



Clayton School of Information Technology Student/Staff Meeting

Meeting 2, 2014

Date and Location: Thursday May 15, 2014 at 2pm in Building 63 Room 115

PRESENT

Chair: Graham Farr

Assistant to Chair: Amelia Morrison

STAFF

Josh Akerstein
Marc Cheong
Alan Dorin
Julian Garcia
Chris Gonsalvez
Daniel Horsley
Stephen Huxford (via phone)
Arun Konagurthu
Carlo Kopp
Mary Lim
Rita Quieros
Caitlin Slattery
David Squire
Peter Tischer
Paul van Haaster

APOLOGIES

STAFF

David Albrecht
John Betts
David Dowe
Chris Ling
Ron Pose

STUDENTS

Michael Billington (BCS-3rd year)
Sharlene Davey (BBIS-2nd year)
Aaron Gruneklee (BCS-2nd year)
Akansha Shubhi Kapoor (BBIS-2nd year)
Anureet Kaur (BBIS-2nd year)
Dana (Da Hye) Lee (BBIS-3rd year)
James Liu (BBIS-1st year)
John Nguyenhuy (BBIS-3rd year)
Harshini Pannirselvam (BSE-4th year)
Josh Parnham (BCS-1st year)
Jack Zhang (BBIS-2nd year)

STUDENTS

Yu-Wen (Becca) Chang (BCS-1st year)
Amanda Cheah (BBIS-1st year)
Neha Chopra (BBIS-2nd year)
Piyush Dhir (BSE-2nd year)
Brett Dunn (BSE-1st year)
Andreas Limberopoulos (BSE-4th year)
Sajeeb Lohani (BSE-1st year)
Milena Mitic (BSE-3rd year)
Manan Rana (BSE-1st year)
Lokitha Sivakumaran (BSE-2nd year)
Stefanie Yap (BSE-2nd year)

1. WELCOME

Graham commenced by thanking everyone for their attendance and one by one everyone around the room introduced themselves. Graham also introduced Stephen Huxford, who was on speaker phone.

2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Graham provided further information on the rationale behind asking students to purchase their own clicker this year. With more and more FIT units implementing the use of clickers during lectures, if the Faculty had to buy them we would need around 600 in total, costing around \$60 each. Aside from the large financial investment, the bigger issue would come from the administration of these clickers. Things such as maintaining an accurate list of who has which clicker, taking and returning deposits for each clicker when borrowed and then returned, and also deciding on consequences for not returning clickers, (e.g. withholding results), all mount to a very complex and time consuming process. It was decided that it would be better to ask students to purchase their own clickers, as they will use them for more than one subject throughout their degree anyway. Clickers are working well in lectures and have increased lecture attendance rates, as well as engagement in lectures.

Regarding FIT2017 and the earlier release of lecture slides, Graham noted that the lecturer is endeavouring to do this.

Improving the flow on from information learned in FIT1040 into second year units (in particular FIT2081), is an ongoing discussion and is now part of the bigger issue of course architecture changes at Monash. The university is in the process of re-organising its course offerings and FIT is a part of this.

Feedback provided on FIT3042 at the last meeting has been passed on to Peter Tischer.

Finally, the issue of slow log-in times in the labs was discussed. Paul van Haaster explained that FIT has increased the number of IT applications for our students and that has increased log in times. He noted that logging in afresh results in a longer log in time (by 3-6 minutes) and therefore students should log off rather than shut down at the end of their session. He said the problem will be reduced by the start of semester 2, 2014. After the meeting, Paul advised he will be making changes to the boot up option of computers in 26/G18 starting 19 May and should be finished by 20 May. He said this should reduce the start-up times by a few minutes.

2. UNIT FEEDBACK

With Stephen Huxford on the phone, Graham discussed FIT2081 and FIT1040 first.

FIT2081 Mobile application development Stephen Huxford (CE/Lecturer)

Students are not happy using Macs in this unit, they would prefer using Windows based computers. Stephen noted that Macs are used because the development environment runs more smoothly on Macs and real devices do not require drivers.

Stephen is a really good lecturer, but the students find that labs (worth 4% each week) are difficult and it is too easy for them to lose marks. Stephen commented that there are four consultation sessions on Thursdays and Fridays to help students earn these marks, and they should attend these sessions for assistance. Students present noted that the consultations help.

