

School of Informatics

UG1 Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting Minutes 11 am, 30 April 2019, 4.14 Appleton Tower

Present: Paul Anderson – Chair (UG1 Year Organiser)
Gabrielle Gaudeau (UG1 Class Rep)
Lars Werne (UG1 Class Rep)
Dee Yeum (UG1 Class Rep)
Chris Lucas (Inf1-CG Course Co-organiser)
Volker Seeker (Inf1-OP Course Organiser)
Richard Shillcock (Inf1-CG Course Co-organiser)
Ian Stark (Inf1-DA Course Organiser)

In Attendance: Rob Armitage (UG1 Secretary)

Apologies: Nico Novatore (UG1 Class Rep)
Frank Keller (Inf1-CG Course Co-organiser)

PA introduced himself as Chair and welcomed the UG1 Reps and Course Organisers to the meeting. The committee discussed actions from the previous meeting; PA then asked for course feedback from the UG1 Reps, from their individual experiences as well as from communications with the student body.

1. Actions from previous meeting
 - 1.1 Action 1.3.1.1: PA and UG1 Secretary make a note to contact former Reps when inducting 2019/20 Reps and arrange a meeting:
PA and RA noted that when the 2019/20 UG1 Reps are inducted the 2018/19 Reps will be contacted to arrange a meeting.
 - 1.2 Action 1.4.1.1: ACTION 1.4.1.1: RA to email about Chair role when the Minutes are distributed; PA or RA to send a reminder when arranging the Semester 2 meeting:
PA noted that no Reps volunteered for the chair role this year. PA will continue to offer this role to future years.
 - 1.3 1.6.6.1: RA to add minutes from last meeting to Documents list. Documents to be circulated prior to next meeting:
RA added to the documents list the minutes from the semester 1 2018/19 SSLC meeting and both semester 1 and 2 2017/18 SSLC meetings. The semester 1 2018/19 minutes were distributed prior to the semester 2 meeting. This practice will be continued for future years.
 - 1.4 ACTION 2.1.1: Pre-arrival material to be prepared and sent out for 2019/20 cohort. PA to discuss with Stuart Anderson and arrange payment for students to compile material:
 - Options for pre-arrival material were discussed. There was general resistance from academic staff towards course-specific material as the school would want

to avoid students being disadvantaged if they did not complete material before the beginning of their studies. As discussed previously, Don Sannella has been developing a game for learning Haskell which can be distributed to incoming students.

- DY noted the Facebook live session run last summer for incoming students, coordinated by DY and CompSoc. If this were to be done for the 2019/20 cohort the ITO would be able to assist in arranging this by obtaining a list of email address from Admissions.
- GG noted that the School of Mathematics was more proactive in contacting students prior to the start of their studies, and that having the option of a diagnostic test was very useful. The committee noted that a diagnostic test for mathematics knowledge and skills would be much more straightforward than a diagnostic test for computer science knowledge and skills, and therefore producing a diagnostic test for Informatics students is unlikely.
- Learn courses for an Introduction to Learn or Introduction to Informatics would be useful, according to the Reps.
- PA noted that Stuart Anderson sends out an email to incoming students. This could be reviewed.
- IS suggested podcasts to be produced by CompSoc or others that would be available to students over the summer.
- The Reps requested the school offer more contact based around academic matters with Informatics students during Welcome Week and Week 1.

ACTION 1.4: RA to email Reps and PA after meeting for suggestions on pre-arrival material, and additionally suggestions to increase tutorial and lab session engagement (see items 3.2 and 3.3). Completed on 30/04/2019.

- 1.5 ACTION 3.1.1: RA to contact Benjamin Bach, InfBase Coordinator, regarding the requirement for all InfBase tutors to have knowledge of all Inf1 courses: Completed on 17/04/2019. BB's response was to highlight the logistical issues of recruiting InfBase tutors that all have knowledge of all Inf1 courses. PA to arrange a meeting with BB to discuss.

2. Review tabled documents

2.1 Minutes from previous UG1 SSLC meetings: Semester 1 2017/18, Semester 2 2017/18, Semester 1 2018/19

- 2.1.1 Sem 2 2017/18 minutes: CL feedback has been passed onto Michael Fourman.

ACTION 2.1.2: PA to meet with Benjamin Bach to discuss strategies for InfBase, including collecting attendance and engagement data.

2.2 Course Feedback Summaries

- 2.2.1 Documents for Inf1-CG, Inf1-DA and Inf1-OP were tabled.

2.3 External Examiner Report

- 2.3.1 Note: External Examiner Reports for 2017/18 were not available due to the use of a University of Edinburgh staff member taking on the role of Inf1 External Examiner for the latter period of the 2017/18 academic year. This staff member was referred to as an Internal-External Examiner. An External Examiner has been appointed and will produce reports for the 2018/19 academic year.

