

MSc Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting

11:00am, Friday 13th January 2023

AT 7.14

Present: I. Murray (MSc Year Organiser), L. Seal (Teaching Organisation Officer MSc), R. Finlayson (Teaching Organisation Administrator MSc), D. Bilc (MSc Rep)

1. Introduction and overview of SSLC

The meeting opened with a brief introduction on the purpose of the meeting, mainly to gain feedback over the past semester so as to help enhance student's experience, and to offer student representatives a chance to talk to the Year Organiser directly.

2. Comments on MSc Courses

[Note: All feedback from this meeting was sent to Course Organisers with the offer to comment on/respond to. Any feedback from the Course Organisers that was returned is included in the minutes]

ANLP

No feedback for this course.

AML

No feedback for this course.

CDI1

No feedback for this course.

CDI2

No feedback for this course.

DBBA

No feedback for this course.

NLP-GP

No feedback for this course.

IVC

No feedback for this course.

IRR

Rep: I enjoyed that the sessions are online, so you can log in at a time that suits you. The material isn't too intense, especially since it is familiar for those who have done an undergraduate. The balance of online/in person has been pretty good, though I am slightly biased as I generally prefer online better so as to focus and be in my own environment; but everyone can take in the material where they want to be. But that labs and tutorials for courses are in person is good, and it's good there is a mix.

IM: That's interesting, as in previous years we have had complaints about there not being enough in person teaching.

IPPO

Rep: I was a TA for this course and enjoyed working on it. The issue I was aware of was that students wanted more transparency with the marking scheme. For coursework 1, which was marked automatically, the feedback only shows what tests failed, but students don't understand why. (I wasn't working as TA at the time of this coursework.) I understand the Course Organiser, D. Symons, wants to use the material next year, hence not releasing full feedback to students.

IM: IPPO is actually one of the courses that has thought about its marking scheme more than most, using a criteria based marking scheme. But there should be some feedback at some points; perhaps some intermediary feedback can be provided earlier.

IPPO Course Organiser response:

"Due to delays in getting the contracts for teaching support staff ready (which is out of my control), I had neither TA nor markers for the first half of the course and had to rely on automated testing for the first assignment. With almost 90 test cases, I'm confident the resulting grades were fair and accurate, but indeed automatic feedback generation is very difficult to get right. There is output for each test, but it is not possible to anticipate every possible error and write human readable error messages for all eventualities. Students had the opportunity to ask about their feedback on Piazza - and indeed I answered a number of questions there and by email. Computer generated errors are an inescapable part of learning how to program though. In fact, I would argue that investigating yourself what could have gone wrong would have been a great learning opportunity. In the end, the answer is usually right there in the instructions. All that is required is curiosity and attention to detail."

BAI-ICDM

No feedback for this course.

NAT-DL

No feedback for this course.

SPT

No feedback for this course.

3. Comments on Other Courses

NAT

Rep: There was a complaint about the space for labs and tutorials, about students needing to bring chairs from another room, but I think this resolved itself/was dealt with in the weekly meetings.

MLP

Rep: This was the course that came up mostly, and the main issue was that it's an intense and short amount of time to do the coursework. If the coursework is the same next year, it will at least be a good test of time management for students. Other comments included the course not feeling very practical, being very theoretical instead.

IM: The course is partly scaffolding, students building up to what they need to do for the final project. There is a tendency for coursework-only courses to take over student's lives, and it's a tricky balance to encourage students to get through the coursework in a healthy manner. In previous years for MLPR we've found that when the course was all assessment, student did a lot of work, but came out with a better mark and understanding of the course. When the assessment is left there as exam prep, it's not done and exam results tend to be worse.

MLP Course Organiser response:

"In the last two years, we significantly reduced the load for the courseworks. While before students had to write a complete report and run experiments for open-ended goals, they are now asked to only answer specific questions in the coursework and run few well-defined experiments with minimal coding. We also time the required experiments ourselves to be sure that they can be comfortably completed in the given time. We observed that many students did not have the prerequisite programming and machine learning knowledge before joining the course, and/or did not complete the related lab exercises before the coursework. These factors definitely made the coursework harder for those students.

In terms of theory and practice, the course aims to teach a combination of theoretical and practical concepts where the lectures focus on more theoretical aspects, the labs in semester 1 and the tutorials in semester 2 focus on the practical aspects. Courseworks measure both theoretical understanding and practical skills of the students, coding followed by experiments and discussing their relation of the experimental results with the theory taught in lectures."

4. General Issues about the Year and Specific Courses

Rep: The course selection was good, and students seemed satisfied with their choices and workload (apart from MLP, as mentioned before). The only other issue was about exams,

and students feeling overwhelmed by doing in person exams again. It's not so much about capacity as it is memory; you forget how much you rely on the source material after doing online exams for a few years. Semester 2 will be better though, but if marks are low this time round, the shock might be why.

IM: We did have multiple session run by Student Support to go through the process of being in an in-person exam. It is something of a culture shock though, and this is why we don't leave all exams until the end of the year.

5. Comments on Computer Facilities

No feedback to report.

6. Comments on ITO Support

L. Seal: I was curious as to if there was any feedback about the new process of informing students about late penalties once coursework marks are published.

Rep: This is the first year for most, so they will assume this is normal and expect it.

7. Any Other Business

None

Meeting adjourned.