

CSE Student Representative Report

2014s2

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Student Representatives

	Representatives
First Year	Octavia Soegyono Harry Day
Second Year	Oliver Tan John Wiseheart
Third Year	Omar Ali Matt McEwan
Fourth+ Year	Sarah Bennett Christopher Manouvrier

About

The CSE Student Representative Report is all about gathering feedback on CSE and courses midway through the semester, and addressing them to the Head of School so that any issues arisen can be fixed sooner rather than later. Positive feedback also helps as it gives lecturers an indication of how they are going.

This semester we gave out two surveys - the CSE survey, a general survey about CSE, which was cut down from previous years as questions get outdated - and the course survey, regarding all CSE taught courses.

Altogether, we had 87 participants in the CSE survey, and 204 responses to the course survey. We have read and compiled this report based on those responses. We have continued to put qualitative results of the course survey into our report, provided there are enough responses to make it valid.

We would like to thank all the lecturers who we know have put the survey up during the lecture - in particular - ChunTung Chou, Andrew Taylor, Michael Thielscher and Nadine Marcus. The courses where we have lecture bashed or where lecturers have presented slides have a much higher response rate.

We would also like to thank all students for their time in completing the survey. We hope the report is informative, and you will see a reflection of changes for areas this report has addressed.

We have also put CSESoc in the CSE survey this semester - and forgot CSE Revue. The results for CSESoc have not been published but presented to CSESoc at their meeting. We will ask CSE Revue next year if they have anything they wish to ask of students.

A few extra pieces of commentary have been provided in the courses section.

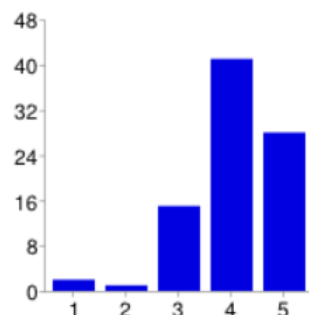
You can view the sturep website at <https://www.cse.unsw.edu.au/~stureps/>.

Sincerely,
Your Student Representatives of 2014

Life at CSE

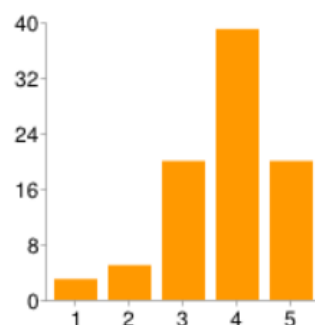
(5 being Amazing, 1 being Terrible)

How are you finding life at CSE?



1	2	2%
2	1	1%
3	15	17%
4	41	47%
5	28	32%

Do you feel like you are receiving sufficient support in your degree?



1	3	3%
2	5	6%
3	20	23%
4	39	45%
5	20	23%

Lecturers in General - Feedback

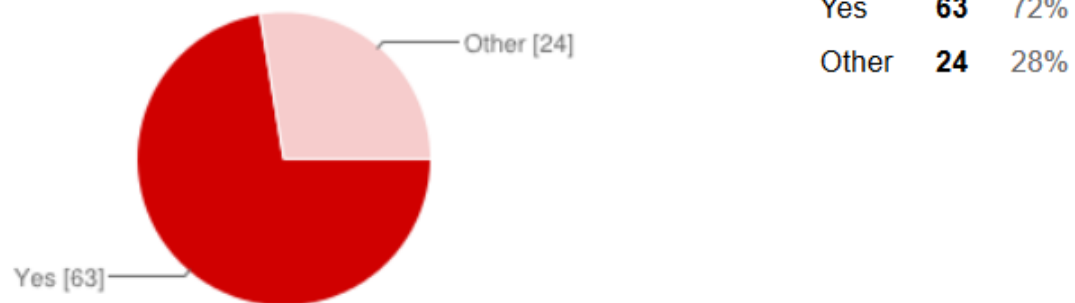
- Students found some lecturers who are not fluent with English hard to understand
- Some lecturers rely too much on reading off slides - and have suggested more whiteboard/use of visual tools

CSE General Feedback

- The community is great, including students and lecturers.
- Many praises have been given for the help desk.
- The point of doing Management and Ethics was brought up a few times
- A clearer, more obvious plan on how to choose electives. Students currently seem to be slightly uninformed.
- Electives are also getting harder to pick as a result of the cuts in subjects and frequency offered. In particular, it was harder to choose subjects in the second semester. Cores should be offered in both semesters.
- It may be useful to have a public poll of the courses in CSE.
- Technologies in some courses are outdated - courses should adapt with the changing technologies.

