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University of Cambridge Computer Laboratory
Teaching Committee

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Chairman: Dr Neil Dodgson   Secretary: Mrs Fiona Billingsley

Minutes of the meeting of the Teaching Committee held on Tuesday 29 April 2008 in GC22 in the William Gates Building

Present: Dr Neil Dodgson   Dr Alastair Beresford   Dr Ann Copestake
             Dr Sean Holden   Prof Alan Mycroft   Prof Andy Pitts
             Dr Frank Stajano   Dr Ian Wassell   Miss Christine Northeast
             Mrs Fiona Billingsley

1. Apologies for Absence
None

STANDING ITEMS

2. Sabbatical Leave and substitute teaching
 Nothing to report

3. Review of lecture course feedback
NAD circulated a summary of the feedback which had been received from students via the online feedback system for Lent Term lecture courses (TC0708/15). It was noted that only nine courses had received sufficient feedback for the committee formally to consider it. ARB's Programming in C and C++ course and AD's Quantum Computing course received good feedback. NAD's Computer Graphics and Image Processing course received excellent feedback.
It was noted that six courses received feedback that gave cause for concern, and that this was a much higher proportion of courses than in previous Terms. According to the feedback received:

- The teaching of Programming in Java (ACN) was too basic, much too slow and the notes were poor.
- Compiler Construction (AM) was interesting but a tad complicated and somewhat confused.
- Computation Theory (JKMM) was uninteresting, slightly complicated, confused and with poor delivery.
- Concepts in Programming Languages (MPF) was uninteresting and somewhat confused.
- Digital Communication I (AWM) was OK apart from confused organisation.
- Bioinformatics (PL) had interesting material but was found to be incomprehensible with chaotic organisation and poor delivery.

Programming in Java in being completely replaced next year and Computation Theory will have a different lecturer next year; it was therefore agreed that no further action is needed on these courses.
AM was actioned to talk to PL about the Bioinformatics feedback and suggest that next year he include less content, not make last-minute changes to the course, and consider attending a training course on delivery and accent reduction.
The committee recommended that AM, MPF and AWM be made aware of the feedback on their courses and asked to take any action necessary.
ARB suggested it would be useful to collect feedback from course supervisors in addition to student feedback. The committee agreed that a mechanism which is

centrally administered and allows supervisors to provide feedback anonymously should be investigated.

4. Review of staff-student consultative committee minutes
SBH reported that, at the last meeting, the student representatives raised no issues which were of concern to the Teaching Committee.

5. Revision of the Tripos
ARB reported he had met with ACR, FHK and CHN to discuss details for the new programming practical sessions. It was decided that:
- Tick exercise 1 will remain, as its primary purpose is to resolve administrative and logistical problems.
- Tick exercises 5 & 6 (ML) will be merged into a new exercise which is yet to be written.
- In Lent Term, the students will complete seven Java tick exercises.
- The practical sessions will be scheduled on Thursdays 10am-6pm, where ACR and ARB will each run two 2-hour sessions. Students will be allocated a 2-hour session in which to complete exercises. Demonstrators would be available during these sessions to help students. Within their session each student will be allocated a short slot in which to get the previous week's work ticked. The ticker for a given session will not be a demonstrator for that session.
- In Easter Term there will be three tick exercises based on what is taught in the Algorithms course. In total, students will complete 17 tick exercises.

ARB will incorporate these details into his Proposal for the Revised Paper 1.
NAD will bring to the next meeting a draft examination structure for 2008-09 for comments.

6. Development of the new MPhil in Computer Science
IJW reported that Faculty Board had approved the papers which are to go before the School of Technology on Friday. IJW will have draft modules for the committee to consider at the next meeting.

7. Liaison with the MPhil in CSTIT
Nothing to report

8. Proposals for new courses, significant changes to courses, and removal of courses
Nothing to report

EXCEPTIONAL ITEMS

9. New options in Part IA – guidance for Directors of Studies
It was noted that the Mathematics and SPS Triposes have changed the names of the papers which we are borrowing. NAD will correct the documentation on the lab's website and notify the Computer Science, Natural Science, Mathematics, and SPS Directors of Studies of the state-of-play concerning supervision arrangements via a briefing email.
CHN will contact the relevant people in the Natural Sciences and SPS Triposes to find out what information, if any, they would like her to include at the start of the Computer Science examination papers for Paper 1, which is being borrowed by both Triposes.
NAD will continue to co-ordinate the timetabling with the Natural Sciences, Mathematical and SPS Triposes.

It was requested that before his retirement as Head of Teaching Committee, it would be useful if NAD prepared a handbook to pass on to the new Head to provide guidance on key tasks and responsibilities.

10. Timetable for 2008-09
The committee considered the draft timetable and decided to move Foundations of Functional Programming to a different time slot. It was agreed that Artificial Intelligence II will be taught in Easter Term and consist of 12 lectures.
It was noted that course and lecturer names need to be finalised before the end of May.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

11. Approval of minutes of the previous meeting
The minutes were agreed and signed.

12. Any matters arising not already dealt with
a) Update on problem sheets to accompany lecture notes
NAD reported that the teaching staff had been encouraged, in a Wednesday meeting, to provide a problem sheet to accompany their lecture notes. He is still to investigate putting into place a mechanism for implementing a mechanism for supervisors and lecturers to collaborate on production of problem sheets [see also final paragraph under item 3].

13. Any other business - Preparatory Reading List
NAD was actioned to update the preparatory reading list.

14. Dates of future meetings
Future meetings will be on 20 May and 17 June.