Admissions

Applications were speedily handled (MJ) and there was general satisfaction with how they were handled and about the level of service provided. June Maxwell’s role in the process was especially commended. No specific changes to the process were suggested.

Induction

There should be more social opportunities during MSc induction to meet and get to know fellow MSc students. Induction was a bit quick and students were plunged straight into lectures (MJ). Some students arriving late missed induction (AA) and they would appreciate recurring social opportunities after induction to get to know their fellow students.

Course Selection

Several students (II, AD, JN et al) asked that course selection be better informed so that students know what to expect and what pre-requisite knowledge is assumed. It was felt that course descriptors, brief selection advice from programme directors and being asked to attend the first few lectures wasn’t a sufficient basis for making course option choices. II suggested an introduction being given to the content of each course. In reply it was suggested that as there are quite a lot of courses taken by MSc students a presentation session might be quite lengthy and most of its contents wouldn’t be useful to each student present.

AA et al suggested written briefing information on courses in addition to course descriptors that detailed the tools and programming languages used on the course, the number of assignments (JN) and their hand in dates.

AA asked that course notes be made available before registration to students to aid option choices and to allow students arriving late to catch up more easily. In reply the university policy of limiting access to the VLE to registered students was described as was the current policy of limiting access to VLE course content to registered students for that course and to registered students or staff who are individually identified as being guests or visitors. It was also pointed out that many staff maintain detailed course information on public web pages and provide links to that material from Vision. AA suggested then that there be a readily available web page with links to all those public course pages to avoid the visibility constraints on Vision.
Experience with MScs

MSc Software Engineering - students want to see more programming examples and supporting tutorials on semester 1 courses on this MSc. Too much of the content was abstract or theoretical and wasn’t backed by sufficient teaching of practical measures for exploiting it (MJ).

Experience with Courses

Insufficient attention was paid to ensuring that coursework deadlines didn’t coincide (MJ, II). Some courses had unrealistic expectations about what students should already know or could catch up and learn in the time available (see below on F21DS, F21MC, F21DL).

Coursework specifications should be available from the very beginning of a course (AA). It was replied that that in fact was current CS department policy although the occasional course may not be fully compliant with the policy.

Although some tutorial and examples for using tools and languages on various courses was provided on Vision, more tutorials and examples should be provided (II).

F21CN Computer Network Security - unfair to give those students on this course, who happened to know C, extra marks for doing some of the coursework in that language (TM).

F21DS Distributed Systems Programming - first part should have more on methodologies to go about exploiting particular DSP technologies such as RMI or CORBA (AD). Second part assumed knowledge of C or that that deficiency could be rapidly made up by someone who knew Java which was unrealistic in the time available (TM). Also its content, addressed at exploiting coprocessors to develop parallel applications, was somewhat removed from the ostensible subject area of distributed systems programming (AD).

F21MC Mobile Communications & Programming - began theoretically with no labs and then suddenly switched to being highly practical with labs being run. This transition was too abrupt (MJ, II, AD). Handouts on early part were too theoretical and should be more practically oriented (II). It took a lot of time to get accustomed to using Eclipse with Android (TM). Perhaps a longer or more helpful introduction might be appropriate.

F29CG Computer Graphics - course descriptor wasn’t explicit that courses would make significant use of OpenGL which was unexpected (AA). This should be remedied.

F21DL Data Mining and Machine Learning - course descriptor was inadequately specific about what was in the course, and the assumptions it made about language and tool use were overly demanding.

Computer and Network Support

The WiFi service was the worst institutional WiFi service that one of our students had ever experienced (AD). It was replied that staff were well aware of the deficiencies in local WiFi and that changes were afoot to improve the university’s WiFi service provision for CS students. Students were asked to use all opportunities available to them to press the university for a better service. Staff would also continue pushing for a better WiFi (and e-mail) service.

MACS, HWU

31 October 2012
MSc projects

MSc project titles would be made available at the end of semester 1. MSc students could propose their own MSc projects or select MSc projects proposed by staff at the start of semester 2. No issues about the selection of MSc projects were raised.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the staff student committee will be held at the end of this semester or at the start of next semester depending upon the wishes of the MSc reps.

Hamish Taylor