

**CSE Stureps 2009**  
**Head of School Summary Report**  
**7th April, 2009**

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**2009 Stureps**

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# 1 Overview

This report has been prepared by the CSE Stureps and covers the period beginning the August 2008 and ending January, 2009. It's contents draws upon formal and informal feedback from students undertaking CSE courses and the survey run during the exam period for session two of 2008.

The Stureps ran a survey from the beginning of the exam period in session two 2008 to the end of the first week of session one 2009. During this period of time approximately 153 unique students responded by answering some or all of the questions. This report focuses on their extended responses to the open ended questions in the survey as well as the multiple choice questions.

## 2 Courses

### 2.1 First Year Computing

#### 2.1.1 COMP1911 - Computing 1 / COMP1917 - Higher Computer 1

Overall the comments on both computing 1 courses were positive. Students appeared to be pleased with the quality of teaching and found the assignments challenging. A student noted:

“Subject included in new course structure, however i was completing the older course plan. This sub ject was good knowledge i now require. Course was well organised and run, possibly more time required in development of main pro jects before release. These are tailored for each session which is essential and wonderful, however more time must be spent planning these before they are released.”

#### 2.1.2 COMP1927 - Higher Data Structures and Algorithms

It is generally difficult to ensure that all students find the coursework interesting and challenging in first year. Some students have a significant amount of programming experience and therefore find the beginning lessons in programming too easy while others without any programming experience have difficulty keeping up with the workload. The majority of the comments on COMP1927 were positive and it appears that the varying abilities of students were managed appropriately.

The extension lectures are an important aspect of the course, especially for students with experience in programming. One student noted that the course was, “Fun, but again too easy. Extension lectures by Aleks Ignatovic were excellent.”

COMP1927 now includes more hardware related theory and coursework that appeared to catch some of the students off guard, as noted by the following comment.

“Interesting range of algorithms to learn about as well as some of their real life applications. Although the assignment taught us how programming languages were designed and compiled, it did not appear to be relevant to material we were trying to learn.”

## 2.2 COMP2041 - Software Construction: Techniques and Tools

Students were quite impressed with the technical and practical skills taught in COMP2041. The course was clearly relevant to student’s studies and well organised. The general opinion of the students surveyed can be summarised in the following quotations.

“The greatest computing course I have ever taken so far (its one of my cores). Lots of new knowledge, interesting topics. The exams quite tough, though.”

“The course is quite good, with further exploration into tools of the trade for pro- grammers, and complements most other programming based courses, especially UNIX based ones. ”

The skills learned in COMP2041 can be seen as important and assumed knowledge for any CSE graduate however the majority of Software Engineering students are unable to take this course due to the lack of free electives in second year.

## 2.3 COMP2121 - Microprocessors and Interfacing

The feedback for the Microprocessors course was generally positive however some of the respondents noted that the labs could be improved. One of the students commented that their was ‘lots of content to learn’ while another noted that the ‘workload was just right.’ COMP2121 must cater for a range of students, from Electrical Engineering students who understand hardware but not programming to computing students who understand programing and not hardware. Some of the students did appreciate the diversity offered by the course as noted in the comment below.

“Good course. Labs were excellent and taught you a lot. Lectures were useful and interesting. Reasonable workload. Gave good insight into the hardware side of computing - something not often seen in SE.”

Due to the wide range of student abilities it is understandable that the course would receive some mixed results. Although it has been noted that some students are left without lab partners and are still required to undertake the same amount of work for the assignments (the final assignment is done with a partner).

## 2.4 COMP3441 - Cryptography and Distributed Systems Security

The majority of comments on COMP3441 were quite positive and students found the lectures interesting and enjoyable. A few of the students commented on the lack of technical work required.

“Was disappointed with the lack of in-depth technical stuff. Past students had raved about it being one of the hardest courses CSE had to offer, but it seems to have been dumbed down for 12-week semesters. Never the less - was very fun! Labs were interesting [...] Some hardcore programming or cryptanalysis assignments wouldve made this course feel much more intense/worthwhile.”

“Good idea for a course but has too much technical stuff cut out.”

