Unconfirmed Minutes

DEPARTMENTAL STAFF STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (DSSCC)

Undergraduate Programmes (Term 1.2)

02 December 2020, at 12:30, via Microsoft Teams

Committee Secretary:
Ms Louisa Ball
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Present:

Name	Abbrev.	Role
Zvezdin Besarabov	ZB	Course Rep for MEng Computer Science (Year 2)
Kevin Bryson	KB	Chair of DSSCC; Programme Director: BSc/MEng Computer Science
Rajesh Goyal	RG	Course Rep for MEng Computer Science (Year 3); Lead Department Representatives
Lewis Griffin	LG	Departmental Tutor
Bangti Jin	BJ	Undergraduate Year Coordinator (Year 4)
Minyi Lei	ML	Course Rep for BSc Computer Science (Year 1)
Giacamo Livan	GL	Undergraduate Year Coordinator (Year 2)
Sergey Mechtaev	SM	Undergraduate Year Coordinator (Year 3)
Suhail Merali	SM	Course Rep for MEng Mathematical Computation (Year 1)
Zak Morgan	ZM	Course Rep for MEng Computer Science (Year 4)
Ali Reyazat	AR	Course Rep for BSc Computer Science (Year 2)
Graham Roberts	GR	Departmental Welfare Tutor / Undergraduate Year Coordinator (Year 1)
Clarissa Sandejas	CS	Course Rep for BSc Computer Science (Year 1)
Abhiram Sasitharan	AS	Course Rep for MEng Mathematical Computation (Year 2)

In attendance:

Name	Abbrev.	Role
Elizabeth Awad	EA	Departmental Student Success Advisor (Year 1)
Louisa Ball	LB	Secretary to DSSCC
David Howells	DH	Senior Teaching & Learning Administrator (QA and Projects)
Nicholas Smith	NS	Teaching and Learning Administrator (Undergraduate)
Jo Stiles	JS	Teaching and Learning Manager (Interim)

Apologies:

Name	Abbrev.	Role
Steve Hailes	SH	ENGF0001 - Module Lead (for CS); Head of Department
Robin Hirsch	RH	Programme Director: MEng Mathematical Computation
Raghib Mirza	RM	Course Rep for BSc Computer Science (Year 3)

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

   KB welcomed everyone to the second Undergraduate DSSCC meeting of the 2020/21 academic year, and second meeting of Term 1.

   KB welcomed Elizabeth Awad (EA) to the meeting, who was the newly appointed Student Success Advisor for Year 1 students in Computer Science.

   EA introduced themselves to the committee and noted that they were based in the Student Support and Wellbeing team. As part of their new role they would make contact with Year 1 students by telephone. EA would contact all Year 1 students by the end of Term 1. Students would then be contacted again in Term 2.

2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

   Received: The minutes of the meeting held on 04 November 2020.

   The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record.

3. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

i)   <u>Minute 5.1 Concerns regarding ENGF0001 Engineering Challenges.</u>

   KB noted that at the previous meeting several issues were raised regarding the module ENGF0001 Engineering Challenges. The concerns were grouped into four main themes, namely: teaching arrangements, insufficient time given to complete assessment, non-engagement of students within groups, that Linux was required for the bioreactor assignment.

There had been an action agreed for SH to feed back to the teaching team for ENGF0001 Engineering Challenges that course content on Moodle should be synthesised to help students understand and navigate it better. This had since been done.

KB noted that they and the Year 1 student reps had also attended a meeting with the teaching team for the module following the previous DSSCC meeting, which was also attended by Teaching Assistants (TAs) working on the module. It was clarified through discussion at the meeting that the concerns raised by the Computer Science Student Reps on behalf of the cohort were not representative of all students enrolled on the module, specifically those who were based in other departments from within the Faculty of Engineering. This was also later supported by the results of an informal feedback survey that was distributed to the student body regarding the issues raised.

ML and CS confirmed that Year 1 students have been more able to understand the module requirements and make meaningful progress in their work in recent weeks; students felt better supported in the module.

ML confirmed that issues with the non-engagement of some students within their allocated groups was ongoing; the non-engagement policy in place on the module was utilised by many students affected by this, but would take time to be implemented fully in each case. Where non-engagement was reported, group allocations were amended by the Teaching team. It continued to be challenging to carry out group work fully remotely, and in particular to successfully contact non-engaging team members. Non-engaging students were predominantly based in the Electronic and Electrical Engineering (EEE) department.

Action – EA to alert the Student Success Advisor for Year 1 students in the Electronic and Electrical Engineering (EEE) department of the high level of non-engagement among EEE students in group work in the module ENGF0001 Engineering Challenges.