CATEI Responses

Do you typically fill out all CATEI evaluations on myUNSW? If no, why not?

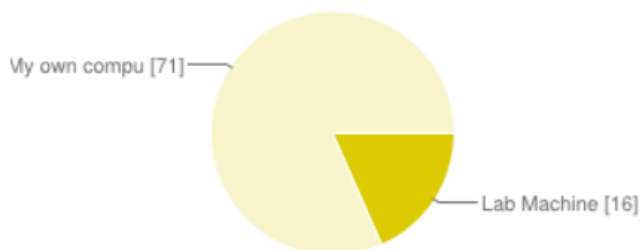


- Usually too busy with exams
- Sometimes there's not many comments to say
 - it is only filled in if the course is really bad
- Data feels like it is unheard of (e.g. COMP2911)
- It is not compulsory
- Can't find it's location on MyUNSW
- Can't be bothered - too long

Student Resources

Lab or Computer?

For assignment work, do you predominantly use your own computer or a CSE lab machine?



Lab Machine	16	18%
My own computer	71	82%

Disk Quota

Was the amount of disk quota allocated to you sufficient for your courses this session?



Yes	72	83%
Other	15	17%

People have indicated “other” have said:

- there are no room for extensions, e.g. for vim
- it is annoying getting email spam when a file is not backed up
- google chrome and eclipse are high storage - especially the google chrome cache
- not enough space to work for operating systems and database based courses
- sometimes temporary space for big files is needed (but can be circumvented with /temp)
- maybe a computer-based saved space for CSE?

Facilities

Note we combined some of the requests for upcoming labs with the Feedback on existing labs as they overlap.

Feedback

- The basement is great
- The mobile phone chargers do not always work - perhaps look at fixing them
- Some of the monitors do not sit up straight
- Some doors are still squeaky
- Update the default version of applications, including Google Chrome, Iceweasel, Python and Java
- Install flash on iceweasel, and more knowledge of google-chrome
- Electrical Engineering Lab/Oud chairs are broken
- More accessible powerpoints for laptops.
- Increase the print quota
- Bring back a cafeteria
- Should be able to lock machines, however, timeout after a user has not logged in.
- More light and colour.
- Better temperature control
- Information on how to mount a CSE drive to a home device
- Make headphone jacks work
- Google Chrome should be on the desktop, and accessible on weill/wagner (when people use VNC)
- A 24/7 lab for students
- The female toilets in the basement are not working

