Meeting was opened at 11:05am by Anthony who briefly explained the purpose of the liaison meeting.

- AS explained that this is a new style of Liaison Committee meeting spanning whole programs, rather than year based (i.e. 100, 200 and 300 levels).
- Degrees covered are BiT Software Tech, BiT Games and BE Software Engineering.
- AS invited participants to give feedback on whether this new format works and if it gives enough opportunity for feedback.
- AS also welcomed any feedback from related units such as DMTH as well as the specific units that we will go through.
- AS proposed to go through a list of units to begin discussion and branch off from there if the opportunity arise.

COMP115:
- Feedback from student Rep(SR)s:
  - SRs shared that Gaurav Gupta is very good, really engaging. Kind of funny. Keeps people on their toes by asking questions.
  - AS asked what experience SR had with programming. SR hadn’t done any programming in HS or experimenting at home. He wondered if the current unit would be slow or boring for those with more experience.
  - AS pointed out that the students in 115 came from a wide variety of backgrounds.
  - Another SR had a fair bit of IT industry experience.
When talking about coding style: set a style to follow. In an organisation, the style would be more set in stone rather than free form
AS responded that we’re teaching what style is, not a specific style but there is plenty of opportunity in later units to have more prescriptive style, such as in group work.
SR6 did COMP115 long time ago and he felt a bit slow from his perspective but he realises he is not the norm. He had programmed a lot already beforehand.

COMP125:
- Feedback from SR1:
  - SR1 repeated the unit this year. As compared to last year, it’s okay this time. SR went through online lectures last year and didn’t work. This year, SR is going to the lecture and says it is perfect.
  - SR1 commented that she was away from programming for 7 years, but had previously been in industry for 10 years. Starting back again is really difficult.
  - SR1 changed class as the original tutor is not very good, SR reported that some tutors are not good in their attitudes and SR hopes the tutors might be a bit flexible. The current tutor is very helpful.
  - SR1 suggested tutors sit in on each other’s classes to observe teaching styles.
  - AS encouraged SR1 to talk to the convener regarding feedback about tutors.
  - AS noted that the transition from Processing to Java is a factor and asked if SR1 did 115 previously. SR1 reported that she was exempted and allowed to do 125 straight away.
- AS invited comments from those who have made the transition from 115 to 125 previously.
  - SR5 shared that on transitioning from COMP115 to COMP125. It was enough to push him into the depths of Java. The first prac was getting into the Eclipse IDE, which he found useful for the transition.
  - AS asked if it would be better to do a bit more of “that”?
  - SR5 responded:
    - Maybe there should be a resource which allows you to do stuff at home
    - More comparisons between Processing and Java

AS invited the room to make comments on any 2nd year COMP Units:
- Comment on COMP225 from last year:
  - Too much content to just get through in the exam. It wasn’t that the content was too hard to understand, it was there simply was too much. Some people felt a bit cheated.
  - AS asked if it flowed on reasonably well from 125 to 225.
  - Response the diagnostic test was a good refresher and a good carryover to make sure that people were on the same or similar page.
- Comments on COMP229 from last year:
  - Felt it was a bit poorly managed, the organisation, the way things were being taught in lectures. The information may not have been presented in the nicest way and was lacking at times when it came to applying it and understanding it.
The take home exam was a popular choice.
AS asked the floor what the general feeling was for take home exams. SRs responded that it makes sense for programming.
AS explained the concept. MH boiled it down to being equivalent to a short assignment that is done during the exam period. AS remarked that it was not used for very many units.

COMP247:
The practical classes:
- SR5 reported that his tutor, probably a new tutor, whenever the tutor tries to talk to the class, his voice is not audible on the other side of the room. So one half of the class only gets the message.
- SR5 also commented how the marking is carried out: Lab sessions are 2 hours long. Students are given the questions the week before to read them first and do them at the lab sessions. There’s a bottleneck at the end of the 2nd half of the hour, not everyone gets marked towards the end. Usually he is the one that misses out.
- AS remarked that it is always an issue. Marking in class is cheaper but marking outside of class is better.
- MH noted that not in all cases. Marking in class is cheaper, but it also allows us to give immediate feedback. However it does take up a lot of class time.
- MC made a side remark about class time bottlenecks being the same for COMP260. More detail in COMP260 comments section.
- AS noted that COMP247 is the data communications unit for 2nd year and in the newest version of the degree, it is required for all BIT students. It is quite important to get that right. It is more lab based, and as a consequence, more tied to class time than the other units.

