

Informatics 1 Student Staff Liaison Committee

Monday 20th April 2015

Room 4.07, Appleton Tower

In Attendance: Gregor Hall, Teaching Organisation Secretary

Paul Anderson, UG1 Year Organiser

Perdita Stevens, INF1-OP Lecturer

Richard Shillcock, INF1-CG Lecturer

Liam Gordon, UG1 Class Representative

Harjyot Singh, UG1 Class Representative

Apologies: Lisa Xie, UG1 Class Representative

Actions from previous SSLC Meeting (Thursday 27th March 2014)

“R. Shillcock to investigate the use of feedback on draft submissions and to review CG reading load. Also R. Shillcock to look at topic list for CG.”

Reading load: RS stated that he tries to limit the reading to 40 pages a week, which he believes is reasonable. Also he stresses to the class that they must read strategically; the references are additional to the 40 pages a week, and he does not expect the students to read them all.

Topic List: As there will be changes in the CG staff for the coming year. RS stated the need for meetings amongst the CG staff to discuss topics.

Feedback: RS gives an advanced spec for their essay. In Psychology they get feedback on their first paragraph. However with 109 students and one marker in INF1-CG this is impractical. RS allows students to drop-in for feedback if they need it.

“A Hill to check if 2 hour labs are an option for CG next year.” This year labs have been 2 hour sessions.

“P Stevens to look into raising the level of support in OP labs.”

PS: the turnout at the labs scheduled directly after the lecture on Monday and the lab on Friday were popular but the others had poor attendance. The webform that students filled out to mark attendance at tutorials did not always indicate that they had done the work.

RS and PS differed in their view of the effectiveness of Tutorials. HS voiced the opinion that he found hackathons valuable, set perhaps every 3 weeks, although he did point out that this is the opinion of students who are already capable coders.

PS believes (at least in INF1-OP) there is no such thing as an ideal challenge for everyone. Group Projects would require maybe 30 groups of 10, requiring a lot of staff resources. LG observed that there was a wide difference in the programming skills of students in 1st year, and that the Haskell tutorials were of very limited use. PS: due to the limitations of Forest Hill, tutorial class sizes in the coming year may have to be larger than we would like. It may be necessary to go through programs line by line.

LG liked how Maths problems were taught. HS was particularly enthusiastic about a mentoring technique (pioneered by Hoppers) whereby students with different programming abilities were paired up. He appreciated the fact that both students would benefit from the experience, and also liked the social aspect of this.

LG questioned the lack of online solutions to INF1-OP past papers. PS would not release these online but was happy to mark attempts at past papers.

HS was of the opinion that the questions used in labs were restrictive of how students could apply their knowledge, to which PS replied that they had to be automatically markable. PS would like to do more Advanced-level labs.

INF1-DA Comments:

HS and LG were complimentary about this course. They felt that the course material progressed the students' knowledge well. The website was well designed and supportive of the course; HS particularly liked the use of Yo social media to engage the cohort. Tutorials were well organised.

LG believed that year one was structured 'backwards' – he felt that the students would have a better experience if the Semester 2 classes were taught in Semester 1.

PS was of the view that year one should split students into those with programming experience and those without, and to provide them with different classes in order to bring the less experienced up to scratch.

INF1-CL Comments:

HS & LG expressed several criticisms of INF1-CL. LG thought it should be more of an introduction – he felt that it jumps straight in the deep end and provides too much depth. There was no set textbook recommended and the documents need revising. The INF1-DA course was held up as an example of the sort of course structure they appreciated.

ITO / Technical Support

Infbase was not advertised well (compared to Mathsbase). HS: Remote login / Virtual DICE needs to be advertised. PA suggested technical support for student laptops could be beneficial.