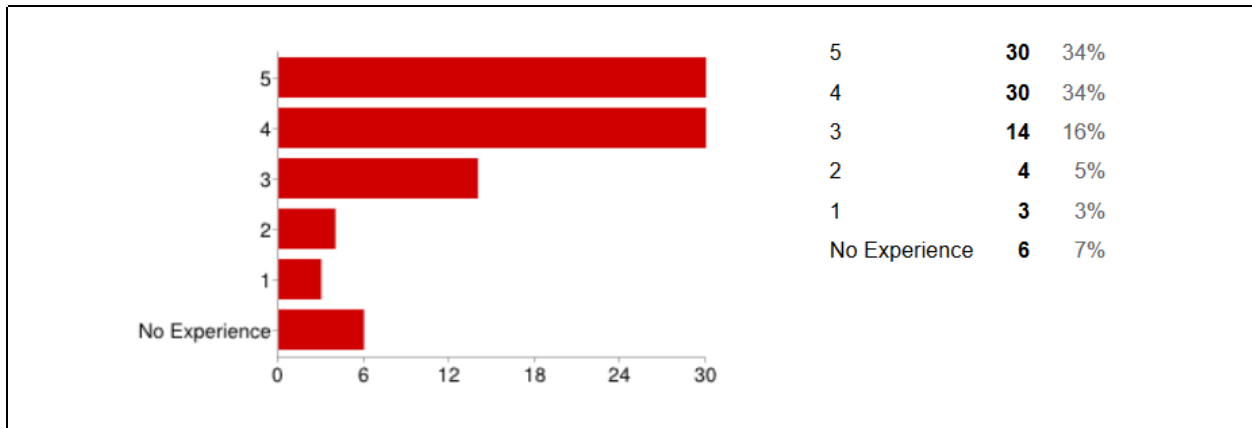
Requests for the upcoming Labs

- Make them themed, for example, like the ones at google
- Mechanical keyboards
- Whiteboards that can roll around, or are of good quality
- Open window design is very nice.
- Good quality monitor stands
- Lower level desks
- Sound proofing
- Mobile phone charging stations
- Water fountains nearby
- Comfier Chairs
- Better lighting
- Cats

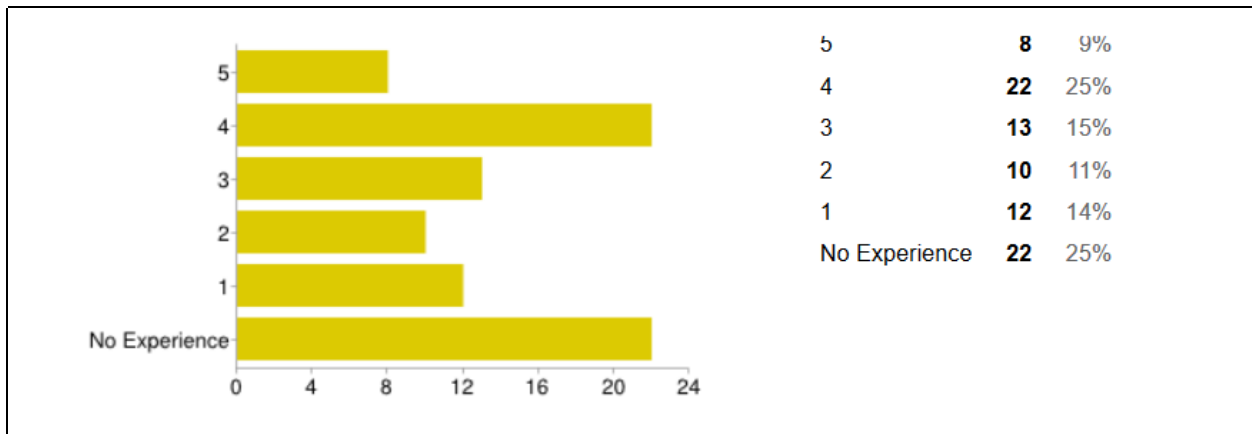
Lecturing Tools

With the growing amount of tools lecturers use to communicate to students, we added this section to ask how effective each method is. Below is a summary of the ratings students gave to different tools (5 being very effective, 1 being least effective):