Stephen mentioned the delay in students receiving feedback on lab answers is because South Africa is a week behind us in teaching. Results here can't be released until the South African students are also ready to receive feedback.

Students who have experience with Java and Python find the pace of the classes too slow, and those without experience find it too fast.

FIT2081 is a core unit for BBIS students and they think it is too narrow. They would like to learn a wider range of languages. Stephen said the decision to do these languages was mobile application development and learn a textual language, and this limits the choices to Java/Android or Objective C/iOS. In FIT3083 students are exposed to many more languages.

FIT1040 Programming fundamentals (Peter O'Donnell (CE)) Stephen Huxford (Lecturer)

Positive feedback. The content is explained well and Moodle is good. There are too many points on the lecture slides. Students would like to know if assessments are cross-marked (between different tutors)? Students feel that some tutors may mark tougher than others. Stephen said he will discuss this with his head tutor next time they meet.

FIRST YEAR UNITS

FIT1006 Business information analysis John Betts (CE/Lecturer)

Slides are easy to read, although some concepts could be explained better. Overall the feedback is positive; John is not moving too fast. Clicker questions are really good. The small group structure is really good. There is a low student turn-out rate to tutorials.

FIT1008 Introduction to computer science David Albrecht (CE/Lecturer)

No feedback.

FIT1029 Algorithmic problem solving (David Albrecht (CE)) Julian Garcia (Lecturer)

Material is stimulating but some new concepts are overwhelming. The PDF lecture slides need to have transitions removed. The textbook implies too much prior knowledge and more resources on Moodle would be good. Students now have longer to answer clicker questions in lectures and this is positive. The PASS program is really useful and Pseudocode is not as overwhelming as it was earlier in semester.

Last meeting, the issue of desks in C1 folding over while being used (and items falling on the floor) was raised. Caitlin Slattery mentioned that C1 will undergo a complete refurbishment at the end of 2014, so the problem should be solved ready for next year.

Due to time constraints in the meeting, Julian Garcia and David Albrecht forwarded comments on to Graham Farr regarding FIT1029 after the meeting. Julian wrote:

Overwhelming content: There is a bit of an increase in difficulty once you cover recursion and move on to backtracking and dynamic programming. I will make my best to try and explain things better. Because of this, we have set up additional consultation times. We have now 5 hours per week for consultation.

PDF transitions need to be removed: That's a fair point. I will do my best to reduce the number of slides while trying to keep the tracing of algorithms that, I know from mid semester feedback, students like.

Textbook: There is no textbook for that content at that level in the market. We explain this at the beginning of the unit.

Further to this last comment, David added:

Although there is currently no suitable textbook, there is a very good book which is recommended reading and we are working on developing an e-book for the future.

FIT1030 Introduction to business information systems (John Betts (CE)) Poh Hong (Mary) Lim (Lecturer)

Students really like Mary; she is friendly and funny. Moodle quizzes are useful. Concerns were raised on the amount of material covered in each lecture. Clearer questions and also more clicker questions would be good.

MAT1830 Discrete mathematics for computer science Daniel Horsley (CE/Lecturer)

There are two lecturers for this unit, who teach in different ways. The class seems to be evenly divided as to whose method they prefer.

Graham read email feedback from Sajeeb Lohani who mentioned that:

For the units 1006, 1029, 1040, and MAT 1830, the students are extremely happy with the lecturer, and the way the classes are running. Also, the implementation of clickers in other subjects would be a great improvement, as the students who have already bought the clickers want to use them more, as they see the fact that they do help with learning.

Also, being a member of this years CySCA competition, I was wondering if it would be possible to start up training earlier, as the other competitors like UNSW trains throughout the entire year.

Graham noted that Monash participated in the CyCSA challenge for only the third time this year, and we came sixth in Australia. All higher placed teams were from two universities, so effectively, Monash was third overall.

