UG2 Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting
11th April 2022 via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Rik Sarker (UG2 Year Organiser)
Kerry Fernie (ITO)
Heather Yorston (DMP Course organiser)
David Sterratt (INF2-FDS Course Organiser)
Mary Cryan (INF2-IADS Course Organiser)
John Longley (INF2-IADS Lecturer)
Cristina Alexandru (INF2-SEPP Course Organiser)
Aurora Constantin (INF2-SEPP Lecturer)
Petros Papapanagiotou (INF2D Lecturer)
Shuyuan Zhang (UG2 Rep)
Ayshalini Rajahsuresh (UG2 Rep)
Sashank Choraria (UG2 Rep)

Apologies:

Alex Lascarides (INF2D Course Organiser)
Boris Grot (INF2C-CS Course Organiser)
Cameron McClymont (UG2 Rep)

Introduction:

Rik welcomed all to the SSLC meeting. Rik clarified that they did not have an SSLC meeting at the end of semester 1 as he was on leave. This meeting would therefore cover courses in both semesters. They would start with discussing semester 1 courses, then moving onto the full-year courses and finally the semester 2 courses.

DMP:

The reps commented that as this course was last semester they could not fully remember all the previous feedback they had received. The reps firstly discussed the workload, commenting that the majority of workload per week came from DMP as it was the only course that released weekly quizzes/homeworks, which they thought was reasonable. There was some negative feedback regarding the fairness of the marking. Heather commented that the marking was quite strict and rigorous, and any queries were answered personally by herself. Another minor issue that was raised by the reps was regarding the naming of one of the courseworks, which turned out to be more like a mini-exam. Heather agreed that it was not very clear due to confusing guidance issued by student services, but confirmed these will now be named as class tests next year.

Heather commented that another change she wishes to make next year is to make proof and problem solving more challenging by providing extension work without making it too difficult for those not on joint courses. She also raised an issue with the timing of the theory taught

within DMP which is needed for David's course, FDS. They agreed that it was difficult to coordinate the learning but they will try to adjust this for next year.

INF2C-CS

The reps state that IN2C-CS was one of the courses that had the most positive feedback. They particularly liked Boris's lectures. Since it was one of the only courses with in-person lectures, they engaged a lot more. The material covered a lot and was also very interesting.

Rik comments that in the past there had been complaints that the coursework was a lot of work, so this had been adjusted for this academic year. The reps think the coursework workload was not too time-consuming. Although they thought it was confusing and hard to understand at the start, but after that it was relatively okay.

The reps had some feedback from students who had talked to some seniors/UG3 students, regarding a previous piece of coursework, 'Cache simulation', which was of much interest to the students, however this had been replaced with an exam to minimise the workload throughout the semester.

INF2-IADS

The students heard from previous years about IADS being difficult so they went into the course knowing this. The reps commented that the in-person lectures in semester 2 really helped with learning the materials and keeping them on track. Other positive feedback they had was regarding the recorded lectures and thought the course was executed very well. The students especially appreciated the personal feedback they received for their coursework.

The reps raised an issue with there being a few typos/bugs in the lab sheet content. They also found themselves looking back to really early lecture slides so created a repository on GitHub for the implemented algorithms. Mary commented that the lab sheets were minimalist and she aims to improve the instructions and create recording to match it.

INF2-FDS

The main feedback the reps got about FDS was about the coursework 2 marking and that the feedback did not justify the marks they have received. David commented that the feedback provided to students was not as uniform as he would have liked due to the strike action and he tried to mitigate this by allowing students to ask questions afterwards. For the project, David has provided the markers with stricter instructions in terms of providing feedback.

The reps commented that the lecture slide material was good, and easy to look back on if they had missed a lecture. They also liked that they had the freedom to pick their own groups or have the opportunity to work individually if they desired.

David had a few questions for the reps regarding how they could improve workshops and labs attendance. The reps suggested that it would be better if the labs were drop-in and more

related to the coursework. They also mentioned that the lab slots were not long enough to finish the lab sheet, so David suggested having fewer but longer lab sessions. David also mentioned the timing of coursework release is tricky and that they try their best to spread them out but there is sometimes classes.

INF2-SEPP

The reps comment that one of the biggest issues confusing the students was the timing of the release of lectures each week. Cristina suggests that it may be overwhelming to release them all at once, so they comprised to twice a week to allow them to adapt. The reps also commented on coursework feedback, regarding some confusion around the exceptionality marks on the common marking scheme. Cristina explained that to get the extra marks required a higher level of understanding beyond the course content. The lecturers agreed that this should be better explained to students in the future.

The students overall would have appreciated if the course including more coding. Cristina commented that although this is not a programming course she will think about implementing more actions with code next academic year.

Cristina addressed some complaints around the lectures not being on campus. She explained that months of preparation go into planning the online lecture content so it was too late to adjust to in-person lectures mid-way through the semester. They plan to revert back to in-person lecture on campus next academic year.

The reps commented that there had been some inconsistency between the lengths of tutorials, with the tutors going through solutions at different speeds. Cristina mentioned that previously tutorials were 50 minutes and were extended to 1.5 hours to allow time for more examples and practice towards the assignments. She assured that the tutors would be better advised on how to better organise the group discussions.

Some students noted that the lecture recordings were too similar to the slide content, which Cristina mentioned she would improve for next year with additional explanations.

INF2D

The reps thought the lecture content and courseworks were really interesting which was quite attractive to students. Some students who are interested in machine learning and AI really like this course because it introduces them nicely to the machine learning courses.

One complaint they had was regarding the length of the tutorial exercises were becoming longer throughout the semester and tutors struggled to cover it all in the allocated slot. They also mentioned that the second half of the course covered a lot of new concepts which students sometimes found overwhelming. The students were worrying about the exam due to the amount of material covered in the course. Petros commented that they will look into restructuring the tutorials to make these more manageable. In regards to the exam, Petros mentioned that the best way to practice is to go through the past exam papers. He adds that

the exam is open book and will not contain much more complex calculations than from the examples from lectures and tutorials.

Overall year

John asked the reps for some feedback on how they feel the courses relate to each other. The reps comment how they have used previous courses material for their current courses, for example, DMP material for FDS tutorials. They think in general it is a beneficial for students to understand the connections and makes them aware that they should refer to knowledge from previous course materials during their learning process. Rik suggested that in the future lecturers should emphasise the connections where possible to do so, in order to benefit those students who may be out of sync or behind on learning material.

A general comment made by the reps was towards the release dates and deadlines of courses overlapping, causing some students to have multiple deadlines on the same week. Particularly towards the end of the semester having a lot of deadlines in the last few weeks. Petros comments that the courseworks for INF2D were generally released as soon as possible after the content was covered to maximise the time the students have to complete the assignments. The reps think that the release of new coursework should be after the previous deadline to reduce the pressure on students. Rik adds that it is really tricky to coordinate coursework so that they do not run simultaneously, but they will consider this at the next meeting they have regarding this.

Some lecturers noted that the tutorial attendance had been pretty poor overall this academic year. The reps feel that the higher attendance at the start of the semester is most likely due to students being intrigued in the first few weeks. Students also tend to prioritise coursework deadlines over small teaching hours, and some students don't like tutors style so just don't turn up. Mary suggests that having fewer but larger tutorial groups in a lecture theatre may be a good solution. Larger tutorials would allow quieter students to sit back and observe, and allow those who like a discussion to be able to get more involved. The lecturers agree to set up a poll to gather student's opinion on the larger tutorial groups for next year.

There were no further comments, and the meeting was ended.