Other comments on COMP247, COMP347:
- SR4 reports problems with equipment in the lab, such as switches. This hampers progress through the material.
- SR4 explains: broken chords, issues with the system not turning on properly.
- AS remarked that there is in place process for renewing the hardware but does not know all the details.
- SR4 recommended that it does not have to be brand new hardware as that would be quite expensive, but would like newer equipment.
- AS and MH had a discussion about whether the hardware itself has been replaced since the department first acquired switches. MH noted that the infrastructure was refitted, but believes that the switches themselves have not been replaced
  - AS pointed out that the university’s funding structure doesn’t currently allow for a continuous maintenance budget for this sort of thing. It’s more of a case-by-case basis but believes there is funding to replace the equipment in question.
COMP260:

- MC commented that we have the same issue in COMP260 with bottlenecks. (Note, MC is a prac tutor in COMP260). Students are given the questions before class and asked to attempt it before class. However, class time is only an hour. Work is about a week behind.
- MH remarked that it used to be 2 hours long however due to budgetary cutbacks, the labs have had to be cut down to 1 hour. It makes it hard to do marking in the labs.
- MH pointed out that getting students to submit Unity projects every week is unviable ("would just be a nightmare").
- MH pointed out a whole system outside of iLearn to submit assignments using BitBucket. iLearn can’t be used to submit the assignments. Having to do this every week for prac submissions would be impossible.
- AS acknowledged that is a common problem with a lot of our units. The budget of marking outside of class is reduced.
- MC commented on the issue further, saying that if all of class time is used up for marking, this leaves very little time to answer questions.
- MH would like to split COMP260 into two because it is horribly overloaded. If we could have two hour prac in the “Unity” unit and no tutes, then the budget would work.

COMP 249:

- Feedback from SR4:
  - Great unit for non-computing students
  - Not sure why ISYS114 is a prerequisite. There is database material in there, but it is almost so basic that you’d be able to learn it by reading a couple of pages online. SR had to do ISYS114 in order to do COMP249 and he did not want to do ISYS114 at all.
  - AS commented that there was a bit of back and forth for this unit. For a while COMP115 was required, but then found that it wasn’t enough, so it was bumped up to COMP125. MH checked the current prerequisites for COMP249 and it is COMP115 and ISYS114.
  - AS asked if the video lectures are working well.
  - SR4 commented that they are working well, but have some comments:
    - The intro music is way louder than the talking parts. It is just a level thing and a minor concern, but it is still notable.
    - From the perspective of it being video lectures, they are useful.
  - For the benefit of everyone else in the room that haven’t done the unit, AS explained the concept of the COMP249 video lectures. Lectures are primarily delivered through video with supplementary classes where they discuss the material.
  - SR4 pointed out that there is an in-person class used as a recap session but it is poorly attended
  - AS remarked that this is always the question. Do lectures actually do what we want and do students actually want to go to them? COMP249 is an experimental place where this has been tried for a few years. It
seems to work okay, but not for every student, referring to SR1’s experience in COMP125.

- SR explains that English is her 2nd language, and then if the lecturer on video also has English as a 2nd language, that is a really bad mismatch.
- The other SR commented a bit further saying he did an experimental version of ENG300, which was done completely online. The questions can be vague. It would be beneficial for students to have at least some sort of lecture to turn up to in order to clear things up.
- AS agreed and remarked that the current feeling in the department about video lectures is to have at least one lecture during the week to discuss the material in the video lectures and still have prac and tutes.

AS invited the room to discuss 3rd year units. MH suggested it might be easier to just go around the room and ask what units people are doing and anyone also doing the same unit just jump in on the discussion.

