

Student Representatives Report 15th of August 2006

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1. Overview

This report has been prepared by the CSE Student Representatives for the period between the 16th of May 2006 and the 22nd of August 2006 for the attendees of the Head of School meeting.

2. Session One Follow Up

1. Lab Capacity & the Re-opening of Windows Labs

1. Overview

Lab capacities were a large issue last semester with CSE having fewer labs and two large first year courses running simultaneously.

2. Currently

With overall enrolment in CSE courses reduced this semester since last, there have yet to be any issues involving lab capacities. In addition Piano Lab is now running Linux with VM ware, which should alleviate the issues of students not being able to find free lab computers.

2. Booking Terminals

1. Overview

Recommendations about the booking terminals were made in Session 1:

1. Change the terminal appearance so that it is clear if a terminal has been booked or not. (Perhaps, bring back red backgrounds like we had in 2005).
2. Change the booking system to allow instant bookings. ("Reserve me a computer somewhere, tell me where it is")

2. Currently

The first issue has been solved- terminals now display messages similar to 'RESERVED FOR COMPXXXX' in large writing

Unsure if second issue has been resolved- could this please be clarified?

3. Internet Quota and other providers

1. Overview

In Session 1, a recommendation was made on behalf of Stureps that CSE should approach the University in seeking an external internet provider that would give students and staff more quota and less reliance on the University.

2. Currently

The Session 1 survey had the following question posed:

45. AARNet charges \$7 per gigabyte. Do you think UNSW should let CSE use another provider?

Yes: 139 votes

No: 36 votes

No answer: 52 votes

Students overwhelmingly agree on this issue- and we believe that approaching the University with results to show student support (as well as further research into prices, etc), that it may be well received (especially if CSE has done the legwork).

Thus, is there a possibility of considering this in future?

4. Student Learning Spaces

1. Overview

The laptop lounge is a wonderful place for all CSE students to hang out or get some work done; however it is generally over crowded. The number of students bringing laptop computers to university is increasing and it is clear the current facilities can no longer meet the growing needs of CSE students.

2. Conclusions

Students have requested another such area as the laptop lounge in the K17 basement. While space is at a minimum it would still be worthwhile to look into converting an empty lab or other general-purpose room into a space for students.

3. Resolution

This issue was placed on hold during session one and it would be of interest if the school plans on creating another space for students.

3. Survey Results

1. Overview

1. Conclusions

The mid session survey confirmed a number of issues from session one and provided guidance for further actions this semester. The number of responses for each question also showed how important some issues are to CSE students while questions with a minimal response don't seem to be concerns for the majority of students.

It was pleasing to see that a large number of students took the time to share their concerns and write lengthy descriptions of courses and services they would like to see.

2. Statistics

1. 234 results total
2. Blank results removed
3. Duplicate results removed
4. Minimal results removed (eg, only answering 1 question, 2 questions)
5. Censored these results slightly (profanity removed, etc.)
6. 227 Results total

3. Duration

1. Begin date: June 26, 2006
2. Finish Date: July 16, 2006

2. Useful Results



1. Results Based on 227 Responses

Below are a few survey results that are rather helpful, informative or insightful into the views of CSE students. The full results are available at http://www.cse.unsw.edu.au/~rksh029/results/all_results.html.

1. It would be useful if CSE offered 24-hour lab access.



2. The Help Desk opening hours are sufficient.



3. There are adequate drink/water facilities in and around the CSE building.



4. Overall, I have had a good experience working in teams at CSE.



5. Lab alarms regularly hurt my ears and prevent me from working on assignments.



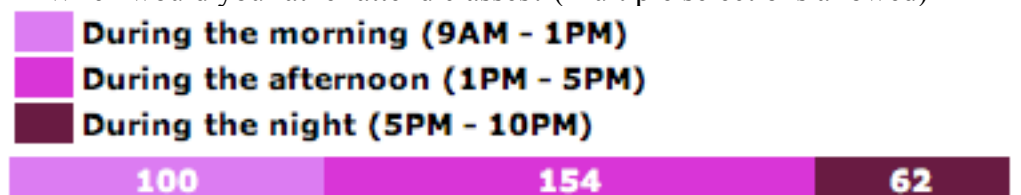
6. I would like to take courses based on the Microsoft .NET platform.