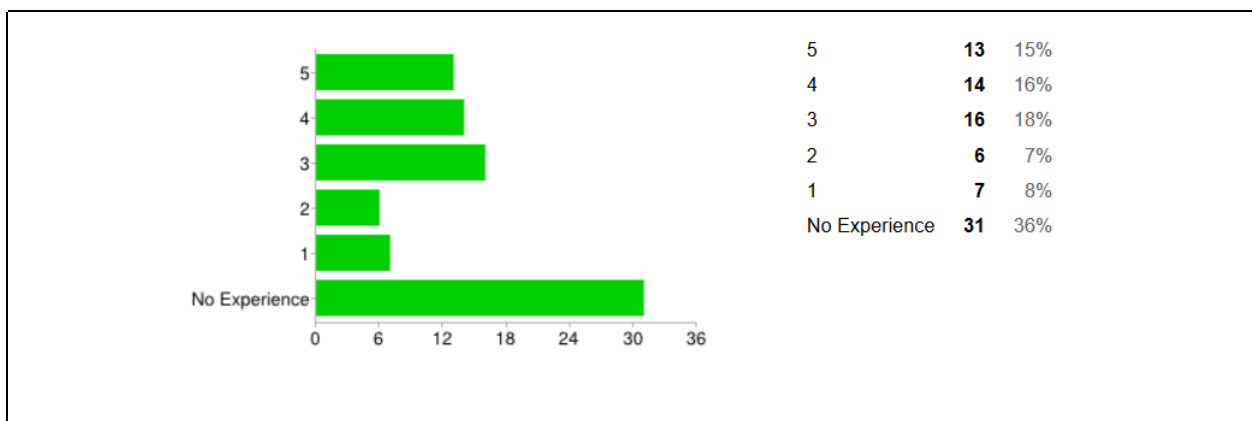
Emails



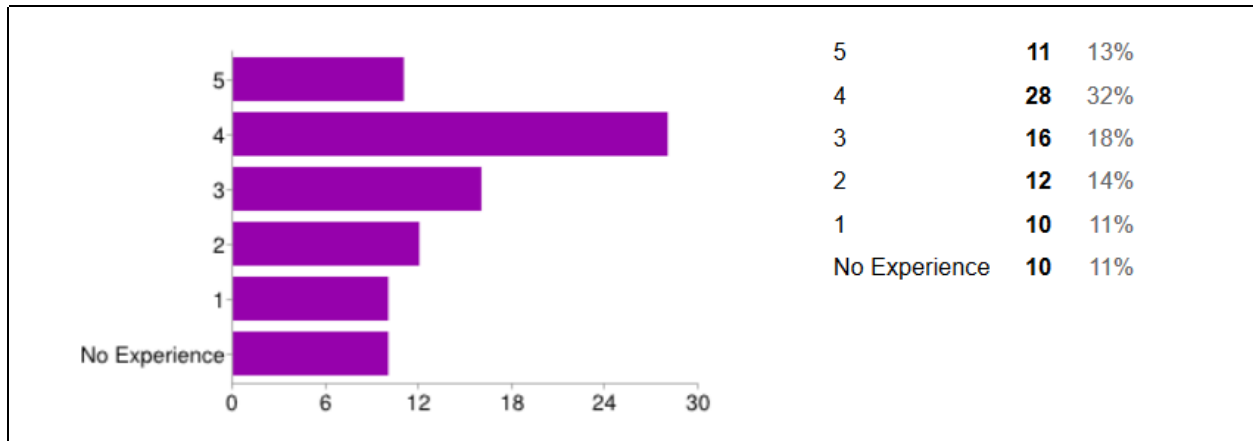
OpenLearning



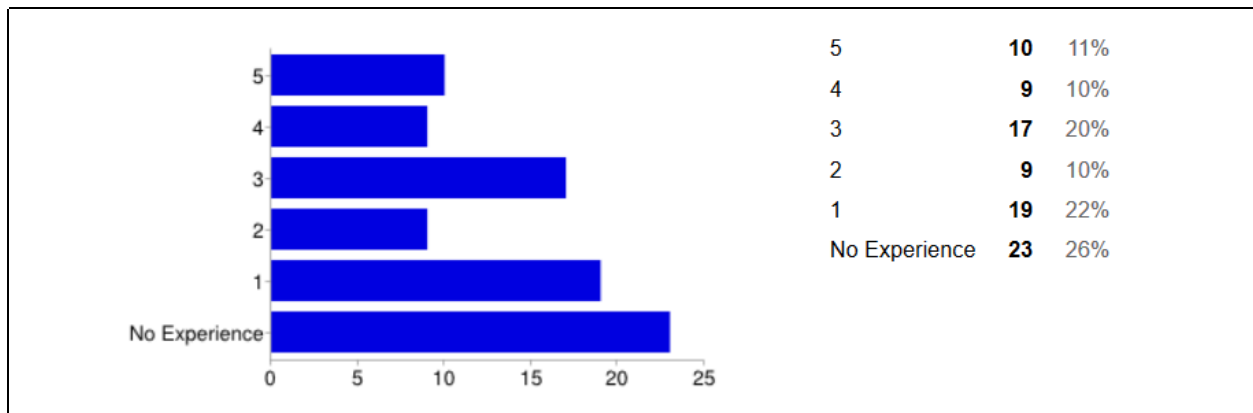
Piazza



WebCMS



Moodle



General Comments

- Emails seem to be a popular communication tool
- Text messages and Facebook Groups were also recommended, with lecturer participation
- Many comments were made about the lack of Echo360 tools given.
 - Live streaming was asked for, but is currently supported by Echo360
 - Many praises were given to lecturers who provided their own videos.
 - Students complained that many lecturers did not provide the Echo link.
- Many students are complaining they have **too many** different content management systems, and the school should stick to one.
 - Using different tools made it hard to keep track of information from different courses.
 - Some students felt that a number of systems used by some courses were outdated
 - Some lecturers used two different tools in the same course, which students found confusing and inefficient.

