MSc Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting

3pm-4pm, Wednesday 29th March 2019

Appleton Tower, 7.14

Present: B. Franke (MSc Year Organiser), S. Stewart (MSc Administrator), R. Finlayson (MSc Teaching Secretary), MSc Rep

Apologies sent: 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 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 (Semester 2 Courses)

ATFD
No complaints reported regarding this course.

AIPF
It's a hard course, but otherwise the course is okay and enjoyable.

BIO2
No complaints reported regarding this course.

CCN
No complaints reported regarding this course.

DME
The lecturer provides fantastic note sheets, and the course is well structured. However, the lectures are quite long and arduous, and can be quite dull.

A. Onken: "This feedback in perfectly in line with what I got for the CEQ. I might need to break the lecture material down into smaller blocks."

DMR
No complaints reported regarding this course.

IPP
The course is going very well. A huge number of students got their first choice of project, and only one or two got their fifth choice. Overall everyone seems pleased with the choices.

MI
No complaints reported regarding this course.

NIP
The course is hard, but otherwise it's okay.

PMR

A hard course, but otherwise okay. A lot of people didn't realise it was so research-based and so mathematical. Maybe have this stated more explicitly in the course description. Students enjoy the course but wish there was more practical work involved.

M. Guttmann: "On the course homepage I have the subpage "What to expect" where in (bold) it is stated that "the course is generally more theoretical and mathematical than the other machine learning courses at Informatics." I am thinking about how to best include more practical work into the course."

RL

The student rep gets two or three complaints about this course every week. The workload is too much for a 10 credit course; there are four tasks to do, and the third task alone takes 30-40 hours to complete. Students are spending some 60 hours on the coursework (which in itself isn't very well organised).

The Piazza forum is bombarded every day, and the lecturer doesn't help much. The code base provided also doesn't work and it took a student who eventually got it to work to write a guide for others about how to make it work. The libraries are also outdated and unsupported. The course is also more CS than RL based and therefore about implementing and algorithms.

It would be nice if the course could be weighted more accurately with the amount of work done for the coursework, or make it a 20 credit course (but even then, the workload is too much and not worth it).

ACTION: B. Franke to speak to S. Anderson (Director of Teaching) about the possibility of bringing the course to the BoS again.

RLSC

Courseworks are being announced later than what is specified on Learn, Coursework 1 was announced six days late and Coursework 2 was announced two days late. Coursework 1's deadline was extended by two days, and Coursework 2 was not

The Matlab code provided doesn't work as intended. Part 3 in particular supposedly uses a library with no documentation and this is a challenge for many students. One student has even stepped forward to provide solutions as they apparently know the software better than the TA.

There is a practical element lacking from the course. A student has mentioned that, even though the theory is really useful, more practical, hands on work would be beneficial.

THF

No complaints reported regarding this course.

3. Comments on other courses

ANLP

Loved the course – one of the best courses ever. It covers the foundations as well as state of the art material.

H. Thompson: Thank you!

EXC

The course had a lot of potential, but was executed badly. Students walked out with a general overview instead of specific knowledge. The slides were bad, as they often just referred students to "go read the papers."

The course material discussed multiple frameworks, but taught us about a third of them; it would be great to have a course that teaches students how the frameworks work. The coursework was great though, especially how it made students think about to build a solution to the problem.

B. Franke: There have been discussions about whether this course is a systems course or an applications course. Since the course was taken over by a new lecturer this year, this is still being defined.

IRR

The marking of the coursework was a big issue, but the Course Lecturer was responsive about the delays and other issues. The lectures were useful for those who hadn't done a dissertation before.

B. Franke: We needed all the marks so as to complete the moderation process, but due to some marks being returned late and issues with Turnitin, a delay was caused in getting marks back to students.

NLU+

It's easy to tell this is the first year they have combined the courses (Machine Translation and Natural Language Understanding). It would be useful if the course had tutorials like ANLP; they were hard but useful.

Coursework 1 was good, but Coursework 2 was a bit too long. More time was needed for better training time. Aside from that, the course was enjoyable and it was great having references from 2019 in the material.

B. Franke: It's always hard to strike the balance between getting students up to speed on the basics and doing new stuff.

A. Lopez: "The overwhelming feedback from students was that the course should have tutorials. R. Sennrich and I did develop some optional tutorial sheets towards the end of the semester in response to these requests, and several weeks ago I asked the ITO to include tutorial rooms in the timetabling request for next year, which they has done."

<u>STN</u>
The course content was great, but it's annoying that the exam is the second semester. Perhaps it could be changed for next year.

ACTION: B. Franke to discuss with R. Sarkar about the possibility of changing exam to December for next year.

<u>TTDS</u>
A lot of work for groups for what was very little return.

4. General issues about the year and specific course

It would be nice if there was a specific space just for PGT students, so as to be with other students who are doing the same courses.

The depth and breadth of the courses is great, especially compared to other universities. Compliments were also paid to the structure of the MSc degree too. It would be nice if there was course or programme specific inductions, instead of one mass induction for all MSc students.

It would be nice to have some MSc specific social events, especially over the summer. The idea of doing something with CompSoc, or running another ceilidh is a great idea. Something just to meet with other PGT students and also get a break from the intensity of the workload. A point was also made about how the Forum can feel very out of bounds for PGT students, and only like a place for PGR students instead.

ACTION: ITO to liaise with K. Lee about future PGT social events (eg. coffee mornings) and making sure it is emphasized to students that they are welcome to events in the Informatics Forum.

ACTION: ITO to liaise with CompSoc about setting up PGT events

MSc Handbook is also very general and could have more in-depth information. It would also be useful to have timetable webpages included in the hand book

ACTION: B. Franke/ITO to make changes any changes to handbook deemed necessary, including liaising about where to put weblinks

Having class reps instead of program reps might be more useful too, so feedback can be more relevant when reported back in in SSLC meetings.

ACTION: B. Franke to investigate the possibility of 10 reps to get more coverage across courses, and how to implement this during Welcome Week is feasible

ACTION: ITO to talk to K. Reid about how the reps system works, and how easily it can be changed from program reps to class reps.

5. Comments on Computer Facilities, labs, study spaces, and social spaces
No comments regarding this issue.

6. Comments on Computing Support

No comments reported.

7. Comments on ITO Support

No comments reported.

8. Any other business

No other business.

Meeting adjourned.