## 2.5 COMP3511 - Human Computer Interaction

Some complaints were received throughout session two of 2008 regarding the workload and the weightings of assessments in this course. Students found themselves completing assignments on a weekly basis that did not significantly contribute to their overall mark for the course. The need for a course on interface design is clear however the majority of student's were not aware that they would spend their time developing paper prototypes and never actually build an interface. One student suggested that the workload could be reduced without any impact on the student's learning:

“While the course had some interesting topics and valuable information the workload was simply unacceptable and didnt help achieve the course aims in anyway. About half of the work would have resulted in achieving the same goals.”

Many of the students were impressed by the quality of the tutors and their willingness to help the students.

“Awesome. Good course, good tutors. Assignment weightings were unclear and we got virtually no marks back until the end of session. Assignments out of 100 marks etc were converted to marks out of 6 and 7. Confusing. Would recommend subject however.”

The workload in the course was a significant concern to many of the students felt that the course did not cater for the range of students enrolled.

“Workload is much more than a standard 6UOC course. Lectures are average at best. Lecturer talks in abstract and broad terms but wants the course to be more formal. The lecturer in no way takes into the account the skills of the students at the beginning of the course who have been writing mostly computer code or have english as a second language. [...] The course tries to fit as much as possible into 12 weeks, without consideration of the student workload, or the fact that there are other courses around. [...] ”

## 2.6 COMP9321 - Web Applications Engineering

The comments received for COMP9321 were positive overall and students found the material they were learning was important and clearly relevant.

“You will learn all the basics of web designing, the MVC architecture.. A must for all the web designers.” “Great introduction to web based systems. Great balance between assignments and labs. Helen Paik is an awesome lecturer. ”

One of the students noted that the resources provided for the course may not be sufficient as development required more disk space and the labs were full at times.

“[...] CSE labs are always full of ppl during daytime. and development environment was out-of-dated and not flexible. in addition, system space for each student is really little. i strongly recommend to increase it. not only this subject, many subject could use much space.”

## 2.7 SENG2020

The second and third year Software Engineering workshops are 3UOC (Units of Credit) while other courses in CSE are 6UOC. A number of students are always confused as to how units of credit relate to the workload of a course. The comments received and the workload of the Software Engineering workshops suggest that the number units of credit of a course has no bearing on workload.

Workshops are seen by Software Engineering students as clearly relevant to their degree however it can be difficult to spend a significant amount of time on the course while undertaking following the required SENG program. Regardless, students are pleased with the quality, content and relevance of the workshops themselves.

“Very large workload, and completely unreasonable for a 3 UOC subject. Other subjects suffered as a result of this course. But good assignments. Good not having an exam.”

### 3 Clashes

Due to the new universal timetabling system used by UNSW, a number of courses which may be popular with students clash with one another. This year, the survey asked whether or not the respondent was not able to take a course due to it clashing with another course. The following table shows the clashes which existed in session two 2008 or session one 2009 that have been noted by students.

Course	Clashes with:
COMP3171	ELEC2134
COMP3441	MATH2859, COMP1927
COMP3711	CSE REVUE
COMP9331	COMP9315
COMP9336	COMP9315
GSOE9820	COMP9021
MATH2601	COMP3431
TELE3113	COMP3441

### 4 Advanced Courses

In recent years the number of advanced courses being offered by CSE has decreased due to declining enrollments and lessened interest. The survey this session asked students which advanced courses they planned on taking out of the current offering. The results are shown in figure 1.

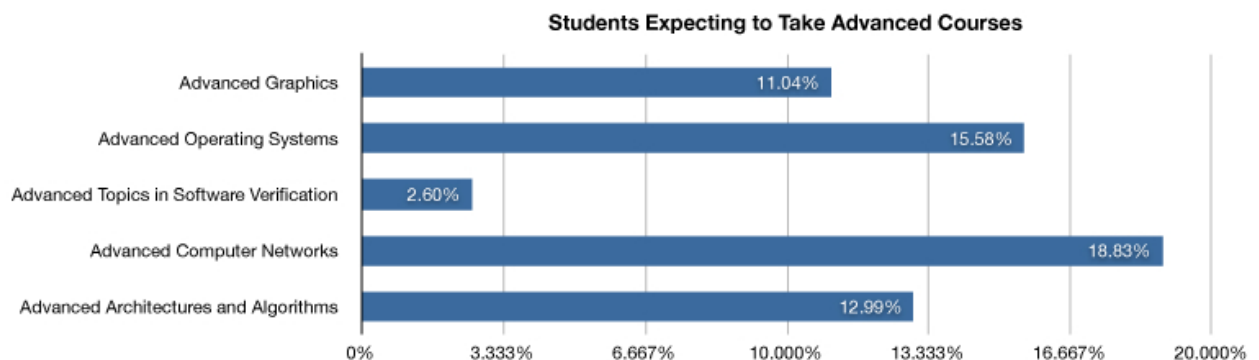


Figure 1:

