Department of Computer Science

Minutes of Staff/Student Meeting

Monday 22 September 2014, Room 303S.561

Present:
Staff: Paul Denny (Chair), Robert Sheehan, Ann Cameron, Adriana Ferraro, Angela Chang and Sithra Sukumaar

Student: Khei Wang (105), Bhargavi Mysore (111), Lizzie Rakhmanova (111), Matthew Spierings (210), Sharon Zhang (220), Sahif Ali (230), Rodney Snell (230), Alyssa Ong (314), Tian hao Du (320), Kenneth Anderson (335), Adhisha De Silva (335), Kieran Jaunay (340), Chris Petty (340), Logan Elliott (367), Timothy Diack (715, 775)

Apologies: None

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 few items were highlighted from the September HoD report:

- Paul Ralph (the new lecturer in Software Engineering) has been successful in the Google Research Awards program with a grant of US$41,670 for "Investigating the Effects of Google Hangouts and Diagrams on Creativity in Geographically Distributed Teams".

- Ian Warren's team won a place as a finalist in the SPARK $100K challenge. The proposal is for Back Pocket Drive (Computer Science/Medical and Health Sciences) – an app that tracks the driving of youth for parents and encourages safe driving amongst young drivers.

- Michael Dinneen has mentored another successful team in the ACM East Division Programming Contest last Saturday. Three of our teams were very close at the end and one qualified for the South Pacific finals in Sydney (26-28 September).

3) Technical report

Although there was no representative from SIT at the meeting, a few technical items were discussed. The first of these was that several student reps had reported trying to submit jobs via the AskIT website and finding the interface difficult to use. Although this would ideally be

simpler to use, it was noted that the email address "askit@auckland.ac.nz" was a simple alternative for submitting job requests.

There were mixed reports of problems using the special download manager software that is used on the Microsoft DreamSpark website (called secure download manager). While some students had used this successfully, others reported problems such as the download manager stalling or continuing to use bandwidth but without making progress. One suggestion for a workaround for such issues was to use DreamSpark to obtain a license key, and then downloading the software directly from Microsoft's website rather than through the secure download manager.

4) Report back from Faculty of Science Undergraduate Staff/Student Consultative Committee

A brief report was provided by Alyssa Ong (CS314) and Khei Wong (CS105) - the undergraduate reps on the Faculty SSCC - regarding the Faculty meeting. Items that were discussed at this meeting included problems with broken chairs in the labs, and some students not taking the Academic Integrity tutorial seriously.

5) Invitation to "Securing Tomorrow" event

Bhargavi Sridhara (CS111) invited all class reps (and asked them to help spread the word of the event to their classmates) to the Securing Tomorrow event, which is a professional networking event for IT students (CS, SE, InfoSys, BTech, etc.) being held on Saturday 4th October. Other avenues of publicising this event were also discussed, including contacting the Faculty of Science student committee, and the CS at AU club.

6) General business

There were two issues raised relating to the CS335 course. The first of these was a problem with the room bookings made for the test that was held on Mon 15 September. Students understood that the test was to begin at 7pm, however there was a booking in the lecture theatres being used which did not finish until that time. It therefore took some time for the test to get underway, at around 7:20pm.

The other issue relating to this course was the perceived workload of the assignment. Several class reps attending the meeting were taking the course and there appeared to be general agreement that the amount of time needed for the assignment was in excess of that needed for other Stage 3 courses, and in excess of the 10 hours per week (including teaching hours) expectations. Good resources were provided for the assignment, particularly examples of source code, but learning the Spring framework and resolving errors relating to it took most of the time. There were additional challenges for students who were not familiar with SQL (which is not covered by prerequisite courses) which was needed. Those class reps who were taking CS280 at the same time felt that CS280 would work as a good corequisite for CS335, given its coverage of databases.

Yet again, an example of the department scheduling tests and assignments for courses at the same level has occurred. On Monday 15th Sept, some students had 4 deadlines: CS335 test, CS320 test, CS335 asst and CS320 asst. Yet again the class reps are asking the department for some solution to this problem.

Hons students reported not having good information or guidelines on what is required for the Hons dissertation. In particular, they would look to have clarity on the general length of the dissertation, guidelines for the presentation such as how long it should be and when it should be given, and access to previous Hons dissertations (similar to MSc thesis in the library).

Finally, some positive feedback on the Hons information day (which was held concurrently with the Alumni event). Those students who attended found this to be very useful and would strongly encourage others interested to attend.

Meeting closed 1.55pm

Good Luck to your Examinations!