- Being inconsistent with the rest of the university was also a matter of concern. Although Moodle was clearly the least popular tool.
- Some comments were made about WebCMS's frame system, message board and outdated interface, and signalled that it can be improved. There were also complaints about inconsistency in using the WebCMS gradebook vs. give, and the differences in login passwords (WebCMS password differs from CSE).
- OpenLearning would have been good if it was faster, and lecturers used it appropriately
- Students wanted courses to be interactive in how they were taught, but felt that this was currently badly done in most courses.

Course Surveys

The rest of the report outlines how each subject is being received based on student responses.

However, there are a few common themes in the responses:

- **Weighting of Exam and Assessment Items:** especially for practical based courses, grades should weigh more heavily on assessments rather than a final exam.
- **Echo360:** many complaints are given in courses where the lecturers do not release Echo360 links. Students feel that not releasing them because it would decrease attendance should not be a factor - and that for some they are good as revision tools, especially for exams, or for catching up. The technology is there and students have paid for the privilege.

A comment made was for an actual course improvement strategy, with quality assurance and a more functional communication feedback loop between staff and students. The number of courses lacking in quality seemed to be increasing, in particular, for Software Engineering.

First Year Courses

COMP1917 - Computing 1

Positive

Sample: 14 (of 245)

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	3.79	4
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	4.36	5
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	3.79	4
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	3.93	4
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3.64	3.5
Would you say the course is well organised?	3.36	4
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	4.29	4.5
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	3.93	4

General Comments

- Students found the course a good introduction to computing since it was well-presented, clear and easily understandable.
- The course content was found to be useful and relevant.
- Most students found the lectures interesting and the real life examples were humourous.
- Consultations have been helpful.
- Students felt that longer lectures (2 hours instead of 1 hour) would help with the flow of learning so that more detailed examples could be discussed and analysed, complementing the concepts covered during lectures.
- Students would prefer a heavier focus on how to address a problem and write a program for it.
- Some found that content was brushed over (e.g. arrays).
- Lab/tutorial questions leading up to the first assignment did not adequately build up the knowledge required for the completion of the assignment.
- Some tutors found it difficult helping students because content was not thoroughly explained during lectures (i.e. some students did not know what a variable was)

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	3.75	4
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	4	4
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	4.25	4.25
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	2.25	2
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3	3.5
Would you say the course is well organised?	4.25	4.5
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	4	4.5
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	4	4.5

General Comments

- Some students enjoy the pace the course is moving at.
- One comment noted that there was time to practice coding in class.
- Students would prefer if the lecturer took a more engaging approach when teaching (i.e. not reading off of lecture notes).
- A student noted that diagrams may help clarify concepts (e.g. memory).

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	2.94	3
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	4.06	4
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	3.64	4
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	2.55	3
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3.67	4
Would you say the course is well organised?	3.58	4
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	3.88	4
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	3.30	3

The course workload was generally considered appropriate.

General Comments

- The lecture videos were good quality and uploaded quickly. Students really liked the fact the it was a recording of the screen overlaid with a recording of the lecturer. They appreciated the extra effort, and enthusiasm this required rather than using echo.
- The content of the course (algorithms and efficiency) was considered interesting and relevant.
- Students liked the lecture’s humour and the “nerdy stuff at the start of every lecture”
- Generally students felt the tutors were great, and the lecturer was nice.
- Some students felt the lecturer couldn’t maintain class focus for the whole of the lecture, and went off topic.
- Students felt that the activities and demonstrations in the lecture weren’t very interesting. It was suggested this could be improved by doing less live coding during lectures. This point was raised by a significant number of students.
- A number students felt that having activities during the week, rather than just in the labs would be better. They also felt this would help them reinforce what they had learnt.
- There were a number of complaints about the difficulty of, and support provided for, the first assignment. Especially in regards to the spec, which some felt required students to do the assignment in a way that wasn’t very sensible.
- Some students said that the lab exercises didn’t relate well to the lecture content. They also felt that some of the tutorial questions would be more appropriate as lab exercises