## 5 Quotas

### 5.1 Disk Quota

#### Overview

It is currently not possible for students to acquire more disk quota from CSE, even if a student would like to purchase it. Undergraduate students only receive a base allocation of 50mbs which can easily be exceeded by students requiring to run large tests on code or the increasing sizes of email. This allocation has not been changed recently while the sizes of files students must work with has increased.

#### Recommendations / Resolutions

Students would greatly benefit from increased disk quota. Many students regularly exceed or come close to exceeding their disk quota due to normal usage and the requirements of their courses.

### 5.2 Internet Quota

#### Overview

UNIWIDE access for students with their own laptops is now free. Only a few years ago students were required to pay \$1 connection fees and were charged by the megabyte. Hence the university has gradually reduced the cost of internet usage on campus for both schools and students alike. CSE is behind the rest of the university in this regard; many CSE students do not have laptops or do not bring them to university. This means that some students will quickly run out of IP quota whilst others are enjoying the free internet provided by UNSW.

#### Recommendations / Resolutions

**Is the Disk Quota Sufficient?**

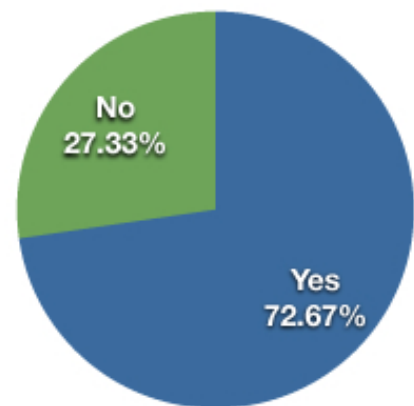


Figure 2:

**Is the IP Quota Sufficient?**

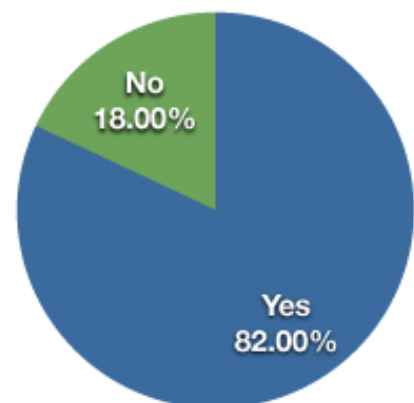


Figure 3:



It would make sense for CSE to remove the bandwidth limits for CSE students. As far as the Stureps are aware, CSE is no longer charged for their bandwidth usage and therefore this savings should be passed onto the students. Additionally, for the sake of equality between those with laptops and those without, all students should have equal access to the internet.

## 5.3 Print Quota

### Overview

Many students no longer print out their lecture notes or any other material and prefer to read document on their computers'. However the students who do print out lecture notes on a weekly basis find the current print allocation insufficient. Print allocation of just over a hundred pages per course means that students cannot print out lecture notes on a weekly basis or all of their study notes at the end of the session.

### Recommendations / Resolutions

CSE is one of the few schools that provides free print quota to students however if that print quota could be increased it would allow students to print out their code for review or lecture notes for studying.

**Is the Print Quota Sufficient?**

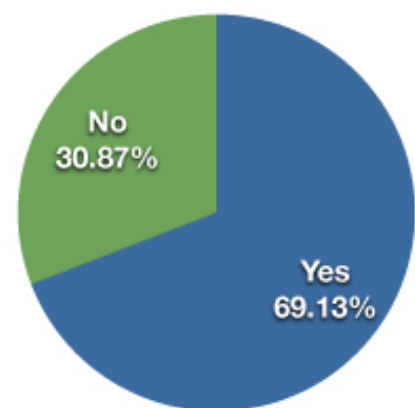


Figure 4:

## 6 CSE

### 6.1 Stureps

Elections were recently held for the 2009 stureps. The first meeting was held last week and a regular meeting time as well as an up to date website are currently being discussed.

Please direct feedback to: [stureps@cse.unw.edu.au](mailto:stureps@cse.unw.edu.au)