SCHOOL OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND ELECTRONIC ENGINEERING

Undergraduate Student Voice Group Meeting

20 November 2019
14.00-17.00

MINUTES

Chair	J Woods (Director of Education)
Present	A Vickers (Head of School), F Sepulveda (Year 1 Deputy Director of Education), M Reed (Year 1 Supervisor), D Ognibene (Year 2 Supervisor), S Perdikis (Year 2 Supervisor), D Bebbington (Year 3/4 Deputy Director of Education), R Scherer (Year 3/4 Supervisor), A Garcia (Year 3/4 Supervisor), N Newton (Director of Curriculum Development), D Gobbitt (Education Manager), I Dukes (Systems and Resources Manager), E Hyman (Student Engagement Intern), K Younger (Faculty Coordinator), H Alexander (Faculty Convener), N Edwards (Year 1 Course Representative), L Buric (Year 1 Course Representative), K Koom-Dadzie (Year 3 Course Representative)
Apologies	M Scott (School Manager), J Gan (Year 2 Deputy Director of Education),
Secretary	W Melhem (Year 1 Student Administrator), T Bettany (Year 2 Student Administrator)

1. **Apologies were noted from those listed above.**

2. **Terms of Reference and Membership were covered by J Woods.**

3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2019 were approved as an accurate record.**

4. **Actions Arising From The Minutes**
The Actions Points from the previous meeting were reviewed and the following discussions were noted:

Ref 2: Year 1 Course Representatives raised the issue that CE151 support classes are not well promoted to students. J Woods said the School has now appointed two new members of staff who are supported by two technical demonstrators as well as introducing a pair-programming format. A Vickers and D Gobbitt clarified that students were notified of the classes following the diagnostic tests that took place on Week 2, and that details of the classes were included in the Engagement email that went out on Week 5. It was noted that the email might have been missed due to the big amount of emails students receive. D Gobbitt pointed out that these classes are mandatory for students identified as needing support, but voluntary for others.

Ref 6: Jira is an industry-standard tool used by businesses in a professional setting, which is why it is chosen as the project management function for final year students. It is good for showing which student has inputted to the project. A Vickers noted that Jira seems to be working, and that other tools are not useful for academic project management. It was mentioned that Yammer for example does not allow CSEE to moderate students' contributions. Course Representatives agreed that Jira is a good tool, but that team members are using external platforms for communication.

Ref 7: It was discussed that the IC Lecture Hall is not appropriate for open book Examinations. Central Timetabling Team and Departmental Timetabling Officer should be made aware to ensure this venue is not booked for these in the future.
ACTION: Deputy School Manager to address this issue with the Central Timetabling Team.

Ref 9: It was noted that not all students are aware of Module Directory or the Moodle archive of their enrolled modules.

ACTION: D Gobbitt will include the Moodle Archive feature in the School's student communications to highlight this function.

Ref 10: I Dukes confirmed that a water fountain is going to be put in Lab 8.

Ref 13: Course Representatives queried why there is still a problem with the Lab 1 card reader.
ACTION: I Dukes to find out the source of the problem.

5. Student Issues

Year 1
a. CE151
Year 1 Course Representatives reported the following concerns about this module: a) during lectures the lecturer uses the white board instead of the visualiser available in the ICH; b) some students find that information provided in the lectures is not sufficient for completing the work required during the subsequent lab sessions; c) lecture slides are sometimes very basic; d) the slides contain screenshots which are very small and students cannot view them clearly; d) a lot of time during the lecture spent asking students to stop talking rather than teaching/learning. J Woods pointed out the he runs a Sunday coding club in Lab 8 during term time and all students are welcome to attend.
ACTION: A Vickers to address students' concerns with the module supervisor. D Gobbitt to ensure practical demonstration videos are available and signposted to students in CE150 / CE151.

b. CE141
It was reported that more engagement would be useful in classes, and that each of the questions in the problem sheets should be addressed before moving to the next question, preferably answers shown on screen for all students to check their work. N Newton, the module supervisor, asked the Course Representatives whether they put their hands up when they have any questions. The Course Representatives confirmed that they did that but that sometimes they may have many questions and prefer to leave them so that other students have the opportunity to ask their questions. N Newton clarified that there is such a variety of background knowledge in maths by our students and that with problem sheets he tried to concentrate on questions that most students find challenging to resolve. J Woods confirmed that this is the case generally with Year 1 students, there is such a variety of abilities meaning that the same work that can be easily completed by some students may be very challenging for others. N Newton said that students are welcome to contact him at any time and ask for help with any questions even if they were from paper 1. It was pointed out that students can attend maths support classes and the Maths and Stats Drop-Clinic run by Skills for Success. These classes are advertised by email and on noticeboards but not all students monitor their Essex mail inbox.
ACTION: E Hyman to advertise support classes on the STEM screen to increase the chance of students knowing about their availability.

