# Department of Computing – Macquarie University

Minutes for the 300-level Liaison Meeting
10th August 2015 at 1pm in E6A357

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<th>Students Representative (SR)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Heimlich</td>
<td>COMP333</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natalie Batshon</td>
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<td>Hijab Alavi</td>
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<th>Staff Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Diego Mollá Aliod (DM)</td>
<td>Chair</td>
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<td>Melina Chan (MC)</td>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
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<td>Natalia Salzberg (NS)</td>
<td>Science IT Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christophe Doche (CD)</td>
<td>Head of Department / COMP388</td>
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<td>Peter Busch (PB)</td>
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<td>Abhaya Nayak (AN)</td>
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<td>Rolf Schwitter (RS)</td>
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<td>Franck Cassez (FC)</td>
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<td>Yan Wang (YW)</td>
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<td>Rajan Shankaran (RS)</td>
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<td>Damian Jurd (DJ)</td>
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<td>Deborah Richards (DR)</td>
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<td>Steve Cassidy (SC)</td>
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<td>Scott Buckley (SB)</td>
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The meeting was opened at 1:05pm by Diego Molla Aliod.

**ISYS301 – Enterprise Systems Integration**  
*Peter Busch*

SRs said they were enjoying the classes so far.

SRs shared that there were too many students in each class, causing overcrowding. PB noted that the workshops had been moved to a smaller lab, because the lab they wanted (E6A119) was unavailable. The layout of the room they had been using (E6A114) was making it difficult to hold class discussions. PB said that these issues were recognised, and they would see how it goes moving forward. SC shared that there was a grant to change the layout of E6A114, and this would be happening shortly. PB opined that it was common for numbers to drop over the first few weeks, so the issues might dissipate due to reduced workshop numbers.

SR shared that she enjoyed that there were two hour lectures and two hour tutorials; that this timetable layout was working well for the students.

**COMP329 – Knowledge Systems**  
*Rolf Schwitter*

RS shared that four students put their names on paper and agreed that they would serve as student representatives for COMP329. One of them sent his apologies and the other three didn't turn up to the liaison meeting.

RS who just spent some time on OSP in Germany observes a lack of attendance in lectures at MQ (compared to Germany and Switzerland where normally at least 80% of the students attend lectures). RS shared that in the week one lecture only 50% of the students attended. In the second week he released a diagnostic test, and iLearn showed him that only 50% of the students had even looked at the diagnostic test online in week three. It was noted that the students were not voluntarily engaging with the unit. 10% of the students hadn’t even logged in to iLearn in the first week of semester.

**COMP332 – Programming Languages**  
*Matthew Roberts*

No students or staff were present to represent COMP332.

**COMP333 – Algorithm Theory and Design**
Franck Cassez

SR shared that the lectures were good, but the tutorials were not so good. SR said that the tutorial content was fine, but it seemed that a lot of the students were struggling in the early questions, and the students who were able to do the easy questions were unable to get any help from their tutor, because it seemed that the tutor was not prepared for the harder questions.

FC asked if the questions for the workshops were ok. SR shared that they were fine, but it would be better if the tutor had solutions for these problems. FC responded that there was not necessarily one solution to a given problem, so it was not necessarily a bad thing when the tutor didn’t have a solution prepared.

CD asked what the issue with the struggling students was. SR said that it was mostly their mathematical background. They weren’t able to keep up with the differences between Big-Oh, Big-Sigma etc. There was also an issue with induction, and the students being unfamiliar with induction on trees and lists, etc. It was unclear where and if induction was taught in the prerequisite units.

SR shared that there was some uncertainty about how difficult the exam questions would be. There were some tutorial questions that the SR (who was an advanced student) felt she might not be able to complete under exam conditions.

CD asked if a ‘catch-up workshop’ would be helpful for struggling students, to identify areas where students were struggling with. FC asked if the elite and non-elite students were working together, or if there were differently streamed groups of students. SR responded that the advanced students tend to work together, and the struggling students tend to work together. FC suggested that the groups should intermingle, because that would help the struggling students learn, and it would be beneficial for the advanced students to explain concepts to other students too.

COMP344 – E-Commerce Technology
Yan Wang

SR shared that everything had been going well so far, but there was some content overlap with another unit that deals with e-business technology. SR said that students would like more time focused on JavaScript (programming), and less time reiterating business/commerce concepts.

