Student Staff Consultative Committee Meeting

The 2/2008 Student Staff Consultative Committee Meeting was held on Tuesday, 20th of May 2008 in room 203/Building 72 at 1.00 pm.

Minutes

Present:  A/Professor L. Kleeman (Chair)  
Professor Arthur Lowery  
Dr. Andrew Price  
Ros Rimington

Students Present:  
Elizabeth Anderson (Level 2 BE),  
Andrew Bonavia (Level 3 / 4 BTE),  
Harjot Bhatti (Level 3 BE)  
Anushi Kulasiri (Level 5 BScBE)  
Aiden Lister (Level 4 Mechatronics)  
Rory Paltridge (Level 3 BCSE)  
Meaghan Soutter (Level 4 BCSE)  
Andre Tan (invited to discuss BSc/BE Biomedical)  
Xiao Fei SHI (Level 2 BE)

Minutes

Student representatives were asked to respond to the wireless access survey in ITS.  LK reported on improvements in ECE3031 Control lectures as reported by student representatives by email.

Level 2:  
In ECE2071 Computer Organisation and Programming labs level 2 students are requesting more demonstrators to answer questions in a more timely manner in the lab.  LK will explore whether improvements can be made to the response time to questions in the lab.  Due to funding restrictions, normally one demonstrator per 16 students is allocated except in power labs where greater supervision is required due to safety issues.

The ECSE Helpdesk operating during lunchtimes and evenings was discussed.  Most of the questions were reported by Helpdesk staff to be from level 2 students and it was felt that more help was needed in the electronics discipline.  Also the Helpdesk staff reported that ECE2011 was found to be difficult for students to follow and confusing.  This information will be fed back to the relevant academic staff.

It was suggest that the Department consider host a source repository server such as CVS.  This would encourage backup and revision control for software development by students and also be a deterrent for plagiarism.  On a related
matter ARP mentioned that host book online web logs were being successfully used in 4th year theses for tracking progress.

**Level 3:**

ECE3092 Systems Engineering and Reliability Analysis – students are still requesting solutions to tutorial questions. These solutions are now available. However the delay in releasing these solutions was due to the late receipt of assignments and TC was reluctant to provide MATLAB solutions that may advantage some students still submitting their assignments. Comments were made regarding demonstrators not being properly prepared for ECE3092 exercises. Lecturers will be reminded to ensure that demonstrators are properly briefed and prepared for their teaching duties.

ECE3031 Control lab notes were being made available the morning of the lab in some cases due to equipment problems. This was felt to disadvantage some students. Lab demonstrators were however briefed to allow for this late distribution of notes in their marking of lab sections. Student representatives acknowledged the pressures that teaching staff were under given the halving of academic staff and the consequential increased teaching loads and supervision loads of 4th year thesis students in particular. A discussion followed on the importance of students being able to “nut out” a problem independently from sometimes incomplete specifications and information. The availability of internet search tools and the vast amount of accessible information should facilitate problem solving by students, yet academic staff commented that the student expectations to be “spoon fed” with ready made solutions and complete information were increasing year to year. Academic staff pointed out that when a student graduates, often the new work environment does not provide pre-packaged problems with all the constraints and required data. There is often uncertainty and incomplete information with adaptation to the task required in a modern workplace.

ECE3093 Optimisation, Estimation and Numerical Methods – the lecturer was improving yet students were still feeling out of depth with the material. Good tutorials helped but the content was felt to be in need of careful revision for next year.

**Level 4:**

Considerable time was spent discussion issues surround Biomedical Engineering units. The view was put by a student that retiring staff in this area were leaving holes in some areas of expertise. The recruitment of staff in Biomedical engineering was cited as difficult due to the high industry demand in that area. Issues relating to the merging of units and dropping of PHY2011 prerequisite were raised as causing a reduction in depth and breadth of material. Consideration will be given to re-instating this prerequisite. Discussions with Ian Brown before this meeting had resolved some of the internal issues relating to ECE4081 Medical Instrumentation. The running of the mid semester test one week earlier than indicated at the start of
semester was flagged as a concern and this will be raised with the unit coordinator in an effort to avoid disadvantaging students.

The cancelling of ECE4032 Advanced Control in second semester was raised and a request made to run an “applied” control elective. A mechatronics student suggested that the Mechanical Engineering 4th year control elective could be taken by students wanting a unit in applied control.

Extensions for 4th year thesis progress reports have been requested, however this was felt to be inappropriate given that exams are just around the corner and extending the deadlines would have a negative impact on examination preparation.

Next scheduled meeting: 29th July 2008.