J Woods discussed the idea of creating CE141 lab groups based on the maths ability of students. The Course Representatives pointed out that students would complain if they were put in a low-ability group. M Reed commented that the group could be created based on the lack of maths/programming background required for our modules rather than on low ability. He added that there is the caveat that such a group would take longer to progress and achieve the required learning outcomes. H Alexander pointed out that students are aware prior to coming to study here that maths is part of our courses.

J Woods asked D Gobbitt to find out whether students think that ability-based streaming is useful for them.
ACTION: D Gobbitt to ask students if they think that ability-based streaming would be useful in CE141.

c. CE150
It was reported that the module supervisor reads out from slides but does not provide sufficient explanation of the content. J Woods pointed out that the mean marks of coursework seem to be good for that module. However, the issues raised are going be discussed with the modules supervisor.
ACTION: J Woods to discuss students' concerns with the module supervisor.

d. Other issues

It has been felt that GLAs in labs are not always interacting with students and helping them. The Course Representatives say that CE153 module supervisor always introduces what the students need to do in the labs, which is very helpful and useful. A Vickers said the GLAs should be interacting and helping students during lab sessions. They need to be proactive.

ACTION: A Vickers to send a reminder to all GLAs to encourage more interaction with students during labs.

YEAR 2

e. CE221

H Alexander reported that the lecture slides are not clear and that more explanation is needed from the lecturer who goes over the slides quickly and is not very clearly spoken. Students also requested that the slides of this module be available on Moodle before the day of the lecture.

ACTION: J Woods to raise students' concerns with the module supervisor.

f. Other issues

H Alexander reported that Year 2 students are concerned about the bunching of deadlines. It would have been better for students if there were a couple of days separating deadlines. This would be discussed further under point 10.

It was queried why module CE206 was changed from being a Spring term module to an Autumn term module. M Reed clarifies that this was to avoid having to assign the module to an academic who is not experienced in the module when the module supervisor went on study leave for a term.

YEAR 3

g. CE301

K Koom-Dadzie raised the issue that CE301 students feel that using MyWeb for their projects have lots of restrictions, and that many students end up using their laptops anyway, or use other tools/applications, such as SWIFT. Students feel they should have the option to develop their work in SWIFT. A Vickers said this would not be possible because SWIFT is not supported by the School. We run our own software so that it is secure, hence the restricted access of MyWeb. However, should a student want to use another server, the School may be able to alter the restriction in some instances, for example Open Day. Students' requests for equipment/resources for their project must come via their project supervisor.

ACTION: Vishuu Mohan to send a reminder to all CE301 supervisors that all equipment/resources need to come from students to their project supervisor and then forwarded to Vishuu in his role of the CE301 module supervisor.

A Vickers commented that next year the School will have a virtual lab that our students can log on to anywhere. D Ognibene added that our computer science graduates will be expected to use GitLab, TortoiseGit and other software systems in the workplace.

It was discussed that some students asked for CE301 Challenge Week to be moved to Welcome Week. A Vickers explained that Welcome Week is not a teaching week and, therefore, students are not required to attend it. M Reed advised that general feedback from CE301 Challenge Week indicates that it was successful.

h. CE322

H Alexander reported that the CE322 module lecturer, Maria Kyropoulou, is to be thanked for her well-delivered classes. The lecturer and the GLAs are to be commended for creating good and challenging ways of teaching.

i. Other issues

It was reported that some students have requested that modules material is published on Moodle earlier in the Summer term rather than at the start of the academic year. This would give students the opportunity to read the material and prepare for the modules over the summer. M Reed pointed out that this is not always possible because when academics go on leave, new academics taking over the module do not have sufficient time to prepare the content to be published in the summer. Also, academics sometimes only get allocated modules in May, thus leaving little time for module material to be ready for release in the Summer term. A Vickers added that academics may have to hide

module material on Moodle until the start of the academic year if they are changing the content, and that, as we are a growing department, hiring new staff members is another reason for content not being published early. It was noted that Talis is live and is there for students to use when preparing for their modules.

6. Discussion of UKES and NSS 2019 results
D Gobbitt covers the following points from the action plan:

NSS Action: Have a set of checkpoints for each assignment so students can measure their progress against guidelines in the draft stage before finally submitting.

