STUDENT STAFF COMMITTEE, SCHOOL OF COMPUTING SCIENCE

Minutes of Meeting held on 30th November 2016 in Room 701
Claremont Tower

Present:
Ms L Heels Transition Officer / Staff Facilitator of Committee
Mrs AM Barfield Secretary
Mrs J Campbell Robinson Library
Mr J Snowdon Senior Computer Officer, Computing Science
Dr NA Speirs Undergraduate Degree Programme Director
Timur Osadichiy School PG rep
Ryan Crosby PGR rep/PG Equality & Diversity rep
Sean Peacock MRes Digital Civics
Stella Englezou MSc Advanced Computer Science (ACS)
Julia Elbe MSc Bioinformatics programmes representative (Bio)
Umar Maikano MSc Computer Security and Resilience representative (CSR)
Mahfuz Ali MSc Cloud Computing representative (Cloud)
Robert Hamilton MSc E-Business and Information Systems rep. (EBIS)
James Hall MSc Computer Science rep (MSc CS)
Cameron Trotter MComp Stage 4 representative (MComp)
Chris Napier UG Stage 3 representative
Andon Andonov UG Stage 3 representative
Matthew Bellis Stage 1 representative
Vasu Gupta Electronics and Computer Engineering rep
Harry Large UG School rep (SSC Deputy Chair)
Sonjeet Paul Chair of Student Staff Committee

Apologies:
Prof A van Moorsel Head of School
Mrs N Dolman School Manager
Dr C Phillips Stage 3 Co-ordinator
Mr J Carey NUIT (Central)
Victoria Godsell Stage 1 representative
Josh Spindler UG Equality & Diversity rep
Patrick Lacey UG Stage 2 representative
Eva Theodoridou Stage 2 representative

1. Introductions
Mr Paul introduced himself as Chair of the Committee and apologised that he was unable to attend the previous meeting.

2. Apologies
Apologies were presented as above.
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting (See Document A)**
   The Chair summarised the action items from the previous meeting.

4. **Student Reports**
   
   **Stage 1**
   Stage 1 reps had run a survey and students responded on how they would prefer to communicate with reps and be reported back to about issues discussed at the SSC (see Document B for survey statistics).
   
   a) The main issues were around coursework and assessment e.g. some students wanted extra support sessions.
   
   b) Students wanted 24 hour and weekend access to the Rack [see item 5 c) below].
   
   c) Students wanted to be able to access the timetable for the Rack to know when it is busy/free. There is already a printed timetable on one of the noticeboards and all room timetables can be accessed at: [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/timetable/room/Timetables.php](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/timetable/room/Timetables.php)
   
   d) Some students found coursework specifications hard to interpret. More specific information was needed about what students did not understand. However drop-in sessions are now available, so students may ask questions. It was suggested that there should be an FAQ page for each piece of coursework.
   
   *Action: Ms Heels to propose FAQ for coursework at Board of Studies.*
   
   e) Students expressed interest in having a winter (Christmas) gathering. Unfortunately it was too late to organise anything now, but there will be a summer ball.
   
   *Action: NUCATS will consider a Christmas event in future.*
   
   f) There have been issues with the internet dropping out at Castle Leazes. Ethernet cannot connect to some games servers.
   
   *Action: Mrs Barfield asked the rep to forward a full account of the issues which would be forwarded to NUIT.*
   
   It was noted that there is a schedule for rollout of Student Network Access which can be found at: [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/itservice/connect/sna/schedule/](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/itservice/connect/sna/schedule/)

   **Stage 3**
   
   g) Lack of PC facilities for UG students: There are only 125 machines in the Rack. Daysh.6.36 and Daysh.6.37 are being used by Stage 2 and 3 students but are also usually full. Unfortunately the School does not have further space to put student clusters until we move to the new building. However with CS Portable Apps being rolled out, students should be able to access most programmes in University clusters. (It was noted that Visual Studio is not available in all places.)
   
   h) There are not enough Demonstrators to sign off work in the appropriate practical classes (CSC3422). It has already been mentioned to Dr Warrender as lead demonstrator.
   