SECOND YEAR UNITS

FIT2001 Systems development Chris Gonsalvez (CE/Lecturer)

Very good feedback. The workload is manageable. Regarding group work, the groups are fixed for the whole semester, and some would like the groups to be mixed, so they can have the opportunity to work with different students. Chris Gonsalvez stated there is a reason for students remaining in the same group for the whole semester. She wants students to experience working with a group who potentially receive negative feedback and then learn how to deal with that feedback and each other (in the same group) to improve their performance. There are skills to be learned from this process and it will assist students for the 'real world'. There was also positive feedback about students sticking with the one group – possibly from those working in a well performing group.

Students mentioned that Chris and the tutors are very passionate about making sure students are on top of their workload, and peer assessment is very good.

FIT2003 IT professional practice (Ann Nicholson (CE)) Josh Akerstein (Lecturer)

This unit is very different to other subjects BBIS students do. The e-folio was discussed. With the e-folio, students make a weekly submission, which contributes to their end of semester mark. The problem is that the last e-folio submission is due at the end of semester, in the same week the last piece of assessment is also due.

Graham read out email feedback from Lokitha Sivakumaran regarding this unit.

Students are generally happy with the way tutorials are conducted. However some of them are complaining that the number of Clicker questions being asked in lectures have drastically reduced. They feel that it will be helpful if more questions were asked.

Josh agreed with this feedback, and will try to increase clicker questions again.

Peer assessment was also mentioned. Josh will talk to Chris Gonsalvez to find out how it works.

There was positive feedback on the last assignment and its two components; group work and an individual report.

Further feedback on FIT2003 was received via email from Sassoon Kuyumjian following the meeting. Sassoon was unable to attend the meeting due to class commitments at Caulfield. He said:

I'd just like to provide feedback on FIT2003, mainly about the clicker system, I know it's new for a lot of units, and they are mainly just trying something new, but I'll give reasons why the current clicker system isn't so good.

First off, I think that the 5% participation mark that's brought with the use of clickers should be removed. What this brings is the concept that students have to pay \$65 in order to obtain those 5% marks, which seems a little unfair. Yes, there are second-hand clickers, but it's still \$30, and there are plenty of alternatives out there that aren't costly. I also don't understand how they would work for off-campus students, where do those 5% participation marks go to? If it's weighted on another assignment, then there's inconsistency with the mark weighing with on-campus and off-campus students.

Also, there are students who are unable to attend the lectures due to personal reasons. I personally get called to work every 2 out of 3 weeks on Mondays, so I am unable to attend a lot of these lectures. I'm sure a lot of other students would have issues such as this. Also, some students just simply prefer to view the lectures in the comfort of their own home (eg. if they live far away, and the lecture is their only class for that day), and those students have to suffer that 5%, which could potentially cause them their desired grade.

So to wrap it up, the clickers are too expensive, there are alternatives. There shouldn't be a 5% participation mark, it causes inconsistency with on-campus and off-campus students, and just overall causes inconvenience.

FIT2004 Algorithms and data structures Reza Haffari (CE) Arun Konagurthu (Lecturer)

No feedback.

FIT2006 Business process modelling and workflow Yen Cheung (CE/Lecturer)

Yen is a great lecturer, there is lots of content and students are enjoying it. Tutes are going well. Lecture slides are long and students are overwhelmed by theories. They are worried about the exam and how much (how many theories) they need to know. Students would like the big concepts they will need to know for the exam put on Moodle. Assignments are demanding. There is a low number of students attending lectures and tutes.

FIT2017 Computer models for business decision making John Betts (CE) Mark Carman (Lecturer)

Positive feedback. There are around 20 students who attend lectures, which are interesting and informative. Students noted they would still like lecture slides to go up earlier. Clickers would work well in this subject.

FIT2024 Software engineering practice (David Squire (CE/Lecturer)

Graham read out email feedback from Lokitha Sivakumaran.

Students who don't have prior experience with Java Programming language, are finding it a bit hard to do the assignments and are worried if any programming questions will be asked in the exam. These students have requested to have a revision session before exam.

There is a gap in the knowledge students have in class; some have experience, some don't. David Squire said he needs to cater for that difference, but it is difficult. He doesn't want to 'dumb down' the unit or cause issues in later units, if students aren't taught the required information in FIT2024.

FIT2069 Computer architecture Carlo Kopp (CE/Lecturer)

No feedback.