- Students felt that using both WebCMS and OpenLearning was inappropriate and would have preferred one or the other. It was noted that how the information was laid out also made it hard to find, and OpenLearning could be used better.
- Some students felt that the workload for the course was too high, when combined with the length of lectures, and assignments, whilst most felt it was appropriate.

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	3.33	3
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	3.44	4
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	3.56	4
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	2.89	3
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3	3
Would you say the course is well organised?	3.89	4
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	3.22	3
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	3.11	3

The course workload was generally appropriate.

General Comments

- Students found the course both interesting and relevant.
- Some students felt like the introduction to programing moved too quickly
- It was widely suggested that the ratio of students to tutors was too high, and the lecture would work better with a smaller cohort.
- One student also noted it would be good if the labs were released earlier.

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	2.63	2.5
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	3.88	4
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	3.13	3
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	2.13	2
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	2.75	3
Would you say the course is well organised?	3.25	3.5
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	3.88	4
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	2.5	2.5

The course workload was generally appropriate.

General Comments

- Students liked the course structure, and found that the requirements had been explained well. Although some students wanted more details of weighting on the marking criteria.
- Students felt that all staff involved were doing very well
- Some students though the course was unnecessary.
- Students felt that the lecture time was somewhat wasted, and could be better allocated to tutorial time and compulsory team meeting time
- Students felt the lecture just read off the slides, and this time was wasted.
- A significant complaint was the mentoring sessions were scheduled outside the timetabled time for the course, causing clashes with other courses.

Second Year Courses

COMP2041/COMP9041 - Software Construction: Techniques and Tools

Positive

Sample: 46 (of 350)

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	4.45	5
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	4.38	5
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	4.21	4
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	4.23	4
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3.60	4
Would you say the course is well organised?	4.21	4
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	4.11	4
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	4.43	5

General Comments

They thoroughly enjoyed the lectures, particularly Andrew's sense of humour. Students also enjoyed the labs, and thought they were well structured. Students were unhappy about the quality of the lecture recordings, and the use of Perl within the course, stating Python should be taught instead.

COMP2911 - Engineering Design in Computing (Semester 1)

Negative

Sample: 7 (of 0)

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	2.44	3
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	2.78	3
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	2	2
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	1.67	1
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3.56	4
Would you say the course is well organised?	2	2
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	2.89	3
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	1.67	1

General Comments

Interestingly enough, even though this course isn't running in 2nd semester, 7 students still submitted a survey response. Their overall feedback was poor, but that has been expressed in previous surveys.

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	3.83	4
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	4.17	4.5
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	3.5	3.5
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	3.17	3.5
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3.5	3
Would you say the course is well organised?	3.5	3
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	3.5	3.5
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	3.67	3.5

General Comments

Students generally enjoyed the course, particularly its practicality and relevance. Some students thought that more simple explanation was needed as some students had been “thrown in the deep end” with no prior experience in the area.

Third Year Courses

COMP3151 - Foundations of Concurrency

Positive

Sample: 1 (of 31)

General Comments

Lecturer and tutor were praised for being interesting and being organized. The student suggested having recorded lectures for extra revision.

COMP3161 - Concepts of Programming Languages

Positive

Sample: 4 (of 72)

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	3.5	3.5
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	3	3.5
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	3.25	3
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	4	4
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3.5	3.5
Would you say the course is well organised?]	4	4
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	3.88	4
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	3.30	3

General Comments

The lecturer was praised for making the lecture fun but students complained that the lecturer did go on tangents that had nothing to do with the course material very often and that there was a noticeable difference between exam and tutorial questions.