KB noted that at the previous meeting there was an action agreed for SH to investigate whether it was viable to conduct a weekly office hour for students enrolled on ENGF0001 Engineering Challenges.

CS confirmed that additional weekly support sessions had been scheduled on Monday afternoon. Following the implementation of the support sessions students felt better able to seek support if they required it, and knew who to contact with queries.

ii) Minute 5.2 Course Rep Moodle pages

Student Rep Moodle pages

KB noted that at the previous meeting there was an action agreed for the Teaching and Learning team to create a Moodle page for Student Reps to use to communicate with the wider student body on matters related to the Student Rep process. This had since been carried out and the Student Reps had been given access to this.

CS noted that they and the other Year 1 reps had placed a deadline calendar and several other useful resources on the Year 1 Moodle page. There was a general discussion forum on the page though this was not currently being used by students. The Student Reps would make use of the announcements forum to communicate with students.

ZB noted that the Year 2 Moodle page was currently still being developed; ZB and AR would take note of the good practice currently in place on the Year 1 Moodle page. RG noted that they had implemented a 'Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)' section on the Year 3 Moodle page and would continue to develop this.

It was agreed through discussion that many students prefer to communicate with their peers through already established communication routes, such as social media, however, the development and implementation of the Student Rep Moodle pages was a useful and welcome additional resource that would compliment students' "home grown" communication channels.

Virtual Common Rooms (VCRs)

Virtual Common Rooms (VCRs) had been set up across all departments in academic year 2020/21 but these were not well used by students in Computer Science. This may

be because their publication was not formally announced to students and their purpose not clearly communicated. A VCR had not been set up for Year 3 students.

Action – Year 3 Coordinator (SM) to set up a Virtual Common Room (VCR) for Year 3 students.

Weekly 'Social Hour'

LG reported that a weekly 'Social Hour' had been timetabled for individual year groups in the Term 2 teaching timetable. The session would appear in students' timetables; students would be expected to use their preferred social media or platforms to meet socially with their peers and participation was not mandatory. LG requested that Student Reps encourage students in their year groups to engage with the 'Social Hour'.

iii)   Minute 11 – Learning Community

KB noted that at the previous meeting there was an action agreed for Lewis to send detailed guidance on what to expect from Personal Tutor meetings to all students. This had since been done; information on this was included in a recent communication to students where they were asked to participate in a survey of their experience of Personal Tutoring.

4. **Student Feedback and Actions**

KB noted that no matters had been raised prior to the meeting and invited Student Reps to raise any feedback or issues that had not already been discussed.

Year 1

CS noted that some COMP0002 Principles of Programming classes did not appear in students' individual timetables.

Action – JS to investigate and resolve timetable issues in COMP0002 Principles of Programming.

Year 2

AR noted their thanks to departmental staff for being receptive to and acting on student feedback very quickly and effectively during Term 1. The Year 2 Student Reps and the wider year group were grateful for the interventions that had been made as a result and felt listened to by the department.

Year 3

Negative Marking in Multiple-Choice assessments

RG noted that a form of negative marking had been utilised in a multiple-choice quiz assessment in the module COMP0017 Computability and Complexity Theory, such that incorrect responses resulted in a loss of marks. Whilst this was a standard form of assessment across many modules in the Undergraduate degree programmes taught within the department, in this instance the 'floor' was zero, and as such it was possible that students would be deducted marks given for correct answers given on other questions. Though the coursework was not highly weighted overall, there was a concern that students may unfairly lose marks gained for correctly answered questions.

It was clarified through discussion that negative marking in multiple-choice assessments was a commonly used assessment method in the Computer Science subject area and was not a fundamentally flawed method of assessment in and of itself. It was noted that students with a lower level of confidence in their responses relative to their knowledge base may be particularly disadvantaged if the method was frequently used.

Action – LG to query with the Faculty for Engineering Sciences whether the application of negative marking contravenes UCL Academic Regulations or Faculty Marking Policy.

Use of Zoom polls in live lectures

RG fed back that they believed students were better able to engage with and check their understanding of taught lecture content if Zoom polling functionality was utilised to pose content related questions during live lectures.

Action – LG to feed back to Module Leads that students would benefit from content related questions being posed through Zoom polling during live lectures.

<u>Opportunities to undertake independent programming projects</u>

RG queried whether the department could provide opportunities for students to undertake independent programming projects; some students in Year 3 had relatively few specifically programming related work to complete for their enrolled modules depending on which combination of modules they had selected.

LG noted that students interested in undertaking independent programming projects were encouraged to take responsibility for seeking such opportunities themselves and for developing their own learning in this area.

