

UG1 Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting Minutes

2pm Tuesday 14th April 2020 – Microsoft Teams

Present:

- Paul Anderson (Course/Year Organiser of UG1 Courses)
- Volker Seeker (INF1B course organiser)
- Max Larson
- Tudor Finaru
- Laura Ambrose (ITO)

Paul Anderson opened the meeting.

1. Main actions from previous minutes:

Previously, a Haskell programme for students before the year starts had been discussed. Paul spoke to Don who confirmed that it was nearly ready but needs tidying up. There is not anything that can be done to make this immediately available and working, however it could be made available to students if they want to put some work in to make it useable.

There was also a previous discussion regarding math requirements for first years. Paul discussed this further with Heather who confirmed that she had made a webpage in 2018 with this information, however it had not been widely use/well-advertised; Heather will update and make available again for next year.

Finally, the previous issues with the INF1A-FP exam was discussed. Paul confirmed that there had been lots of discussion about this and that the end result was reasonable. Tudor explained that students were confused with marks when they came out, but the confusion was mostly due to the mark scheme; when it was explained that students could not get a higher grade than 80% the students were very disappointed. Paul explained that the Common Marking Scheme does present 100% as an exceptional mark and that marks above 80% should be rare. Moreover, there is a difference between someone who can do all the course correctly and someone exceptional. Confusion this year was not ideal and will be clearer next year. Short term reactions to 80% were bad but students are more accepting now. Paul stated that the main issue came from the three separate exams and suggested that in the future they will be moving away from this into different types of assessment.

Demonstrators uniforms were also considered – It was decided that the demonstrators did not want uniforms, but more effort will be made to introduce them and make it clear who they are.

2. Comments on UG1 Courses

INF1B – Volker mentioned that he had tried to follow CMS with 80-85% being exceptional. The students confirmed that this was expected as Volker has communicated this and students are happy with it whereas with INF1A-FP they were told they could get 100%. Moreover, students confirmed that the marking criteria was very clear for INF1B.

There was then a discussion of the use of CodeGrade. The students confirmed that CodeGrade worked well and provided continuous feedback; it was a good method and they had no complaints to raise. CodeGrade also provided confirmation of submission and students could see they had uploaded the correct file. Students really appreciated the access to tests so they could see what was wrong in their code.

Content of course was discussed next – the course was more practical this year and it provided a good practical experience. There was positive feedback, rare complaints, and overall, it was well received. The reps believe that the practical aspect was well implemented and well balanced.

The assessment method was then discussed further. The first INF1B assignment was not for credit and students did not find the final assignment dramatically harder. They found it to be a good system of assessment that allowed students to see progress. It was more practical and provided students with tools to take forwards.

INF1B labs were also discussed – Students confirmed they were helpful for practical experience, that it was helpful to have them online and to have sample solutions to see what good code looks like and what functional code looks like.

Volker commented that he considered the Piazza support to work exceptionally well this year with short response times and extensive answers for most questions which the students generally agreed to.

Negatives:

A minority of students have mentioned that they perceived some of the answers on Piazza as 'condescending' which has made them feel discouraged to ask questions. Volker commented that it is hard to communicate through text at times as you cannot tell the tone or emotion of the text. He also commented that some of the replies were intended to guide students to find the information more independently – for example, directing students to lecture slides or previous answers. It is understood that communicating in a forum can be intimidating due to the volume of content and replies as well as the nature of the replies.

It was also communicated that the students found the marking for part 2 of the assessment was not as clear. This was because no examples were provided as no one has completed this assessment before. Volker confirmed that he would look at assignment 2 as a whole and be lenient with what is accepted and find a middle ground when marking. In the following year, Volker confirmed that students will have examples from this year and so what is expected will be clearer.

3. Comments on Other Courses:

No comments.

4. Comments on ITO Support, Computing Support, Computer Facilities, labs, study spaces and social spaces.

No comments.

5. Any Other Business:

No comments – quiet semester, very few complaints.

Session was then brought to a close