Status: We will work out three equal distant checkpoints prior to the final submission of an assignment, and outline what format/progress/stage the assignment should look like at each of these guidelines. This should help students to apply the task and time management skills taught in our Project Modules and apply them to their own workload. This will measure the expectations for what is often mis-perceived to be coursework deadline bunching.

NSS Action: To address 'fair marking' particularly, the School could amend the '2nd Mark Request' form to require the student to apply the marking criteria to their own work prior to submitting the request. Experience of actively considering their own work and applying criteria will promote self-development and measure expectations.

Status: DoE to liaise with DDE on how to apply for this departmental variation to the 2nd mark request form. Once this has been developed, we should plan to promote this augmented process to both the UG and PGT cohorts during the SP Term to try and measure the impact this may have in the period that Y3 students are completing the NSS. Year Managers will play a role in the consideration and processing of these requests.

D Gobbitt addressed the decrease in the score of Question 9 on Page 3 (*Marking and assessment has been fair*). J Woods commented that some students may give feedback that the marking is not fair if they do not get high grades. A Vickers confirmed that this NSS question is problematic because some students interpret it as 'I didn't get the mark I was expecting'. In response to the decrease in the score of this question, our academics will continue to give clear marking criteria and provide students with clear feedback. D Gobbitt mentioned that 2018/19 was the first year feedback moderation process was applied. This will be discussed with students on 4 December 2019 at the First Year Focus Group meeting.
<u>ACTION</u>: Course Representatives to collect feedback from students on why they might feel that the marking and assessment have (not) been fair.

D Gobbitt discussed the dropping scores in the 'Academic Support' section of the action plan, and outlined a number of targeted initiatives aimed at these questions specifically.

NSS Action: Hold drop-in surgeries for students making decisions about their course, to ensure they can plan their own pathway, consider any special syllabus or course changes, and engage with any Placement Year or Year Abroad options.

Status: We will hold a separate series of events for both Year 1 and Year 2 students to enable them to make informed decision about their module choices for the next academic year. These will be held before eNROL next opens in Mid-March, with Year Managers from all areas of the School to give expert advice on pre and co requisites as well as further study or industry areas.

D Gobbitt commented that the increasing score of Question 23 on page 8 (*I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course*) is a good result for CSEE. The School will continue to:
- Maintain an online Student Voice Box for suggestions.
- Hold In-Year Questionnaires for all Y2 and Y3 modules.
- Circulate regular, detailed emails to all students outlining our engagement initiatives and opportunities.
- Hold termly focus groups on targeted topics.

- Education SMT members regularly auditing teaching and laboratory sessions, and speaking to students.
- Hold a 'Student Array' league table to gauge student performance and attendance in targeted Y1 modules.
- Have a proactive SE Intern liaising with students
- Coordinate the recruitment and promotion of our student Peer Mentors and Course Reps,
- Have record-levels of attendance at SVG meetings.
- Regularly meet with SU staff to coordinate our approach to operational issues at School and Uni level.
- Facilitate discussion forums for Monthly Competitions.
- Request and review feedback on 'Welcome' events.
- Have a coordinated strategy for both the NSS / UKES.

The statistics on page 8 show an increase in scores, which is healthy – there is an increase of 19.9 for student voice Action points, and we will continue to do what we did last year.

Page 10 shows a summary of all changes in the NSS sections which are bench-marked against both the CSEE results from 2018 as well as the University of Essex results from 2019. We can see an overall improvement from last year, and a shortfall to address for next year's NSS. It was noted that the sections which are a High priority for the School are mostly under the 'Teaching Quality' group of sections, and that the 'Student Experience' group are showing faster improvement and have less of a shortfall to make up.

D Gobbitt said that last year was the first time UKES was used. M Reed pointed out that free text in surveys is a very useful feedback tool. J Woods said that the more students we can get to submit the survey, the better, it makes it beneficial to students as we move up ranking tables, thus making their degree more recognized.

7. UG SAMT 2018-19 results
J Woods reported that the results are mixed because some of the modules have a good score, whereas others are not as good. Modules with a score below 4 will be discussed with the lecturer to identify potential issues and solutions. The SAMT results can be accessed by students on the University website.

The CE101 score is 3.3. J Woods pointed out that this score could be due to the fact that some students do not favour having to learn social skills in addition to technical skills. This may mean that this module may never get a high score. Low SAMT scores could be due to the module being hard for students, and therefore, such modules may always have low scores.

In conclusion, J Woods commented that the SAMT results seem to be fair and would continue to be a useful bench-marking tools for teaching staff to analyse their modules and make measured changes accordingly.