   *Action: Dr Speirs to speak to Dr Khomenko and Mr Collison.*
   
   i) Daysh.6.37 is open until 9.00pm, but students are not able to enter the building after 6.00pm. Unfortunately we share the building complex with other Schools, so we do not have control over the front doors. Students can make use of CS Portable Apps in other clusters and Linux machines in Daysh.6.37 can be accessed remotely.
j) The whiteboard in the Fine Art Lecture Theatre is unusable.  
*Action: Mrs Barfield will report it to Lecture Room Services.*

**Postgraduate Research**

k) A student expressed frustration after receiving no feedback on his thesis corrections one month after submission. Mrs Barfield explained that it depends how busy the examiners might be when the corrections are submitted. Research Student Support Services (RSST) would chase examiners if the feedback is not received within 6 weeks.

l) Students wanted more accessibility to read about funding rules for students submitting a thesis and how funding would be affected if a thesis is funded early. Mrs Barfield explained that the rules for each funding body are likely to be different. Students should check their studentship contract first. If the rules are not clear, they should check with their supervisor or the PG Director.

m) In Open Lab a group of students have started a movement aiming to raise awareness of feminist issues in HCI, they’d be interested in partnering with the school to tackle diversity issues. Miss Heels would be very interested to work with any students on this topic, they should contact her.

**Stage 4**

n) Students would like paper recycling facilities in the MSc ACS rooms. This item is already in hand.

**MSc Computer Science**

o) A specification for a piece of coursework for CSC8008 had been put on NESS, but was not on Blackboard for another couple of weeks and students had not been told it was available. If students believe that they should have been given their coursework specification, they should remind the Module Leader.

p) When there was a problem with NESS submissions, students were informed that it was not working. For one module students were able to email their work to the Module Leader. However students were confused by the message they received when it seemed to be working again. Unfortunately the School could only work on the information that had been received.

**MRes Digital Civics**

q) Requesting holiday absence through S3P could be easier and more intuitive. Students would like more information shown about what periods are seen as holidays i.e. do Bank Holidays need to be booked as absence or not?  
*Action: Mrs Barfield will report this to Student Progress Service*

r) Block modules don’t sit well with “regular” modules and the pattern of assessment does not fit well. Mrs Barfield explained that this programme uses modules which existed for other programmes before the MRes. These modules are scheduled for the programmes for which they were designed and the MRes modules are fitted around them.
s) Lectures after 5pm cause problems for family commitments. Mrs Barfield explained that the University’s standard times for teaching are 9am-6pm on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday; 9am-5pm on Friday; 9am-1pm on Wednesday but some PG teaching does take place on Wednesday afternoons.

t) Some laptops for the cohort still have not arrived. Students feel that the situation has been handled poorly and the process has not been transparent. They would like assurance that this won’t happen again.

The records for laptop orders have been checked. Two machines had only been ordered with the last 2 weeks. There is a problem with the order for one machine and this is an issue with the supplier at University level. Mr Snowdon noted that the MRes Cloud programme orders the same machine for each student in the summer. The MRes Digital Civics programme does not order the machines until after the students arrive and not all machines ordered are the same.

Action: Students should propose to the course leaders that a similar system for ordering should be used as for MRes Cloud.

MSc E-BIS

u) The Daysh 6th floor cluster rooms are too hot. This is partly owing to the number of PCs in each room. Students requested that the radiator should be turned off.

Action: Ms Heels will ask if radiators can be switched off.

5. Staff Reports

a) The UG External Examiner’s report and response had been circulated (see Documents C and D).

Action: If anyone had any comments to make they should pass them to Ms Heels.

b) The School’s Learning and Teaching Committee had asked for reps to ask their cohorts for views on:

- Standardised coursework deadlines (i.e. all deadlines being at the same time of day for a Stage or Programme).
- Opinions on the consistency & format of lecture notes.

Action: Reps to contact their cohorts.

c) 24 hour access to the Rack. Ms Heels reported that we can get agreement for this to happen, but we need an agreement on how to stop students vandalising and/or leaving it in a mess. If an agreement is reached and then an incident happens, then the 24 access will be stopped for all students, so we need a way to make sure that students respect the space. After some discussion the following was agreed:

- Reps should take responsibility for training and setting an example to others.
- The number of Security is next to the phone in the Rack and the desktop will also have the Security Number so that incidents can be reported.
• A form will be devised so that students can sign to say that they will use the space responsibly.

Action: Ms Heels to devise a form and liaise with the reps.

d) Library report. The Library rep circulated an update document about the Library. The number of multiple copies of core text books will improve. Students should continue to use the reservation system so that the Library knows how many copies are needed. Also report where new books and e-books are required by emailing jenny.campbell@ncl.ac.uk