- SR6 doing COMP343 now, COM332 last semester:
- SR6 on COMP343:
  - Likes the way it is presented.
  - Unfortunately clashes with COMP434. A few other students have this clash, but it’s understandable to have that clash because it’s a different year zone.
  - AS and MH remarked that it’s hard to avoid all clashes especially across all year levels.
  - Lecturer is awesome. The lecturer takes into consideration people watch online.
  - Tutorial:
    - The tutor is very quiet: doesn’t teach in a very interactive manner.
    - Turned up to one tutorial and figured you could spend the same time learning it yourself.
    - SR4 remarked that he stopped turning up to the tutorial for that exact reason.
- SR6 on COMP332:
  - Enjoyable. Like the idea of the 3 exams and then redoing them at the end. Let’s you know how you’re doing and gives you a taste of what’s expected. Can learn from your mistakes.
  - AS pointed out that there is a similar model used in COMP115.
  - AS explained that when this was first done in COMP332, the first comment from a student was “Wow the exams are actually helping me learn stuff, rather than just a big scar thing at the end to test me.”
  - SR3 commented that in COMP125 that there are quizzes. It is really helpful to understand the basics. The fear automatically goes when you’ve done the quizzes.
- SR4 on COMP332:
  - Feedback on last year’s Assignment 2 regarding type inference:
    - Quite a jump in difficulty and then a plateau in terms of getting it done. The jump was too high. SR6 agreed.
    - The other assignments had a gradual progression.
AS asked if Scala was okay.

SR6 said it was good to learn other programming languages, especially if the unit itself was about programming languages.

SR4 said he’d love Scala to be used more in teaching.

AS agreed. Scala could be used in other units although it’s up to individual unit conveners to choose.

SR4 on COMP343:

- Remarks that it is officially a BYOD (Bring your own device) unit, but there are no power sockets in the prac/tute rooms.
- Officially labelling a unit BYOD implies some responsibility on the university to provide power and other supporting facilities for devices.
- AS asked which room it was. SR4 responded it was the top floor of the business building.
- SR6 remarked that you could sit at the back to power your laptop. There are a couple of outlets there.
- AS pointed out that this should be taken into account with timetabling and which rooms are chosen for BYOD units.
- SR4 reports on other student’s feedback for COMP343: There is a split down the middle of the unit where the first half is quite “mathy” and find it scary, especially when they look ahead at the other half of the unit.
- AS remarked that there are plans to make COMP343 less mathy and more cybe security based as there will be a new cyber security major.
- SR4 has no problem with the “mathy” stuff and in fact loves it but acknowledges that other students do not feel the same.

SR4 on COMP330:

- He dropped the unit last week because he’s done COMP350 already, he didn’t actually need COMP330. He just didn’t have enough time to invest in it.

AS proposed to proceed to covering COMP434:

SR6:
- One of the classes he enjoys turning up to. It is more interactive. Doing a good job of filling out what you’ve missed out on

SR7:
- It’s good

FC:
- So far so good.
- Last year, there was some question about the assignment and the reports.
- MB remarked that it was a bit vague and asked when he was supposed to start the 8 week plan, then realised he was 2 weeks into it.

AS commented as for background information. There is a transition from the Engineering department taking care of the Software Engineering department, but now the COMP dept has full responsibility for the program. That is now why ENG436 became COMP434. The department is trying to integrate better with the other streams like Software Technology and Games and so on. Hopefully the capstone will evolve.

AS invited the floor to make comments on other units not necessarily in the COMP department but units that are required in their degree.
SR4 comments on DMTH units:

- Thinks they are valuable and would like COMP students to continue to do them.
- Noticed there doesn’t seem to be a lot of cross collaboration between COMP and MATH. Assumed knowledge seems to be re-covered again, even if there’s a DMTH prerequisite. Would like to have more communication between the departments so time spent re-explaining required material can be used on covering new material related to the unit.
- AS remarked that this is an issue that the department is aware of. The reason why the DMTH units exist was because the previous MATH prerequisite units was heavy in calculus, when it was just the DMTH material that was needed. This discussion is ongoing between the departments.
- MH remarked that we will take the feedback about knowing what material is in the prereq’s so as not to repeat previous material.
- AS commented that Christophe Doche (HoD) is communicating with the Maths department regarding this issue and also making moves so staff teaching these units should have an awareness of previously covered material but it is an ongoing process.
- SR4 also commented that it would be beneficial for DMTH units to motivate and point out where some concepts are applied and how it is directly useful for students.
- AS also pointed out that this discussion has also been happening with the Maths department; like using software engineering examples to motivate DMTH concepts.
- MH proposes two action items:
  - **Action Item 1:** Tell COMP conveners what is in the DMTH units so they don’t duplicate coverage of covered material.
  - **Action Item 2:** Tell MATH conveners to see how it applies to COMP
- SR1 remarks that DMTH makes a good environment for software developers, especially for her, because it puts her in that mode of concentration.

