

Department of Computer Science

Minutes of Staff/Student Meeting

Monday 12 May 2014, Room 303S.561

Present:

Staff: Paul Denny (Chair), Robert Amor, Robert Sheehan, Michael Dinneen, Adriana Ferraro, Angela Chang, Sean Davidson, Sithra Sukumaar

Student: Li You (101), Khei Wong (101), Yurii Belinskyi (107), Alex Slipper (111), Prabhat Gokul (210), Jiecheng Huang (215), Kenneth Anderson (220,230), Priyal Bangia (345), Adhisha De Silva (351), Chris Petty (369), Amy Wang (373), Tim Diack (720), Yaoyang Liu (751)

Apologies:

Staff : Ann Cameron

Student: Sid Jotsingani (732), Ocean Wu (220), Ruane Seumanutafa (773), Shaun Roberts (225)

If you attended the meeting and your name does not appear above, you did not fill out the attendance sheet as requested.

1) Welcome

Paul welcomed everyone to the final staff/student meeting of the semester. A nutritious lunch was served.

2) HoD report

A couple of items from recent HoD reports were mentioned. The first was that the department and University dropped in the recent QS rankings, however UoA is still the top ranked NZ institution.

In more positive news, there has been a very strong field of applicants for the 3 new lecturer positions with interviews currently underway. There were 80 applicants for the Software Engineering position alone.

3) Technical report

Sean Davidson gave a brief report on behalf of SIT. The labs were stable and had been running well this year, with fewer problems reported compared with last year. Usage of facilities had increased with the ground floor lab saturated at certain times of the day.

In the previous staff/student meeting the weak wifi coverage between the Maths and Chemistry building was discussed. Sean reported that a survey was conducted last year regarding this issue, however because of the construction work in the Chemistry area this has gone on the back burner. Sean has opened this request again.

4) Report back

Our class representatives on the Faculty SSCC briefly reported back on the meetings they had attended earlier in the semester. A particular highlight was an impromptu presentation by Yurii showing examples of posters that could be put up near the lifts to encourage people to take the stairs where practical. This will be discussed further at the next Faculty SSCC, however as a department we can certainly put up some of the posters near the lifts that we use frequently to see if this has any effect. (Paul to follow up with Yurii).

In the previous staff/student meeting, an issue was raised with concerns regarding certain Stage 2 assignments. The class reps reported that this has now been dealt with, and a detailed response of the issue was sent to the class reps by the lecturers.

The link to the Microsoft's DreamSpark software has now been updated to one which checks UoA credentials first (many thanks for Alexandr Shirokov for updating this). Sean noted that students must be enrolled in a paper taught by a department participating in this program with Microsoft to be eligible to access the software. There was a general feeling amongst the class reps present that this is a potentially valuable resource which is simply not well publicised enough. Paul will contact course coordinators of Semester 2 courses to invite them to mention DreamSpark somewhere in their introductory material (course information, coursebook) and consider making an announcement in class. (Paul to follow up with Semester 2 coordinators).

5) General business

There was very positive feedback on the new Hons/Masters space on the 4th floor. Students were finding this a very useful resource.

A survey on the CS215 facebook page indicated that scheduling of assignments is one of the most commonly perceived problems. It was noted that this is monitored in Engineering, but Science students have much more flexibility in their degrees and scheduling across departments is not practical. However, it may be possible to reduce clashes between assignments at the same Stage level within the department. A current Part 4 SOFTENG project was developing scheduling software for this kind of problem, and that may be of use. In any case, this issue will be discussed at an upcoming Academic Committee meeting. (Paul to raise at AC).

In more than one course, it was reported that a lecturer granted an extension very near the originally published deadline which was unfair to those students who had managed their time and worked hard to meet the original deadline (in one case, the extension was granted on the same day as the original deadline). There should be some guidelines on when extensions could be granted, and this will be discussed at an upcoming Academic Committee meeting. (Paul to raise at AC)

There was a brief discussion about a CS210 assignment (on assembly language) for which there was very little help available in the labs as many demonstrators were not familiar with the simulator being used. Adriana noted that there is a list in the lab showing which courses the demonstrators are most familiar with, and students could use this to plan when they work on the assignments.

There was positive feedback from several class reps on numerous courses including CS105 (particularly the well prepared lecture notes on ADTs), CS210 and CS351/751 (the use of strategic exercises by the lecturer).

In some courses there is inconsistent delivery of course materials - for example one lecturer might post everything on the course web page, and then the next lecturer might exclusively use Cecil. Students did not like this inconsistency, and this will be discussed at an upcoming Academic Committee meeting (Paul to raise at AC).

Paul thanked the class reps for their service during the semester.

Meeting closed by 1.55 pm.