DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTING - MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
Minutes of the 300-Level Liaison Committee Meeting
1pm - 19th May 2014

Present

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Student Representatives</th>
<th>Units</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ronald Hancock</td>
<td>COMP348, ISYS326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Moss</td>
<td>COMP343, COMP330</td>
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<td>Anthony Wales</td>
<td>ISYS355, ISYS326</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Staff Representatives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Len Hamey</td>
<td>Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christophe Doche</td>
<td>Head of Department, Convenor COMP343</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steve Cassidy</td>
<td>Director of Teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Camille Hoffman</td>
<td>Admin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melina Chan</td>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yifan Gao</td>
<td>ISYS355/358, COMP352/355</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mehmet Orgun</td>
<td>ISYS326</td>
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<td>Marwan El Tannir</td>
<td>ISYS326</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott McCallum</td>
<td>COMP330</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manolya Kavakli</td>
<td>COMP330</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rolf Schwitter</td>
<td>COMP348</td>
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<td>Nick Reynolds</td>
<td>Minutes</td>
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Meeting commenced at 1:05pm with an address by Len Hamey.

Units are in the order they were discussed. Some units were not represented and as a result were not covered.
Len queried about the previous question raised regarding the amount of maths and theory involved in the final exam. A student commented that there is still a lot of content being delivered because it’s a broad introduction to security. Christophe clarified the previous exam issue saying that the first six weeks of lectures will only account for 30 marks in the final examination and the remaining 70 marks on the practical aspects of the unit, introduced in the last six weeks. Also, the final exam from last year will be made available on iLearn soon.

The practicals are going really well and student thoroughly enjoying the new practical exercises.

**Assignments**

Students have their last assignment due in three weeks' time, which is an analytical report on the security holes in a piece of software. Only about 10% of students have started it and they are still figuring out their topic even though they have been given lots of examples.

**COMP330 - Computer Graphics**

Unit Convenor: Scott McCallum  
Other Lecturers: Manolya Kavakli-Thorne, Matt Cabanag

Students commented that the unit is going really well; they have started doing 3D graphics and are trying to wrap their heads around its different dimensions. They are receiving lots of examples and guidance on how to implement them. The C++ has been getting more difficult and the tutors have been helpful in that regard.

Everything is really positive.

The students have a large assignment due in a few weeks' time. This assignment builds on their previous 2D implementation by making it 3D. Students enjoy that they are building on their existing work and that it adds a layer of consistency.

Scott asked if there are any areas they can improve on with the student restating that everything is going really well and that no students have raised any issues.
Difficulties

Students are finding this unit very difficult; it is a good unit but the students would be enjoying it much more if they didn't have such difficulties with it. The student explained that there is a large step up in knowledge to grasp a lot of the concepts. The student claimed that they are putting in a lot of effort and are still not able to complete last week's workshop task. The student suggested that peer tutors may be able to help.

Rolf explained that they are covering the semantic web as a new topic and he realises that students may have issues with RDF compared to XML but that he has tried to relate RDF to database schemas. Rolf also explained that as this is a 300 level unit they must teach some new more in-depth concepts.

The student said he feels he is always taking up the tutors' time and often has to go to Google to find the answers to practical tasks. Rolf and Eng agreed that this could be a positive learning experience as learning to use your resources is very much a part of software development and Rolf does not want to give away answers in his lecture notes.

Len asked the student if it is just taking a lot of time to learn key concepts or if he just feels hopelessly lost. The student replied that it's a mixture of the two and he needs a significant amount of help and he feels lost in regards to the assignment completed recently. Student said that many other students have had the same difficulties and there seems to be a gap in the foundation knowledge. The student finds the math difficult but doable.

Rolf thinks that it is not a good idea that students can submit solutions to assignment 2 (which covers material of the first half of the unit) until week 10. This way they don't engage enough with the new material.

Rolf informed the student that there are two workshops which will assist with the third assessment. Len summarised the discussion saying that the students cannot see the correlation between the workshop material and the assignment tasks, which is something we desire and perhaps a peer tutor would help.

Python Libraries (NLTK)

The student said there is a lot of effort in getting the library calls to work. Even though they have some reference material, it doesn't explain in depth what functions do or why to use them. Rolf asked about the textbook on iLearn but the student doesn't find it useful. Eng suggested to use the search on Github or Google code to understand how they are used better. Len appreciated the issues raised by the student and said that they will be discussed.
Peer Tutors

Students believe that peer tutors would be a good idea as they might be able to fill in the gaps or just be there to bounce off ideas. Christophe asked whether the student would prefer peer tutors or longer consultation hours with the existing tutors, as their expert knowledge might be desired. The student said that peer tutors would be more useful because tutors have to be more careful about giving away assessment answers.

COMP/ISYS355 - Capstone Project Unit

Unit Convenor: Stephen Smith
Other Lecturers: Yifan Gao

The unit is going really well; students are liking it. The student had a slow start because of their sponsor but this has been worked out. The assignments are really well defined and the staff are quick to give feedback. The lectures are pretty good with real world examples and esteemed guest lecturers.

The groups are formed really well. For instance, there will always be two programmers to ensure the workload is not too great and there will always be two female representatives to ensure fairness.

Yifan commented how they don’t have weekly lectures but they get a few experts in to give their ideas. Everything is running smoothly and groups notify them of any issues. Steve will be back soon and he has already outlined the next assignment.

Student commented that having the knowledge of what is coming up is really useful. The group size (5 students) is really good and allows for strong communication between ISYS and COMP students. The weekly email communication between staff is good. The student suggested that perhaps staff members could reply to the email to ensure they have received it as it is a marked component.
There are problems with the Oracle limitations on the Animatrix and Matrix servers. This unit is covering new content compared to previous years. It is covering much more in-depth concepts such as optimisation and requires more database permissions for users to be able to modify important details.

The recent assignment required three parts: first an outline of what could be optimised, and then how you plan to optimise it and finally the optimisation implementation. Due to the restrictions, students could not run or test their optimisations. Because of the technical problems, Marwan changed the third part of the assignment to require the students to submit a plan for testing but to not require students to carry out the testing.

Marwan said that they have issues with the database server and we don’t have anyone responsible for the Oracle instance. The users need admin to do specific tasks but this needs to be carefully implemented to prevent security flaws. Marwan also said that the concepts they are learning are important and just because they can’t implement them doesn’t mean they shouldn’t understand them.

The student said he liked the idea of the assignment but is very disappointed they couldn’t implement it giving the example of his friend at UTS who is able to implement these components.

The student felt he learns from ‘doing’ and trial and error and is disappointed that he won’t be putting what he is learning into practice.

It was suggested that students could install Oracle on their laptops but this would not suffice as it requires an enterprise version and five separate hard disks which cannot be easily replicated on a user machine.

Steve Cassidy commented that we need to make sure our plans match our capabilities, making sure that things we want students to do can actually be implemented. Going forward we need to look more closely at our Oracle installations to ensure they meet our needs.

Len said that the issue is well understood now and insisted it is good that the student has been exposed to these concepts and it is desirable to have the knowledge of trial and error and what can or cannot be done. Eng fully agreed, citing his work as an Oracle DBA - all the low level details are important and the concepts are very important.

Labs
Students who are not part of the scheduled practical classes are not leaving when they are asked to. In E6A114 there’s always 2 or 3 computers which don’t work and every computer is needed. The practical demonstrator finds it difficult to remove students and it has been like this from week one. Admin staff suggest contacting them straight away and they will come down and resolve the issue.

Meeting closed at 1:58pm