SR shared that the lectures had been good so far, but perhaps some more time could be spent on programming concepts than business concepts. However SR appreciated that there were lots of programming examples in the slides. SR shared that the slides were very good, and that she had been revising using those slides and it had been very helpful. SR shared that the weekly submissions had been great; they varied a lot and were interesting. SR asked if the weekly submissions could be released on Tuesday, so
that students would have more time to complete them. YW responded that Tuesday might be too early, especially given that the submitted problems had been and would continue to be non-challenging.

DMA asked if they had done much (or any) programming in previous units. SR shared that they had done programming in COMP115 and COMP249 previously, so they weren’t struggling with core programming concepts. SC shared that COMP249 had some JavaScript, but not much.

COMP347 – Computer Networks
Rajan Shankaran

No SRs were present. DJ echoed RS comments about COMP329, that he had been getting perhaps 13 out of 43 students attending each lecture. However, the lecture being scheduled in Y3A might be contributing to this problem. He also noted that many students had lecture clashes with other units. There was initially only one practical class, and a second class had been opened. The first practical class had 6 students attending, and the second had 35 students attending, which was causing serious overcrowding problems, especially given that the practical room only had the equipment capacity for 20 students.

DJ shared that the students seemed to be up-to-speed generally, with perhaps just a few students having some difficulty keeping up. They had started lecturing on routing algorithms, and both DJ and RS shared concerns about how students would handle this content. When DJ asked the students about Dijkstra’s algorithm, many students said they had seen this algorithm before in COMP225 or similar. DJ predicted that the mathematical content would be a sticking point for many of the students. MC asked which units had timetable clashes with COMP347. DJ said that COMP332 lectures were clashing with COMP347 practical classes. MC clarified that the lectures were not clashing with each other; that only practical classes and lectures of various units were clashing.

COMP352 – Videogames Project
Malcolm Ryan

No students or staff were present to represent COMP352.

COMP355 – Information Technology Project
& ISYS355 – Information Systems Project
& ISYS358 – Business Information Systems Project
Deborah Richards
SR shared that it was going alright so far.

SR had a question about deliverable certificates and the students were having trouble understanding the second page of this certificate. They wanted to know who should be signing the “checked by” field. DR responded that there needed to be a second member of the team (not the author) who was checking over the deliverable before submission. DR said that there was some discussion on the iLearn forums addressing this questions. DR said not to put “everyone” in the “checked by” field.

SR shared that it might have been helpful to have team-building on the first week, because during the second week many students had been distracted by trying to get their teeth into their new projects. DR responded that the timing as it existed was intentional and needed to stay the way it was. SR understood and conceded.

General discussion was had about the details of when they could have the teams meeting their clients and how to schedule this with team-building and understanding their new projects.

SR asked about the sponsors and email communications: should DR be CC’d on all email correspondence with sponsors? DR said ‘not necessarily’, that she heard about all of the teams’ email correspondences in weekly reports anyway. SR asked about brevity vs detail in weekly reports, and DR said that a balance should be found. If a report was long then structure was very important to help her navigate the different parts of the report. SR asked about the format of weekly reports on the forums they were using: should they use multiple threads (one for each meeting), or multiple comments (one for each meeting) on a single thread? DR said that she didn’t mind either way.

**COMP356 – Web Design and Development Project**

*Steve Cassidy*

No SRs were present.

SC shared that there were 13 students enrolled (with 11 turning up regularly). SC shared that they had been running the unit a bit differently than in previous offerings: they had two clients, and the group was working on two separate projects. The idea was to keep these projects running over multiple years (through successive unit offerings). The unit worked with not-for-profit organizations and ran as a ‘web shop’, performing web development and maintenance tasks for its clients. The students had had a museum tour from one client and a meeting with another. DR asked what kind of project documentation and management they were using. SC responded that they were using agile development, and formal document planning deliverables were not a major part of the marking scheme. Reflective documentation and the like were being
used to evaluate the students’ work, as well as a “sprint score” which tracked their development activities.

**Labs and General Discussion**
CD asked the SRs if they had seen the new printing policy. SR shared that they had heard it had changed but didn’t know the details. CD explained that the quota accumulated the same as in previous years, but now there was a quota cap of 120 pages.

DR asked the SRs if they were having any trouble walking between buildings for lectures and workshops in her unit. SR responded that the short walk provided a welcome break for the students.

*The meeting was closed at 2:00pm by Diego Molla Aliod.*