Student Staff Consultative Committee Meeting

The 1/2011 Student Staff Consultative Committee Meeting was held on Tuesday, 22\textsuperscript{nd} of March 2011 in room 203/Building 72 at 1.00 pm.

Minutes

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

Students Representatives Present:
         Nikolai Sidorov
         Andrew Ringenbergs
         Mohammad Zohair Fazilati
         Sanjeewa Abeygunawardana
         Hannah Ervin
         Amirhossein Bahmanpour
         Xuan Tong
         Shamal Boteju
         Manish Pahwa

Minutes

Lindsay Kleeman introduced the purpose of the committee as a forum for discussion of course matters and a mechanism for student feedback to improve the student experience and quality of education. Student representatives’ email addresses will be published, with their permission, on the Departmental webpages accessible to enrolled students.

In terms of student satisfaction with the teaching of the ECE units across the Department, LK tabled with some pleasure the following results from the student unit evaluation surveys for the past 5 years. Note that semester 1 averages have monotonically improved each year and similarly semester 2 averages have likewise improved. Part of the improvement can be attributed to the role of this committee in providing timely feedback on teaching performance.
The common first year structure was discussed whereby the fact that a Department could be chosen after a year of experience in Engineering across difference disciplines of the BE course was seen as a good thing. However it was noted that this delayed the technical content in a preferred field of study. There is the option for studying the BCSE where entry is obtained at first year.

A comment was made by a student that the ECE2011 and ECE2061 were well correlated in their material and complemented each other very well.

It was noted that ECE2041 online quizzes did not provide answers and this did not allow for feedback on what parts were answered incorrectly. The chair will investigate whether this feedback can be provided.

ECE2061 labs suffered from a shortage of alligator clips and this was being addressed by the lab staff.

In ECE2011 a student felt that some explanations of “calculations” were not in written form but only offered as a verbal explanation. A written or graphical form was felt to be more helpful. Students should request written notes during the lecture as a next step.

Another student stated that there was not sufficient C++ documentation for internal functions available at an introductory level of understanding. A different student pointed to many online tutorials available and the ECE2071 coordinator RAR suggested that the prescribed textbook may be useful for this purpose.

The discussion turned to the amount of time in labs in ECE2061 being inadequate for exploring ideas to gain a complete understanding of the material. Several academic staff commented about the philosophy of labs and that in some cases the lab was deliberately designed to whet the appetite of students so that they could follow up on questions in their own time. The recurring theme of independent learning at university was discussed.
There was a query as to whether the computer labs in building 60 could open half an hour earlier at 7:30 am to allow students to print notes before an 8 am lecture. The issue of resourcing of the labs and the fact that there were few students who would take advantage of earlier opening hours was discussed.

ECE3022 and ECE2021 labs were discussed in terms of the lack of synchronisation with lecture material and a student felt that the lab material should be introduced after the lectures covered the material. In some cases the reverse was occurring. This will be followed up with the coordinators for these units.

A comment was made that ECE3092 lectures could be improved by adding explanation that was not available on the overhead power point slides. Tutorials were useful however.

A comment was made that some Biomedical students would find the sequencing of ECE2031 before ECE2061 and ECE2011 difficult, although prerequisites would allow this. The lecturers will be made aware that this can occur for this cohort of students and to allow for this.

In 4th year project coordination a comment was made by a mechatronics student that the approach adopted by Mechanical Engineering of releasing project titles and supervisor lists in December the year before the projects was helpful. In ECE4094 project lists are only available via Blackboard and access to this depended on the student being currently enrolled in the ECE4094 unit and the Blackboard site being active. The chair agreed and suggested that the ECSE Department could publish project lists earlier and make them available on the Dept website whereby only authcate access is required to solve this problem in the future.

Finally there was a discussion about the availability of power electives in light of one being cancelled last year and it not scheduled again until 2012. The availability of electives was dependent on staff and since 2 power group staff had left last year this had lead to the cancelling one elective. Ros Rimington pointed out that there are still 3 other electives available in that area in the 2 year cycle of offerings. The Dept was limited by resources to offer any more.

Next scheduled meeting: Week 8 Semester 1 2011