Department of Computer Science

Minutes of Staff/Student Meeting

Monday 7 May 2012

Present:

Staff: Paul Denny (Chair),Robert Amor, Ann Cameron, Angela Chang, Adriana Ferraro, Sithra Sukumaar and Sean Davidson

Students: James Taylor (101), Yanjin He (101), Pooja Yeligala (105), Timothy Diack (210, 215), Jeong Su Jeon (215), John Douglas (220,230),Nck Stones-Halves (225), Kiwei Jiang(225.230), Yutaz xerxes (345), Shengyang (Jack) Luo (369)

Apologies:

Staff:Robert Sheehan

Students:JJ Blucher, Camille Nicodemus (373), Aswin Ramakrishna (734T), Priya Bangia (215)

1) Lunch

Lunch was provided, and the meeting began with everyone filling their plates. As always, with their light dusting of icing sugar, the chocolate brownies were delicious.

2) Minutes from previous meeting

Paul reported back about several issues that had been raised in the previous meeting (26 March).

2.1) regarding shortage of computers (exacerbated by students using lab machines for non-work related activities), Margaret Goldstone, Andrew Cranna-Powell and Sean Davidson had met to discuss this issue. A notice had been circulated to teaching staff to remind students to use computers for study-related purposes and

not be disrespectful to their fellow students. This discussion is continued in Sean's technical report (see below).

2.2) regarding tutor preparation, all tutors undergo training, but the format of tutorials for each course is different. The tutor coordinator, Andrew Luxton-Reilly, indicated that the amount of preparation time tutors are allocated depends on the course. As suggested at the last meeting, feedback to the lecturer by the class rep would be the most appropriate initial course of action.

2.3) regarding department support for Hons students, Gill Dobbie (HoD) had been in touch with the class rep and indicated that Hons students are eligible for prox cards (available from the office) for accessing the drop-in space in the open areas. Gill had also informed the Hons coordinator to publicise this to all Hons students.

3) HoD report

3.1) The Gibbons lecture series is now underway. The theme this year is "The Turing Legacy". This Thursday evening Professors Brian Carpenter and Bob Doran will talk about Turing's Achievements in practical computing.

3.2) Of interest to all, the department now maintains a blog at: http://uoacomputerscience.blogspot.co.nz/. The most recent entry shows a parody video called "1944", but filmed in 1984 and designed to fire up Apple's sale force meeting. It includes a cameo by Steve Jobs acting as "the Chief".

4) Technical report

As always, the highlight of the meeting was Sean Davidson's technical report on behalf of SIT. The following were the main points:

4.1) A meeting with Faculty took place to discuss the shortage of lab machines. CS has lost lab space while gaining students, and it is common for students to use the machines for non work-related activity (facebook being a common example). An announcement was distributed to teaching staff in the Faculty to remind students of

the rules for using lab machines. The Faculty would prefer not to take a very heavy-handed approach, and is appealing to students to be respectful of one another.

Checks within the labs have been stepped up, and anecdotally the number of incidences seems to have fallen somewhat. Sean noted that in most cases when he approaches someone in the lab using facebook or youtube, once they close the browser they usually do have legitimate work they are in the middle of doing, so some of the incidences may be a case of students taking short breaks.

4.2) The Faculty laptop loan scheme has the potential to reduce the pressure on the labs, but has not been well utilised. Sean reported that the current usage of the loan scheme is only around 6% - nowhere near the capacity of 600 loans per week. Students can loan a laptop initially for 2 hours, which they can renew online for another 2 hours - so it is very simple to get 4 hours with a laptop from the scheme. The loan scheme is available from 10am-6pm, as it is intended to target the peak hours when labs are busy.

4.3) The wifi in Scispace has been under load, and sometimes it is not possible to get a connection. The wifi points in the new tutorial spaces in the basement area are far less used.

5) Faculty SSCC representatives reports

Tim (undergrad rep on Faculty SSCC) had reviewed the minutes of the Faculty meeting, and there was nothing new to report.

6) General business

6.1) Discussion around the laptop loan scheme continued. There seemed to be agreement that a major reason for the low utilisation was poor publicity. Although some of the class reps (and the chair) had seen one or two posters around the building, consciousness amongst students was not very high. Sean asked for suggestions which included:

- a Cecil announcement to all FoS students

- in-class announcements, particularly to Stage 1 classes

- the best time to publicise the scheme may be when demand is highest, in other words the demonstrators could inform students in the labs on particularly busy days. Adriana will look into asking the demonstrators to remind students that the laptop loan scheme exists.

6.2) There were a couple of reports of coursework clashes: the CS101 class rep reported that assignment due dates clashed with due dates in a popular Maths class, and the CS225 assignment was due on the day of the CS345 test. This led in to a discussion around management of course workloads within the department (and the Faculty). This issue had been looked at before, and it had been determined that it was too difficult to coordinate deadlines between departments in the Faculty, however it should be a possibility to balance deadlines better within the department - starting with 300-level courses. One of the items currently on the Academic Committee's worklist is to capture assignment and test due dates for 300-level courses in 2012 to see how problematic this is.

So in summary, clashes between departments in the Faculty cannot be avoided, and students are reminded to manage their time carefully if they aware they have multiple assessments due on the same day. Also, clashes between levels in CS are not currently avoidable, although the AC may extend their work to consider this once the 300-level courses have been examined.

6.3) There were major problems with the administration of the CS230 test this semester, which was held in class time (meaning the end-time of the test was fixed). Robert Amor has been notified of this problem and the lecturers have a plan (including a plussage scheme) for allocating marks as fairly as possible given the disruption to a large proportion of the class.

6.4) A suggestion was made to have a department item of clothing (the suggestion was a hooded-sweatshirt) available for purchase by students. The approach could include a design competition for the logo/pattern to appear on the shirt, and pre-orders could be taken for shirts containing the winning logo. In addition, other items of CS-branded merchandise were discussed. The feeling amongst several class reps was that this could be an effective way of promoting the community spirit of the CS dept. Heather Armstrong may have had some involvement in this type of thing in the past, and will be consulted.