7. Overall I enjoyed session one.



8. When would you rather attend classes? (Multiple selections allowed)



9. When would you rather the help desk was open (as above)



10. Where do you go to find out which courses you are required to take for your degree? (as above)



3. Reliability of Results

1. Issues

The survey did not require students to enter personal details or log in to take the survey, while this made it completely anonymous it also made it impossible to verify if a single student had taken the survey multiple times. With the large number of questions on the survey, another risk was students arbitrarily filling out certain questions without properly reading the question.

2. Actions

In order to minimise these issues Rupert wrote a script to compare and rank all the surveys against each other. This picked up the few duplicate and non-serious survey attempts thus improving the reliability of the results.

3. Conclusions

The current way CSE administers surveys is quite good as students are required to log in and are only allowed to have one submission counted, in future this is what we plan to do.

4. Requests

1. Surveys

It would be advantageous to the Stureps if we were granted access to the authentication facility used for the CSE surveys. This would allow us to ensure each student only fills in a single survey or conducts a poll only once.

4. Courses

1. COMP1911

1. Overview

Overall the course received positive feedback from most of the students; this feedback was mainly verbal and praised the lecturer (Richard Buckland). Other students did however question whether the assignments were explained enough or suitable for the majority of the students in the course.

2. Issues

The actual and final due date for the project confused a number of students resulting in later submissions and students losing marks. Many students assumed that by submitting by the final due date they would be eligible for all possible marks as the spec stated that only bonus marks would be lost if a student submitted by the final submission date.

3. Recommendations

The wording and explanation of project due dates and the project should be defined and explained.

2. COMP1021/1091

1. Issues

Students in this course sent in the following issues to us:

1. 2 hours for a 21-question test was not enough. 15 are multiple choice, the other 16 are all fairly involved code reading short/long answers.
2. Why is there a -1/2 mark given to wrong answers in multiple choice segments? I thought that lecturers and the subsequent courses they taught were out to try and help you pass subjects not punish you needlessly.
3. Why is there a 50% needed pass for both the written and prac exams? I sort of understand the prac exam requirement but for reasons mentioned above, the written exam was a bit of a joke given the time limits and tasks asked.

2. Resolution

Andrew Taylor replied, answering with the following replies:

"While time pressure is often a factor in exam performance, based on past sessions I doubt it will have major impact on results in this exam. If it does and the distribution of this session's written exam marks is inappropriate, the written exam marks will be scaled up."

"The 0.5 mark penalty (versus 2 marks for the correct answer) for incorrect multiple-choice answers is to deter guessing. This is a common strategy to produce more accurate assessment from multiple choice questions."

The student was pleased with the outcome of both their result in the course, and with the responses from the speedy responses by Andrew Taylor.

3. SENG1031

1. Issues

A few students raised the point that no copies of the textbook were available in the library.

The project specification was delivered very quickly and in a vague manner, student expressed concern about the specification and its lack of explanation. All groups are currently behind schedule as the spec was not readily made available and a lecture was cancelled.

2. Resolution

Peter Ho (LIC) has put forward the proper forms to acquire a copy for open reserve in the library as soon as it becomes available from the bookshop. The issues regarding the project are pending.

4. COMP2121

1. Issue

Numerous, see comments

2. Comments (Spelling errors corrected)

The board doesn't work - software which has been tested on other boards simply fails to work on this board - a board which has already been taken to the CSE hell-desk for repair once before, during their less than meager opening hours

There was supposed to be a prerequisite course for this subject. But for this year, the prerequisite was cancelled. This makes life incredibly difficult for students who have absolutely no knowledge about microprocessors and interfacing.

The lecture notes are useless, as they contain magic numbers and symbols coming out of no where with concepts introduced in the wrong order, along with circuitry diagrams which doesn't mean a thing to us. Very often the lecturer is not being clear with the explanations and makes mistakes which absolutely confuses the students, and just tells us to 'Refer to the Manual'

The lab work gets much too difficult too quickly; again, this is with respect to students with little knowledge about microprocessors and assembly language.

The labs are too long. There's no way we can finish these things, perhaps they should be broken up into smaller labs (perhaps one per week) which had less content?

