Minutes of the 200-Level Liaison Committee Meeting

1pm - 22nd May 2014

Present

Student Representatives  Units
Anthony Hiton  COMP225, COMP260
Thomas Gaskill  COMP225
Barak Alkhaldi  ISYS254
Natalie Batshon  ISYS254, COMP247, COMP249

Staff Representatives  Role
Mike Johnson  Chair
Christophe Doche  Head of Department
Melina Chan  Executive Officer
Yifan Gao  ISYS254
Annabelle McIver  Convenor COMP225
LIKE Mathieson  COMP225
Richard Miller  Science IT
Michael Hitchens  COMP260

Apologies
• Steve Cassidy

Meeting commenced at 1:05pm with an address by Mike Johnson.
General
The coursework is good, there has been a nice steady progression into the more complex topics. The tutors and lecturers are good as well, students especially like Luke’s presentation style and that the lecturers are now using the visualizer which helps those using ECHO360.

Students feel like they are learning lots of new interesting concepts, such as binary trees, which they will find useful in the future.

Assignment
Some students believed they deserved a higher mark for the most recent assignment. Annabelle explains that students were provided with baseline JUnit tests and that staff had an expectation that the students would test their own work more comprehensively. The assignment was worth 2% of the units marks and can be used as a learning experience which also gives the students something to write about in their portfolio due later this semester.

COMP125 follows the same principle, providing students with basic tests for them to expand on. Mike comments that students should not be playing the game of ‘can I get it passed the marker’ rather they should be trying to write correct code based on the specification.

Students understand that they can learn from this experience rather than taking it negatively.

Groups & Peer Tutors
Annabelle asks how the group size of 5 students is going, the students find that team members are just doing the easy questions and not rotating between different roles. The workload needs to be better distributed between students.

The peer tutors were not utilised by most students, it was suggested that students need to be better aware that they are a good resource and students should take the task more seriously. The second hand in draft should be made earlier which might make students more inclined to help.
COMP260 - Game Design

Unit Convenor: Michael Hitchens

General
Students are finding the tutorials very enjoyable. Some students are having difficulties with the new scripting aspect of the unit while others have already finished all of the available tutorial tasks for the rest of the semester. Students are enjoying the relevant content being posted on the forums.

Content
A student comments that using object methods instead of the “send message” method might be more intuitive. Michael explains that in Unity there are many different ways of doing the same thing and because of the prerequisites of this unit (COMP115) they can only cover a small portion of the possibilities so all students can do the tasks. He also suggests that the students who want more out of Unity should go and play with it in their own time.

Attendance & Scheduling
The lecture is held on Mondays at 6pm for 2 hours and the attendance has been very low. The content of the lectures is good and hasn’t changed since last semester therefore the timetabling is blamed for this lack of attendance. A lot of the lectures are very practical and aren’t heavy on referencing with theory which may make the unit seem easier compared to other computing units.

Michael also asked in the lecture how many students needed this unit to run at night with only a couple of students raising their hand. Michael comments that we are discomforting 90% of the students just for a small benefit.

ISYS254 - Applications Modelling and Development

Unit Convenor: Stephen Smith
Other Staff: Matthew Mansour

Group Work
Group work equates to 1/3 of the final marks for the unit and students say they are enjoying these group assignments. Students raise concerns about group members not contributing equally, Yifan recognises the issue in his classes and says there will be peer review forms available for students, alternatively students can give him a prototype (unfinished assignment) and they can work from there to solve the problem.

Yifan also comments that staff are putting in the effort to engage students that are not showing up to classes or contributing however that only goes so far, every student is treated equally. Mike commenting that it’s good we put in the effort to look after our students. Mike also comments that this is another good learning experience and something that students will have to deal with in the work force.

As a side note, Steve and Matt are great entertaining lecturers.
COMP247 - Data Communications

Unit Convenor: Len Hamey
Other Staff: Ian Joyner

Students say it is going really well so far, they have handed in the first assignment and are working on the second one. Students enjoy how practical the unit is and explain that it keeps them nice and busy in their classes so they rarely finish early. The lectures, practicals and assessments are all aligning logically and while students found the first assignment difficult, they received a good mark and learned a lot along the way.

COMP249 - Web Technology

Unit Convenor: Steve Cassidy
Other Staff: Ian Joyner

General
Students had a lot of issues transitioning into Python from Java and suggested spending more time on this transitional stage. Some of the notes online are still in Python 2.7, but students understand that this is because we are transitioning to Python 3+.

The lectures are great but the hour goes very quickly. Steve has a good emphasis on implementation and good practice. Ian spends a lot of time discussing history at the start of the lectures and students would prefer more concise information so they can learn more on the implementation side.

Assignment
Many students found the assignment difficult, especially integrating the static app into their work. Other students had no issues with the assignment saying that the notes were comprehensive and useful. Students appreciate that the deadline for the assignment has been pushed back so they can still submit for a pass mark, they also appreciate all the assistance staff gave them while completing the assignment saying they were very helpful.

Scheduling
There are lecture clashes with COMP225 and some workshops clash with other units. Students understand that they can just attend different workshops but the lecture timing is problematic. Mike recalls a meeting where he was informed this wouldn’t happen. Staff will look into this issue.
General

Communications
Mike asks about the different communication channels Macquarie could use to contact students. Twitter is mentioned as a possibility. Some students actually read the notice board in passing so it could be good for secondary information. Students find notices on doors for room changes etc to be useful. Student suggests some sort of priority push notification method where students can be alerted on their phone of room changes and similar relevant information.

Mike asks a student not enrolled at Macquarie how they communicate at their institution and they use Facebook with a cohort of 20 people in 10 separate groups.

Y Building Computer Labs
Students are unable to access their science drive from the labs over in the Y buildings, Richard will look into it.

E6A Labs
Richard asks what students think of putting iPrint facilities into the labs, students have very strong feelings against it as they want to be able to print their assignments without having to worry about money on their student card.

Some of the workstations are too tightly tied down so that the mouse or keyboard do not reach a satisfactory length.

Mike thanks students for their attendance and feedback.

Meeting closed at 1:55pm.