet Orgun (MO)</td>
<td>Chair</td>
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<td>Melina Chan (MC)</td>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
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<td>Stephen Smith (SS)</td>
<td>ISYS355</td>
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<td>Debbie Richards (DR)</td>
<td>ISYS355, COMP355, COMP365</td>
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<td>Yan Wang (YW)</td>
<td>COMP344</td>
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<td>Jian Yang (JY)</td>
<td>ISYS301</td>
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<td>Minutes</td>
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Apologies: Igor Shparlinski, Mark Dras

Meeting Started at: 1.05PM

MO welcomed all and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Unit Matters:

COMP329: Unit convenor: Abhaya Nayak

Student: Students are finding the unit easier to follow now, compared to the beginning of the semester. Voluntary (ungraded) exercises were useful.
One student pointed out that he finds it hard to connect to this unit. There are no compulsory weekly submissions; it would be useful to have some compulsory submissions.

AN: The unit had compulsory submissions before, but some students find it hard to manage the time to complete graded weekly submissions. So, it was decided that there won’t be any graded submissions. This matter will be considered again for future offerings of this unit.

Tutorials: Students are happy with the tutorial.

**COMP332:** Unit convenor: Tony Sloane

TS: The unit is running alright. Students expressed in the last meeting that the mid-semester test was a little too long. The final exam has been calibrated based on that information. Students have pointed out that the practicals are too lengthy. But, they actually contribute to assignment tasks. So, it’s beneficial for students to do the practicals before the assignment is due.

**COMP333:** Unit convenor: Igor Shparlinski

No representatives were present for this unit.

**COMP344:** Unit convenor: Yan Wang

Student: Student mentioned that the design of the two assignments was not ideal. The second assignment requires the solution of the first assignment to be redesigned. As a result, it involves a lot of work. It is particularly problematic for students whose first assignment was not working.

LB: It is always a problem to have consistent material when there are 2 lecturers and the scheduling of teaching weeks. In the future, the lecturers will collaborate to make sure that the assignments are more consistent.

LB will try to contact the good students to see whether their solutions of the first assignment could be made available as samples. Also, LB has a solution for the first part of the second assignment, which will be made available since the submission deadline passed. Students can use those solutions or build on those solutions for later assignments. Components that have already been considered for earlier assignments will not be considered again for grading.

Students also mentioned the following points:

- Practical material for Javascript and PHP could have started earlier since they are very important later on. Students don’t have sufficient background of Javascript from COMP249 or other web technology units.
- The slides and diagrams in the lectures are really helpful.
- Not getting much out of the practical sessions themselves. Also tutors lost control of the class fairly quickly. At the moment, students primarily tend to do the practicals in their own time.
- The kinds of work they do in the practicals are generally nothing new (the personal opinion of a single student). LB to look into the design of practicals to be more related with assignments.
- PhD student presentations were really good.
- Emailed comment: It would be good if the students were given some feedback on the scope of the projects that students have to present.

LB: All these points will be considered in future offerings of this unit.

**COMP347:** Unit convenor: Len Hamey

Student: No comments. Lectures have low attendance, this may be because of clashes. Friday classes are generally the least attended. Students have different levels of ability and background knowledge of the unit.

LH: Unit has iLectures available.

IJ: Online tutorials are available. Students can benefit from completing those.

**COMP355/COMP365:** Unit convenor: Deborah Richards

The student pointed out that they had to do agile programming for this unit (in industry project). In a work environment, for agile development, there would be a mentor who could help. For this unit, the students did not pick up on agile programming earlier on in the semester. More understanding was needed before the students engaged with clients. Students in this group are finding it difficult primarily because the first two years of computing did not provide them with sufficient background knowledge for this project.

The student also said that the focus, for grading, is primarily documentation. The unit is evaluated based on documentation provided. The implementation part is not marked.

DR disagreed and explained. Useless documentation is not what is needed. The marks/comments are given based on consultation with the client and on the workload the students are undertaking. There were also group dysfunctionalities that contributed to this particular group’s frustrations. Two of the members of the group are generally not easy to reach. In terms of marking, this particular group did not provide proper design documents and there was no rationale behind their design decisions. The intent of the unit is to provide some experience on working in teams and hopefully students can use this experience in the future.
Students should have some sort of induction at the beginning of this unit. Students need to spend more time together, and perhaps meet at least every fortnight. Agile programming requires significant team collaboration, which has been a major problem for this team.

DR: The internal project groups are doing fine.

MO suggested the students to re-visit the issue with DR because of the time constraint in the meeting.

**ISYS301**: Unit convenor: Peter Busch

**Lecture**

Student mentioned that the lectures are quite well structured. In the beginning there was some reference to ISYS360, but towards the end of the semester, the unit has been handled quite well.

**Practicals**

Students mentioned that the main issues are practicals.

- the practicals have hindered the overall experience of ISYS301. Some students found that the practicals are quite pointless. There are no walkthroughs with the tutors in class. It is primarily solo study. Some students have stopped attending the practicals. But now the practicals are needed for the assignments, and some students are not showing up to practicals. As a result, groups are having issues and the process of doing the assignment has slowed down. A lot of the material for the current assignment was covered in weeks 3-4. Some students feel that they should have been presented later.

- Labs are not reserved for ISYS301 practicals anymore. As a result, there are a lot of students in the labs, and it is very hard to do group work. ISYS 301 practicals are not shown on the timetable outside the classroom. Students were not aware that practicals would be cancelled.

- Introducing the students in the practicals would be a good idea. It’s hard to find group mates. If they were introduced beforehand, that would be good. At the moment, more effort goes into arranging meetings than doing actual assignment work.

Peter responded that the room bookings can be redone and the lab timetable changed. A lot of students work full-time plus also do 4 units. It’s a problem every semester. In the past, practicals had to be switched to a different time for students.
Assignments
About the assignment: all the material is intentionally provided at the beginning of the semester so that students can learn the important things early on in the semester and apply them in later assignments.

ISYS303: Unit convenor: Ian Joyner

Student comments (emailed):

- The amount of reading material has decreased, which is good for the students.
- Slides for the second half of the semester are better
- Students are getting more help with the practicals.
- The material is a little overwhelming. Students often find it difficult to connect to and it is difficult to catch up if a student misses a class.
- There are no lecture notes available and since there are no text books, revision of the unit material is a problem.
- Students not attending the lectures are missing out on a lot of information. Support material for last minute revision before the exam would be good.

Ian Joyner explained:

- The decision not to have a textbook is deliberate because the intent is to let students use the Internet as a source of information.
- The reading got a little overwhelming for specific weeks when the students were being taught version control, now it is back to normal.
- There has been a comment about groups as well. It is hard to make the students form their own groups.
- Students should attend the lecture and discuss issues with the unit in person.

General Matters:

Student: The way world-class universities teach is very different to how teaching happens here. There are in-class quizzes. There is more student engagement and smaller classes.

Lecture theatres here can have cameras for iLectures. The teaching-learning process needs to be more interactive. There is a lot Macquarie can learn from courses available online.

OneNet has been quite unstable.

COMP333: NTL is not installed in the lab machines (Ben Wong).

The meeting closed at: 2.05PM