The first assignment was completely pointless. Aside from teaching us nothing, it also wasted inordinate amounts of our time which could have been used for other things. Information was nigh-impossible to find, and the majority of the course used a single website and one textbook pdf.
www.heyrick.co.uk/assembler

In general, quite inappropriately paced. With the exception perhaps of the 1st week, the first 7-8 weeks of lectures was spend reiterating concepts already covered in computing 1b. while it is necessary perhaps to do a refreshing of memory, and to get hold of more syntax, the amount of time spent on this was far too long.

3. Resolution

We believe a new lecturer has taken over this course for Session 2. We'll monitor feedback that we receive and see if it has improved from last session

5. COMP2041

1. Issues

A student was concerned over some of their Session 1 marks, and attempted to contact both the LIC and their tutor, as well as posting on the CSE Forums, to no avail.

2. Concerns

1. Disputing some of the marking for Assignment
2. One of his lab marks incorrectly listed in sturec
3. Unsure about how final mark mark was calculated (best 11 labs, or best 12 labs?)

3. Resolution

No resolution that was publicly sent to stureps@cse is archived. The reply may have been directly to the sturep who sent the mail, or there may have been no response.

6. COMP3111

1. Issues

Tim Lambert has acknowledged that making COMP3111 no longer compulsory was not discussed at length or in detail at the last TC meeting.

The following was a background prepared and sent to Tim Lambert:

1. Albert Nymeyer has been asked whether any changes will be made to improve the subject, and has not responded.
2. The course surveys I have collected (<http://cgi.cse.unsw.edu.au/~stureps/survey/>) for COMP3111 have been very, very negative
3. Several students have told me that they would rather have no ACS accreditation than be forced to take COMP3111
4. Several students have asked me whether they should delay / boycott the subject given that it may not be improved next session (Session 2)

2. Resolution

No resolution has been reached on this issue.

7. COMP3311

1. Issue

There were concerns that the LIC had not posted on the forums to answer pre-exam questions for over 2 weeks. Also that they had not replied to emails sent to the class account, and that marks were distributed long after required by CSE policy.

Further concerns were raised about spam being placed onto the CSE forums.

2. Resolution

The LIC responded citing the reasons for not having the time to perform above duties. They explained the reasoning of prioritisation in answering responses, and also noted that the CSE forums are regularly subjected to robot spam attacks.

Students felt frustrated that the first project was ambiguous and hence was re-updated numerous times. This prolonged the time taken to complete the project (which was not easy to begin with) and caused the LIC to give an extension which caused concerns of the timeframe of the other assessments.

After hearing the student's complaints the LIC to cut down aspects of the second project. This second project was indeed much easier, which also resulted in concerns on the equal weightings given to the projects

8. COMP4001

1. Issues

1. No feedback had been provided before exam was sat.

2. Nobody in the course received feedback on their work, not even now, 17 weeks after the start of term.
3. It was meant to be 4 Assignments worth 10%, 15%, 10%, 15%, and 50% exam. It ended up being 2 Assignments, worth 10%, 20%, and 70% exam.

2. Comments

"Many people in COMP4001 left out the last question in the exam, which was worth 50% of the exam marks. They thought they could count their final assignment as the last question on the exam, due to the confusing re-arrangement of the COMP4001 assessment. Therefore unless there is a huge amount of scaling (in the order of +20 marks per person in the course), most of the course will fail.

To see a really messy course, I encourage you to read the notices on www.cse.unsw.edu.au/~cs4001 . If you want to see some frustration, check out the corresponding forum."

3. Survey Results

Based on 8 students responses

TEACHING: 1.625 / 10
FEEDBACK: 1.0 / 10
RELEVANCY: 4.75 / 10
ENJOYMENT: 1.75 / 10

(The lowest mark you can get is 1/10, not 0/10)

4. Resolution

Pending resolution from the school.

9. COMP4211

1. Issue

A final year Computer Engineering student had a problem with this course - he had enrolled in it (COMP4211) as well as Thesis B. He did this at the start of the year when he did the rest of his timetable, and didn't think much of it.

2. Comment

"I was told by a friend of mine that the course had been cancelled. I went back to look at my e-mails (both CSE and unimail) and found I received no such notification e-mail [...] the class website yields no information either. This left me in a difficult position as semester had already started, and I had to rush to choose a subject before they filled up (if they had already done so).

