

## UG2 SSLC Semester 2 2020/21

4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 via Microsoft Teams

### Present:

Rik Sarker (UG2 Year Organiser)  
Laura Ambrose (ITO)  
Alex Lascarides (INF2D Course Organiser)  
Claudia Chirita (INF2D Lecturer)  
Mary Cryan (INF2-IADS Course Organiser)  
Cristina Alexandru (INF2-SEPP Course Organiser)  
David Sterratt (INF2-FDS Course Organiser)  
John Longley (INF2-IADS Lecturer)  
Callum McWilliam (UG2 Rep)  
Irina Gubaciova (UG2 Rep)  
Ammir Barakat (UG Rep)

### Apologies:

Wenxuan Li (UG2 Rep)

### Introduction:

Rik Sarker welcomed all to the meeting and opened a brief discussion on the overall year. Rik mentioned that before semester one began there was a meeting in which the course organisers discussed deadlines and spaced deadlines out, but even with this the number of deadlines has been a lot due to the increase of coursework. Rik asked the reps whether they believed a specific course was problematic or whether the issues were more general? The reps commented that they believed it to be more general; it is a combination of overlapping work and that individually most courses are fine. If the reps had to pick, INF2-SEPP stands out in this semester and INF2-CS last semester, but INF2-CS was more organised than INF2-SEPP and generally the INF2-SEPP coursework was less well organised.

The Semester 2 and full year courses were then considered individually.

### INF2D:

The reps shared results from feedback surveys given to the UG2 students. INF2D was rated 4.2/5 and was the highest rated course. Students found staff to be very patient, well organised, and the office hours were extremely useful. Tutorials were engaging and students appreciated points for engagement. Alex Lascarides commented that they would not be continuing with engagement marks due to students being overwhelmed but they hope to keep the tutorial exercises. The low attendance at tutorials was discussed; Alex was disappointed that tutors had been organised and paid for and that students did not take advantage of the opportunity. Rik commented that online learning was not as engaging in general, and in the next year it should be emphasized that while lecturers need to continue efforts to make courses interesting and engaging, students also need to make additional effort to keep up engagement in an online teaching environment. Alex agreed students had had a bad experience with online learning, but commented that it was bad for academic staff, too; there was no engagement and often they had to speak to blank screens.

### INF2-SEPP:

The reps again shared results from feedback surveys: INF2-SEPP received 1.8/5, which was the lowest score. Reps shared that they did not relate to the course content. Reps commented that the delivery of the course was good, and they appreciated the answering of their questions on Piazza, but that this

standard of answering questions did not continue. Reps reported that students felt their concerns regarding CW3 were ignored or brushed over on Piazza and some found the responses rude. Reps further commented that the feedback from coursework was vague and repetitive and that the coursework itself was hard to understand; CW3 was particularly disliked. There were also issues with delayed lecture release and sound quality. In general, aspects of the course were overwhelming; while tutorials helped, there was a lack of understanding among students and a lack of examples to help students understand.

Cristina Alexandru apologised for the students experience with the course and shared that it had been a negative experience for her, too. She believed that the redesign of the course had been much too ambitious for online delivery. Cristina also shared that there had been issues with the Teaching Assistant pool, such as poor communication and delayed responses, and this had a negative impact on coursework. She confirmed that they will be accordingly lenient with marking. Additionally, she said she will add more examples to the course next year. Cristina also had issues with low tutorial attendance and lack of engagement; labs had low attendance too. To combat this, next year tutorials will be bigger with more examples to help with assignments. Cristina also commented on the issues students had with feedback; markers were meant to give more specific feedback and they did not do this enough. An automated tool was also used for feedback which was meant to speed up marking, but there were technical difficulties.

One of the reps commented that CW3 felt disjointed from CW2; lots of students were confused that they would not be going off of their own designs and that there was a lack of continuity between CW2 and CW3. They also felt a design would have helped. Cristina commented that the coursework was not as continuous as it should have been and that a design will be provided next year.

Rik commented that software engineering has been a difficult course to manage over the years. The redesign of the course was to try and help issues already present. However, it was hard to redesign the course to be interesting and to cover all that it needs to. The pandemic increased the difficulty as it is hard to begin a new course online. For next year all the above issues will be looked at.

## **INF2-IADS**

The reps praised John Longley and Mary Cryan; their lectures were enjoyable and very well done. They also wished the best of luck to John for his book. There were some concerns over delayed lecture release and some students felt that CW1 and CW2 were worth more than 10%. CW3 received positive feedback and was considered by some to be the best of the three coursework. CW2 had mixed reviews. Some students felt the difficulty of CW1 spiked between parts, with part B being the most difficult. John commented that he would reorder the parts or slim down the coursework in the future.

Mary commented that some of the coursework would be cut down next year so that it would ask less of students, but that she would keep the quizzes as a way to keep on top of content; some of CW1, CW2, CW3, and the engagement blog would be lightened. One rep commented that the engagement blog could be cut and suggested a peer review instead. Mary commented that she won't rule it out, however there have been some amazing blog examples and the blogs are a good way to get students to engage; it is not a lot of effort for engagement and is therefore an easy way to get marks. One rep commented that while the blog wasn't a lot of work, some students don't use Piazza and struggle to find areas to write about for the blog. Mary said that the point was that students would have to engage to have something to write about. John commented that levels of activity on Piazza have been much higher this year and wondered how much of that was due to the engagement blogs.

Mary also commented on the lack of engagement from students in the tutorials and said that next year she would increase the tutorial size to avoid empty tutorials. However, participation in live discussions was good and Mary and John were happy with overall engagement.

## **INF2-FDS**

The reps felt that staff really cared about student experience. There was also praise for the notes provided and course content was said to be enjoyable. Lectures were interesting, but sometimes they were too long, and slides were not always useful. Students enjoyed the final project and liked having choice. Some students felt course was not balanced well across semesters; instead of being split 50/50, some felt the split was more similar to 30/70. As well as this, some felt the essay did not provide incentive to work hard as it was too difficult to get a good or high mark. Reps said that the workload was fine, but the spread of the work causes some issues. They also asked for lectures to be added as playlists to Media Hopper to which David Sterratt agreed.

David expressed his appreciation at the feedback. He commented on the imbalance and said that there was a lot of material they wanted the students to cover before they began their coursework. He also commented on the low attendance in workshops and said that they tried to do more tutorial exercises in semester two, but that this did not make a difference in attendance. The attendance was good for presentations and they were helpful to see student progress and engagement.

David also asked what should be cut from the course if they decide to cut something. One rep commented that they thought the ethics portion of the course was overly long; this could be condensed. Another rep commented that they felt a lot of the ethics to be common sense, but the topic still had important points, so they agreed that less time could be spent on this area. David commented perhaps ethics could be integrated into other areas of the course and he would consider ways to do this.

### **Final Comments:**

The reps commented that there was no standard set up for each course on Learn and the presentation was not consistent. Small administrative improvements to make all the courses more similar would be helpful. Rik agreed and suggested the UG2 course organisers meet to agree on the layout.

The reps also raised questions about hybrid learning. The need to maintain social distancing was discussed; large lectures will still be online pre-recorded or live. Smaller groups will hopefully be able to meet in person. This also depends on room availability and usefulness – for example, David mentioned he had asked for labs but also had to consider how useful it would be to have labs if students and teachers have to remain one metre apart from each other's screens.

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