8. UG ARC (Annual Review of Courses)
A Vickers explains that the ARC is a quality assurance measure whereby auditors review and evaluate courses every five years. The ARC is one mechanism to provide the auditors with the information they need. The ARC is submitted to the Faculty in the first instance for feedback.

The 2018-19 ARC report covers among other things the following points:

-Improve Stage 1 progression and achievement rates
Students drop rate are low beyond Year 1. However, progression in Year 1 is not as good as we think it should be and this is something we are working on. K Koom-Dadzie commented that the gap between Years 1 and 2 should not be very big so that Year 2 is not a big shock to students.

-Monitor the ongoing effectiveness of course implementation and delivery at Northwest University (China)
-Plan for the arrival of students from Northwest University on Campus in 2020-2021

A Vickers gave a brief overview of the Northwest University partnership and how the School monitors this partnership. It was mentioned that Northwest University students are aware that the campus is very diverse with students from 150 countries on campus. The Northwest University students will be here for a short visit to have a taster of the campus before they arrive here for their course.

-Consider implementation of pair/group coding in labs to enhance student learning
It was pointed out that this point is concerning modules CE150 and CE151, not CE155. This will be corrected in the ARC file.
ACTION: D Gobbitt to correct module code in the ARC file from CE155 to CE151.
H Alexander asked if the pathway in courses is clear enough for students. Final Year students may have to tailor their modules to fit with their project. A Vickers and D Gobbitt explained that that there is going to be a Curriculum Workshop that will address this issue, and gives Y1 and Y2 students more information on their module choices and planning of their learning pathway.

9. External Examiners' reports 2018-19
J Woods pointed out that the External Examiners' reports are important because external examiners verify, among other things, that our students are meeting the learning outcomes. Every university in the UK has external examiners who monitor and give feedback on assessment and courses. J Woods said that the reports are satisfactory. There were a couple of procedural issues, such as not being able to find a file on a pen drive, but nothing else to report at this meeting.

10. Coursework bunching of deadlines
J Woods discussed that the School is committed to reducing deadline bunching. Our assignments are spread over 10 weeks, but most of the deadlines have to be scheduled over the last 4 or 5 weeks of term whatever we do. Also the optionality available in module selections means that it is very hard to eliminate bunching of deadlines for every combination of module selection. Students may complain that they have too many deadlines in one week, but in reality they would have had 10 weeks to prepare for these deadlines.

D Gobbitt said that for every Spring Term assignment, lab work, etc students will have be given guidelines to help them keep track of their progress. This will allow students to feel more direct ownership over the planning and completion of their assignments, and help them monitor and develop these over the course of the Spring Term.

D Gobbitt pointed out that CSEE is one of the few departments at the University to focus on deadline and workload management. Students can use that to improve their marks and studies outcomes. CSEE will liaise with the SU with regards to this point.

11. "In-Year Questionnaire" results
A Vickers said that this questionnaire was introduced to give students a chance to give feedback midway through the module rather than wait for the SAMT at the end of the term/year. The IYQs also allow the School to demonstrate the ways in which student comments are being put into practice, and shows a readiness to take Student Voice seriously as a valid tool to develop the School's delivery of these modules.

We have received a total of 43 'You Said; We Did' actions as a result of the IYQs, with the new and established academics leading these modules given the tools and data to reflect on their students' feedback. A like-for-like comparison, for those modules with similar questionnaires last AU Term, shows that there is improvement across the majority of these modules.

K Koom-Dadzie said it is worth the time to do this questionnaire but that depends on the module, for example module CE303 lectures are full and the questionnaire would be useful there, but not so much for other modules. The Course Representative added that it would be better to have it at the start of the lecture because some students leave before the end of the lecture.

12. Any other business

It was pointed out that the School does not have information on who of the academic staff will be on strike during the period of Industrial Action. A Vickers confirmed that the School will send information to students regarding attendance regulations during the Industrial Action period. Students will need to attend lab sessions even when the module supervisor is on strike, because GLAs will be available to assist students during these session. If no lecturer or GLA are available during a lab session, it would be considered as a personal study time. The strike will last for 8 working days between 25 November and 4 December 2019. The School is monitoring the progress of Year 3 project meetings during the strike period.

Students should assume that all progress tests will take place as scheduled. If any tests need to be rescheduled, the students will be notified. The strike will not be accepted as extenuating circumstances for missing scheduled progress tests. That applies even when a lecturer notifies students that they will be on strike. The students still need to turn up for progress tests because the School might have alternative arrangement.

13. Date of next meeting: 4 March 2020