Informatics Course Review Project
M Rovatsos, tabled at Board of Studies meeting 6th February 2013

Our course portfolio and the documentation describing individual courses (course descriptors and web pages) have grown organically over the years and exhibit great variability in terms of quality and structure. While a Curriculum Review was conducted by Kyriakos Kalorkoti in 2010, no systematic effort to revise and streamline it has been undertaken. I propose to initiate such a systematic review across all our Honours courses over several BoS meetings, with the aim of completing this project by the end of 2013. Non-Honours courses are more tightly co-ordinated with each other and their documentation is in good shape, no changes are suggested there.

I propose to proceed in three stages, across several BoS meetings, and to ensure sufficient discussion prior to the actual meetings among course lecturers, year organisers, degree programme co-ordinators, and the ITO to be able to approve suggested changes “in bulk” at the actual meetings:

1. **Year 3 course review**
   This comprises 22 courses normally taken in Year 3, i.e. all Level 9 courses plus Professional Issues, and excluding Introduction to Java Programming which is an MSc-only course. This is already underway and should be complete by the next BoS meeting in March. A document has been created at [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fqtTdSy1yir0xXodqEGjG9PWMRv5dnbvRf1lu-RFA/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fqtTdSy1yir0xXodqEGjG9PWMRv5dnbvRf1lu-RFA/edit) for all to contribute to this discussion, and relevant staff members have been specifically approached to contribute.

2. **Year 4 course review**
   This comprises 29 courses, where many are shared with year 5. It seems reasonable to deal with courses that have a level 10 and level 11 version at the same time.

3. **Year 5 course review**
   This comprises 27 courses, given that those shared with year 4 will have been dealt with in phase 2.

While I expect that most changes will be minor, I suggest we take this opportunity also to re-consider the structure of courses at an academic level, in particular regarding the following issues:

1. The level 9/10/11 classification of individual courses. This relates to recent discussions on opening up level 10 courses to Y3 students and level 11 courses to Y4 students by default, and potentially re-classifying some level 9 courses as level 10 to enable Y4 students to access them.

2. Rethinking coursework load. Given perennial problems of heavy workload among our students, I would suggest introducing a “a total of 10-15 hours worth of assessed assignments for every 10 points of course weight” default.¹

3. Considering combining two existing 10 point courses to 20 points, or making individual 10 point courses be worth 20 points in the future. This would help better reflect the workload of some demanding courses, and reduce the complexity of our course portfolio. Also, it would reduce administrative overhead, exam setting requirements etc, simplify duties allocation, and enable lecturers to focus on one larger teaching duty.

The Board is asked to comment on the suggested way of proceeding. I am planning to also conduct a similar review at the degree programme level after this course-level review is completed.

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¹ Students have around 2-4 hours to work on each assignment per week (during term time: average 4 x 2 = 8 hours of lectures, 4 x 2 = 8 hours of labs/tutorials, another 10-14 hours for self-study if we want them to engage with courses, this leaves around 10-14 hours for coursework per week over four courses). Most assignments of the 10-15% weight category can usually be worked on during three to four weeks.