<u>Coursework deadline for COMP0169 Machine Learning for Visual Computing</u>

SM noted that they had been contacted by the Year 3 Student Reps regarding concerns that coursework assessments in COMP0023 Networked Systems and COMP0169 Machine Learning for Visual Computing had been set at the same time but without specified deadlines.

RG confirmed that coursework had been set in both modules at the same time, however the deadline for the coursework set in COMP0169 Machine Learning for Visual Computing had not been announced by the Module Lead. Students who took both modules did not feel able to begin working on either piece of assessment due to not knowing whether the coursework for COMP0169 Machine Learning for Visual Computing would be due for submission before or after the coursework for COMP0023 Networked Systems.

Action – SM to contact the Module Leads for COMP0169 Machine Learning for Visual Computing to request that the deadline for the recently released coursework assessment is announced to students.

<u>Year 4</u>

No matters raised.

5. Departmental Teaching Committee

KB noted that the Lead Department Representative would attend all plenary Departmental Teaching Committee (DTC) meetings in the 2020/21 Academic Year. No DTC meetings had yet taken place in the current academic year; the next DTC meeting would take place on Wednesday 9 December, and would be reported on in the first DSSCC meeting in Term 2. This would take place in January.

6. Report from Faculty-level Meetings

No matters raised.

7. Programme and Module Development

No matters raised.

8. Programme Delivery

8.1 Teaching and Learning

No matters raised.

8.2 Assessment and Feedback

No matters raised.

8.3 Organisation and Management

No matters raised.

8.4 Learning Resources

CS queried whether it was possible to include direct web links to live teaching (i.e. Zoom links) on the UCL Online Timetable.

LG clarified that the UCL Online Timetable did not contain the necessary functionality to allow for web links to be added to sessions in the timetable.

9. Inclusivity

No matters raised.

10. Academic Support, including Personal Tutoring

LG noted that the data collected from the recent Personal Tutoring survey indicated that the Personal Tutoring system was working well in the current academic year and better than in previous years; the majority of students reported that they wanted to engage with their Personal Tutor and were able to do so. Where students had reported having a non-responsive Personal Tutor, LG had contacted the individual Personal Tutors and ensured this was resolved. Students who had not received contact from their Personal Tutor were encouraged to attend the Departmental Tutor office hour, which took place at 8:00am (UK time) every Monday (within term time), to raise this for the Departmental Tutor's attention.

11. Good practice

Lecture transcription made available as a separate file

CS noted that some lecturers would upload the full transcript of recorded lectures as a separate text file and students found this helpful, particularly where they were unable to stream or watch the lecture recording itself.

Student Representatives

KB thanked the Student Reps for the extremely good work they had carried out to date in keeping in contact with students in their respective year groups and escalating representative concerns through the appropriate channels.

12. Any other business

Student Rep and Year Coordinator Meetings

AR noted that regular meetings conducted between Students Reps and the relevant Year Coordinators were very constructive and helped to reduce the overall number of issues raised for discussion at formal DSSCC meetings. Student Reps and Year Coordinators would meet at the end of Term 1 if there were a significant number of matters to discuss at that time; Student Reps would contact Year Coordinators directly to request a meeting if required.

Action - Year Coordinators to contact Student Reps before the end of Term 1 to check whether a Student Rep and Year Coordinator meeting is required, unless already requested.

Campus based enrichment and teaching activity

LG invited feedback from the Student Reps regarding the department's recently announced operating model for face-to-face enrichment in Term 2. In the teaching week preceding the DSSCC meeting 5 per cent of the Undergraduate cohort had engaged with scheduled face-to-face enrichment sessions.

CS noted that overall students were aware that the department was acting within Government guidelines in respect of face-to-face teaching and enrichment. In general, it was important that the department struck the appropriate balance with regards to its face-to-face enrichment offering, such that students based on campus were reassured that the decision to study on campus afforded them access to a satisfactory level of face-to-face enrichment, whilst also ensuring that students who had chosen to study overseas were not disadvantaged for not being able to access this additional enrichment.

Face-to-face enrichment sessions afforded Year 1 students to meet in person where they had only been able to meet and interact in online spaces since enrolling with UCL.

RG noted that students who had attended scheduled face-to-face enrichment sessions in Term 1 reported that they found them beneficial and enjoyable.

LG noted that the department were working in consultation with the college to develop a proposal for student led, campus-based sessions related to course content, which would allow for students to study together in person. Any such proposal must fall within the guidelines set out in UCL's Temporary Operating Model.

13. Dates of Next Meetings

The first DSSCC meeting in Term 2 in Academic Year 2020/21 would take place on Wednesday 27 January 2021 via Microsoft Teams. The start time for the meeting was yet to be confirmed.