THIRD YEAR UNITS

FIT3036 Computer science project (Sid Ray (CE)) David Dowe (Lecturer), Alan Dorin (Lecturer)

Good feedback and students are happy with classes. The two assessments were not very similar.

FIT3042 System tools and programming languages (Robert Merkel (CE)) Peter Tischer (Lecturer)

There is a steep learning curve required in this unit. Students are not sure how to study for the exam. Peter Tischer said there will be a sample exam provided, which will probably be discussed in labs. It was noted that assignment 1 was difficult for some students and therefore more clarification on what was expected would have been useful. Peter said some students left starting the assignment too late. They started around two weeks before it was due and then realised there was more than two weeks work involved.

FIT3047 Industrial experience project Peter O'Donnell (CE)) Stephen Huxford (Lecturer), Marc Cheong (Lecturer)

Students feel that the unit workload is disproportionate to what the unit is worth; it should be worth two units (12 credit points), not just one. Caitlin Slattery noted that second semester will build on the work being done now and the overall weighting of the year-long subject is 12 credit points. Marc Cheong said that students were aware of the nature and expectations of the unit from the start of semester, and that the benefits of the unit relate to industry and what will be expected of them when they gain employment.

FIT3063/FIT4063 Human-computer interaction (Judy Sheard (CE)), Marc Cheong (Lecturer)

Some students are having problems with the group work; where one person isn't working as hard as the other. Students would like there to be some way of noting this. Marc Cheong commented that students can advise him if they are having problems and so there are methods in place to note this.

FIT3077 Software engineering: architecture and design David Squire (CE/Lecturer)

Feedback was mixed on how students are asked to submit their assignment. David Squire said the method of submission was not strange to BSE students.

FIT3140 Advanced programming Robert Merkel (CE/Lecturer)

Students are confused about how to meet expectations for the interface-based project.

ACTION: Graham Farr will follow up with Robert Merkel

FIT3143 Parallel computing Carlo Kopp (CE), Ron Pose (Lecturer)

There has been good improvement in lectures and tutes. Computer labs are still a problem and so people are bringing in their own laptops to use. Lab computers are taking up to 30 minutes to log in. Carlo Kopp recommended that esolutions work on resolving this, as before the commencement of semester, academics had to put in their time for testing, rather than esolutions. Paul van Haaster noted that this was due to many Linux developers having left the university and so those left (1 or 2) were very busy and unable to help. Graham suggested discussing this further after the meeting.

It was mentioned that FIT3143 lectures on a Monday afternoon clash with compulsory IBL lectures (for those students who will go on IBL placement). Therefore lecture attendance has been low. Graham said he will look into the timetabling of classes with IBL lectures.

ACTION: Graham Farr will follow up Carlo Kopp and Paul van Haaster, and also look into timetabling issues.

FOURTH/FIFTH YEAR UNITS

FIT4002 Software engineering studio project David Squire(CE/Lecturer), Carlo Kopp (Lecturer), Kevin Korb (Lecturer), Robyn McNamara (Lecturer)

Students are happy, lectures are good, everything is clear. David Squire noted that problems this semester relate to having the biggest ever enrolment in this unit. This has made scheduling presentations very difficult. The existing unit setup doesn't work due to the high student numbers, and they were one week behind schedule because of Good Friday, but have now caught up.

FIT4004/FIT5171 System validation and verification, quality and standards (Robert Merkel (CE/Lecturer)

Specifications for the assignment need to be made clearer. Students would like more guidance, including ways to study for the exam.

FIT4005/FIT5125/FIT5143/FIT2083 IT research methods David Green (CE/Lecturer)

No feedback.

FIT4009 Advanced topics in intelligence systems David Dowe (CE/Lecturer), Reza Haffari (Lecturer)

No feedback.

4. OTHER/GENERAL BUSINESS

Graham read out general feedback received from Milena Mitic, via email.

Could we please try and standardise UML syntax requirements for assignments across Software Engineering units?
Or at least be very specific in the assignment specs about what are syntax requirements for the full mark.

Graham said he will pass this comment on to the BSE course director.

Graham concluded by thanking everyone for their time and feedback.

Meeting closed at: 3.00pm

Next meeting date: TBA, semester 2, 2014