

1st Year Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting

Wednesday 3rd March 2010

Appleton Tower, Room 4.03

Attendees: Alex Simpson (Course Organiser/Lecturer), Ewan Klein (Lecturer), Areti Manataki (TA), Boris Zagrebins (Demonstrator), Diana Crisan (Class Rep), Veronika Nesheva (Class Rep), Evgeniya Sotirova (Class Rep), Anton Caius Gurgu (Class Rep), Tamise Totterdell (Secretary)

Apologies: Kat Merican (Student Rep)

The meeting opened with a brief introduction on the format and purpose of the meeting.

1. 1st-semester Inf1

The reps were asked for comments on the perceived fairness of having two programming exams for INF1-FP in December. It was felt that this had been fair and that as it was not possible to examine all students at once, there was no other option.

2. Inf1-DA (Simpson, Manataki)

The students were generally happy with DA, but some felt that too many topics were covered and that these were not covered in enough depth. It was also mentioned that some students would have preferred to see more applications for the material covered rather than just the theory, but as the course was a theory course, this was not appropriate.

Alex Simpson confirmed that this had been mentioned in the past and that the balance of material had been altered from previous years in response to comments. As the course was a first year course, it was necessary to cover a broad range of material and courses in later years would provide further depth.

Some of the students were intimidated by the amount of extra reading provided, but were pleased that printed copies were made available to them. It was felt that the reading was not needed for the tutorials exercises, and that in some cases the tutors were not aware of the content of the readings. Alex Simpson confirmed that the reading was indented to supplement the lectures and lecture notes and that it was perfectly acceptable to use non-lecture material in tutorials and exercises.

3. Inf1-OP (Klein, Scott, Powell, Wang)

Students liked that the assessed exercise was computer-based, but some students wanted to see the marking scheme and also more detailed information on how marking would be done before the exercise was due. They also suggested that lab solutions be published on Fridays, but Ewan Klein explained that the delay was to

allow students who were behind time to catch up before they had access to the solutions.

Students felt that the Friday catch-up sessions had been introduced too late in the semester and some students were now up to five weeks behind in the lab material. Ewan Klein asked why students had not asked for help in the lab sessions. Some students did not want to monopolise demonstrator time and some felt that they should be able to complete the lab work unaided and saw this as a challenge.

Ewan Klein said that the need for catch-up sessions was in a sense a failure and asked if the exercises needed to be easier. The reps thought that the exercises could be made a bit easier, but that it would still be good if the catch-up sessions started earlier in the semester. It was also mentioned that students were not expected to be able to complete the lab exercise within their one-hour scheduled lab and they should also make use of the drop-in sessions.

There was some concern that the difficulty of the lab sessions was uneven. This was due in part to different TAs working on different labs and, in addition, most of the course materials had been re-written for this session to take advantage of the new format of one lecture and one scheduled lab per week. These materials would be adjusted for next year and it was hoped this would resolve the problem. The advanced exercises were discussed and it was felt that not many students were attempting these, but that there were useful to those students.

There were mixed opinions on the tutorials. Some students felt that it was good that they did not have to prepare for the tutorials and so had to think during them rather than just going over answers. Some students felt it would have been good to discuss or work on the lab exercises during the tutorials. This was difficult as the tutorial rooms had at most eight machines and tutorials were normally larger than this. It was suggested that tutorials be streamed and it was confirmed that this would be considered for next year.

Attendance at both tutorials and labs was dropping.

Some students did not like the recommended primary textbook. It was confirmed that this had also been a problem in previous years and that a new book was being considered. Reps felt it was good that an alternative textbook was also recommended.

4. Drop-in Labs

Students felt that, in general, there were enough demonstrators in the labs during drop-in sessions. There were problems with some machines. Reps were reminded that broken machines should be reported to Computing Support through the web form <http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/systems/support/form/>. Other building related problems should be reported to the ITO.

5. Communications

The newsgroups were no longer used. There was a Google Group for OOP, but traffic was fairly low and students required a Google email address to sign up. Some students were using iRC, but this tended to be used more by CompSoc members than other students.

Boris Zagrebins suggested that students could have a course mailing list that would be used exclusively for course related material and not for administrative purposes.

ACTION: Course Organiser to look into methods of communication for next year.

6. Any Other Business

There was none.