SR3 comments on DMTH units:

- Some units not available in certain sessions and because of prerequisite structures, has had to wait till the following year to progress his studies.
- AS responded that it is a resourcing question. The most flexible thing is to offer all units for every session, but it is a question of practicality.

AS invited the floor to talk about programs in general.

Programs: Software Tech:

- AS pointed out that it is still early on the program, but invited students to comment on the structure. If there are units or activities they deem to be unnecessary.
- SR3 remarked that he is not really interested in the PACE units. He doesn’t really want to work in industry. He’s already has experience in industry. He is more interested in pure computer science stuff, but he can’t get that now, so this is the closest thing he can get.
- AS pointed out that the PACE unit is a university requirement. The PACE experience can be tailored at the department level to suit the requirements of students, but it must be done.
SR4 remarked that he doesn’t have to do a PACE unit but his capstone unit is the PACE unit.

MH pointed out that it is to do with the generic wording of the requirements. It doesn’t necessarily have to be a PACE unit specifically, but it needs to meet the PACE requirements.

AS pointed out that there is a change being pursued at the moment to separate PACE and the capstone units for all of the majors. The PACE will remain as it is now, essentially a group project working with an industry partner. However, the capstone units will become actual units in the program. For example, for software technology, the capstone will be COMP332. Each major will have a specific capstone unit. This is the intention but it has to go through the university process of being approved. This does not apply to the students in the room, since they’ve already started but it will apply to new students.

SR4 asked about the 300 level requirements, saying 9 credit points from 300 level COMP, and beneath that there is no “and/or”, it just says “ISYS 3 something”.

AS and MH pointed out that it is in that list. MH said that it is painful wording that everybody reads wrong.

SR4 was worried that the unit in question hasn’t been run for years.

AS remarked that it will come back.

AS pointed out that it may be rebranded as COMP326 and that confusion will disappear.

AS pointed out that there will be another major coming online will be data science, which will involve advanced databases. ISYS326/COMP326 will be the capstone for the new data science major.

Programs: Software Engg:

SR6 commented

- that lots of work keeps him busy
- Capstone unit is good. Takes overview of what done/not done
- Teaching GIT good, maybe to teach GIT just a bit earlier.
- Good to have electronics class…. ELEC141.

AS remarked that this would force people to use version control things... assignment submissions via GHUB and BitBucket. Version control.

How ENG Units relate Software, SR7 commented that:

- Doesn’t really apply to soft eng in particular, more engineering in general
- Did ENG300: Organisation not so great.

SR5 said:

- last year, done in 255. Git, writing code in 255.
- Some talk about version control in 125, may be not going to happen
BIT - Games Degree

- SR5 worried about the “Games” part of the degree name – employers won’t take him seriously.
- Not a lot of freedom in the electives.
- Seemed no problems with facilities.
- One of the problems was using Kodu for COMP111, now using Unity.

General comments about the facilities, labs:

- Administrative. There’s never any hand sanitizer there.
- SR happy with the machine power, there is place to plug your power into.
- Anthony asked whether BYOD is a good idea:
  - SR6 – brings small laptop. Useful to have desktop when you have something more demanding
  - SR1 – We need more stuff.
  - SR3: Prefers his own stuff. Power and Ethernet would be nice to be on the desk rather than crawl underneath. Rather than no machine.
  - SR4: having to support every student on each device would slow down classes so much
  - Hard to find seats sometimes.

The meeting was closed at 12:05pm