2.4 Course Evaluations

- 2.4.1 Note: This document will no longer be listed as this is a now an unused format for evaluating courses.
- 2.5 Course Enhancement Questionnaires (formerly Quality Reports)
- 2.5.1 The report for Inf1-DA was tabled.
- 2.6 Teaching Programme Review
- 2.6.1 The previous Teaching Programme Review took place in 2014/15; the next will take place in 2020/21. There will be no document to table until then.
- 2.7 **ACTION 2.7: RA to note that the above documents list is to be reviewed before each semester 1 SSLC meeting and that only the relevant documents will be listed.**
3. Comments on Lectures, Tutorials, Labs and Coursework:
- 3.1 Informatics 1 – Cognitive Science, Course Lecturers: Frank Keller, Chris Lucas, Richard Shillcock.
- UG1 Reps' comments:
- DY raised the feedback that there is not enough "introduction to Python" or "introduction to programming" material for those who are not already familiar with it, and asked what could be put in place that would fill these gaps in knowledge without increasing the workload. Online courses including those on Lynda and Codecademy were suggested. CL and RS agreed that internal support and resources were not going to be replaced.
- General points were raised about lab sessions, including that some students struggle to make the best use of the time, but also that many demonstrators have little to do during the sessions. Strategies were discussed to help students and demonstrators engage with each other further. VS raised a strategy he had been made aware of that placed a member of academic staff leading the lab session along with multiple demonstrators who would move around the room and actively engage with the students, removing the barrier that students might feel unsure about disturbing the demonstrators. GG and DY asked if demonstrators could be distinguished by wearing a hat, t-shirt or other clothing, something that had been previously raised in a weekly rep meeting.
- ACTION 3.1.1: RA to note request in increase in funding for hats/t-shirts for demonstrators, for this and other Inf1 courses.**
- Update 13/05/19: RA discussed this matter with Stuart Anderson who believed it had already been raised elsewhere. PA to follow up with SA.
- 3.2 Informatics 1 – Data and Analysis, Course Lecturer: Ian Stark.
- UG1 Reps' comments:
- GG received feedback that students really enjoyed the course and expressed regret that it is being discontinued. Other feedback included the feeling that coursework and an exam would be preferable to exam-only – IS noted that it has been a conscious decisions for the course to be exam-only – and requests for the exam to be open-book or to include a formula sheet – IS agreed that a formula sheet may have been useful to implement but since it was late in the semester it would not be able to be implemented. Other positive feedback included students liking the lecture slides.
- As with other courses, tutorial attendance has been variable and is always difficult to manage. Action 1.4 was amended to include a request for suggestions as a response to this.

3.3 Informatics 1 – Object-Oriented Programming, Course Lecturer: Volker Seeker.

UG1 Reps' comments:

LW received feedback that people were generally happy with the course. The reps noted that, as with Inf1-DA, tutorial attendance was variable and reduced over the semester, one case being LW's group started the semester with 10 members and by the end of the semester only two members were attending. The general understanding is that it is weaker students who stopped attending once they started struggling. GG's experience was different to other students' in that she completed the work in advance of the tutorials however the group spent tutorial time going through solutions, leaving her with little to do.

VS is considering a system including both standard lab sessions and advanced lab sessions for next year, all being drop-in so students can choose to attend those which are most useful.

PA asked if feedback had been given about the mock exam. No feedback had been received.

VA noted that Piazza had been used regularly this semester and we were at a stage where students were collaborating to assist each other with questions, which he considers to have had a positive effect.

Regarding help on the course, GG felt that the lack of activity from InfPALS compared to semester 1 was unfortunate.

PA asked for suggestions from the Reps to increase engagement with tutorials and lab sessions. This was added to Action 1.4 (see also item 3.2).

4. General issues about the year

4.1 Piazza

LW noted that Piazza is very useful and asked if it could be advertised more. VS noted that it is already widely advertised and linked widely throughout the semester so is unsure how else to increase awareness.

4.2 Learn

IS noted that, so far, Learn has been inferior when compared with former course pages which were ran as blogs by the Course Organisers, allowing more freedom to offer useful content. The committee hoped that as the school gains more experience of Learn that any perceived shortcomings are reduced or eliminated.

4.3 Lecture theatres

IS requested feedback on the lecture theatres used. LW and GG felt that the Appleton Tower lecture theatres are superior to the Gordon Aikman Lecture Theatre.

4.4 Weekly rep meetings

LW noted that the weekly rep meetings have been useful for raising issues as they have arisen across the year.

5. Comments on Computer Facilities, labs, study spaces and social spaces
No comments were made.

6. Comments on Computing Support.
No comments were made.

7. Comments on ITO Support.
No comments were made.

PA thanked the committee for attending.