I would like to know if there is any avenue to launch a formal complaint about this"

3. Resolution

The student was contacted with available options, as well as an offer to lodge the complaint through us, anonymously, or alternatively for us to organise a meeting with the school and student to sort this issue out.

As the lecturer resigned from his duties at the very last minute so it was difficult to complete the admin side of the course. In the future lecturers should have to finish all their duties before stepping down as the ensure there is a minimal disruption to student's learning.

5. CSE

1. Tutor Applications

1. Overview

Tutors seem to be a concern University-wide, but more specifically to CSE, there are some students who believe the selection process is weighted too heavily on WAM and Marks (which are of course important for course content knowledge), with insufficient weighting on whether the tutors can actually teach (or have appropriate personalities).

2. Comments

“How many bad tutors have I had?

How many bad tutors have you had?

How many bad tutors are there in CSE?

the answer to all these questions is too many.

Why is this so?...because the selection process is imperfect and rates

WAM's as more important than teaching skills. Why does it not involve a personality test of some variety?

Just because a tutor has a high WAM, does not mean that they can convey the content from their brains to the students.

Why is it so hard for engineers to design a better selection process?”

3. Recommendations

CSE should implement a brief class or session for tutors to attend, in which they can get hands on practical experience in presentation, class management and being able to control students. Doing this amongst themselves with the guidance of session trainers would be beneficial. Tutors could either be selected from this day after academics review their work, or just as a general training day for all accepted tutors.

Feedback from students should be encouraged more- lecturers are teaching and we review them at the end of session, why not tutors as well?

2. Student Facilities

1. Overview

While there is still concern over adequate water facilities in the CSE building, thanks goes out to Brad Hall for publicizing both:

1) The availability for all students to freely use the Level 1 kitchenette

2) The locations of water dispensers in the building

2. Recommendations

If future concerns from students about availability of resources arises again, and they are unsatisfied with the quality of current resources, we will reopen this issue. Otherwise, this is a good outcome.

3. iLecture

1. Overview

The Stureps has received some feedback from students who would like CSE lectures to utilise the iLecture facilities provided by the university. As many of the bigger lectures are held in rooms with recorders, it will be very beneficial to students who would like to listen to their lectures again.

2. Conclusions

Although, there could be some concern with regards to students skipping lectures as a result of this feature. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of the students to disadvantage themselves. However, not providing iLecture services might disadvantage those who have a valid reason for missing out on a lecture or would like to clarify certain things after a lecture.

3. Recommendation

The Stureps would like to propose the use of iLecture facilities, particularly in CSE courses with a bigger enrolment.

4. Disk Quota / UDUS Funds

1. Overview

Could we please obtain clarification on the disk quota in CSE for Session 2? There are reports (apparently from the CSG meeting?) that Disk Quota has doubled. Will this take effect on the census date, or earlier?

Is there a page dedicated to explaining the process through which CSE gives Wireless students credit in the UDUS model pool? There have been concerns raised that there is little information on how much students receive, how it is calculated, and whether census dates have any effect.

2. Recommendations

School to clarify on this issue, Stureps to link information from the Stureps website and post a news item about it.

5. General facilities

1. Societies Office

Brad Hall has mentioned this in the past- will this be available in 2007? Or is there a timeline of when this might be operational?

6. Student Representatives

1. Activities

- Drafting of a constitution for the school to approve after the Stureps have agreed on it. This is progressing well and has gone through several draft stages already.
- Election for two new positions after David Collien (2nd year rep) and Usama Malik (postgrad rep) have stepped down.
- The Stureps have gone around to multiple large COMP/SENG lectures to advertise the role of the Stureps and how we can help. Positive feedback generally, everyone seemed to listen and pay attention, not talk amongst themselves or distract others during our talk. First year was exceptionally

receptive, most probably due to Richard Buckland accompanying our talk with his guitar.

7. Congratulations

1. Richard Buckland

The Student Representatives would also like to congratulate Richard Buckland on his teaching awards this session. Well Done!

It is also worth noting that Richard Buckland received over four pages of praise from students in our mid session survey.

8. Thanks

1. Special Thanks

We would also like to show our thanks to the school and those who have assisted us greatly this session, including the administration staff (Paul), grievance officer (Bill), staff liaisons (Ken, Brad, Brenda), and all the academics and staff that have helped answer our questions. And SS as well, who have helped us many a time.