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	4	4
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	3.25	3.5
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	3.5	3.5
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	3.75	4
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3	3
Would you say the course is well organised?]	3.75	4
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	2.25	2.5
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	3.5	3.5

General Comments

The course content was noted to be good, but students complained that the labs were way further ahead of the course content that should be reasonably expected. Also, that the lab instructors are not very good at explaining the course content.

COMP3331 - Computer Networks and Applications

Negative

Sample: 10 (of 86)

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	2.6	2.5
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	2.9	3
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	2.5	2.5
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	2.4	2
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3.3	3
Would you say the course is well organised?	3	3
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	1.4	1
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	2.1	2

General Comments

The course load was appropriate for the students but there were complaints about how the course content itself was very boring and that the lecturer was unable to communicate enthusiasm effectively. Also, the lack of staff in tutorials means that students cannot effectively get the help that they need.

COMP3421 - Computer Graphics

Positive

Sample: 3 (of 123)

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	3.67	4
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	3.33	4
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	4	4
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	2.67	3
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	4	4
Would you say the course is well organised?]	3.67	4
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	3	3
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	3.33	3

General Comments

Students said that the content was interesting and that the lecturer was good but that the lack of programming exercises makes it a bit of a hurdle to learn the course properly.

COMP3431 - Robotic Software Architecture

Negative

Sample: 1 (of 16)

General Comments

The Student said that the lecture contents could be improved by having the lecture talk more in depth about the different approaches used in robotics and that the course website and outline are outdated and need more detail.

COMP3511/COMP9511 - Human Computer Interaction

Positive

Sample: 20 (of 120)

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	3.71	4
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	4.33	5
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	3.33	4
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	2.71	3
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3.33	3
Would you say the course is well organised?]	3.48	4
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	3.71	4
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	3.48	4

General Comments

Students enjoy the course content but feel like the lectures are very poor and at an incredibly inconvenient time. Some suggestions were to have a 2 hour time slot at a better time and go through content much quicker. Students were unhappy that the lecture attendance was mandatory for its time slot.

COMP3601 - Design Project A

Positive

Sample: 1 (of 20)

General Comments

The student that filled out the survey for this course said that they wished for a bit more guidance on projects but that other than that it was a positive learning experience.

Fourth+ Year Courses

COMP4161 - Advanced Topics in Software Verification

Positive

Sample: 2 (of 9)

General Comments

Course is really interesting and the workload is good for the course.

COMP4920 - Management and Ethics

Mixed

Sample: 2 (of 182)

General Comments

Good lectures and tutorials are fun. They were confused as to why some of the students doing the course were kicked out for doing it early, and later the lecturer asking for more attendance. Also it is not really a management course and it should be renamed to just ethics.

COMP6741 - Parameterized and Exact Algorithms

Positive

Sample: 2 (of 13)

The two responses have opposing views.

- One student is happy about the lecturer's openness to feedback (via. his own paper surveys), and think the course will be useful for his future.
- The other thought the course was too confusing with the symbolic terminology. The student thought concepts could be better explained with English.

COMP6771 - Advanced C++ Programming

Positive

Sample: 5 (of 92)

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	3.86	4
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	4.43	5
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	4	4
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	3.71	4
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3.57	4
Would you say the course is well organised?]	4.29	4
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	4.43	5
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	4.29	4

The workload was considered appropriate by all.

General Comments

- The assignments were considered useful.
- The workload was commented on to be just right.
- However, there was a doubt in to 60% weighting of the exam, and 40% in assessments - which should be the other way around considering the lecturer claims it to be a “practical course”.
- Echo360 lectures would be good for revision.

Postgraduate Courses

COMP9021 - Principles of Programming

Mixed

Sample: 2 (of 89)

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	4	4
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	4	4
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	2	2
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	2	2
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	2.5	2.5
Would you say the course is well organised?	3.5	3.5
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	3	3
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	3.5	3.5

The workload was considered appropriate.

General Comments

- Students find that the course goes into a good amount of detail.
- Some students find that the lecturer is too focused on specifics and should spend more time on teaching concepts, rather than solely practical applications only.

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	3.5	3.5
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	4.5	4.5
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	2.5	2.5
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	1	1
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	5	5
Would you say the course is well organised?	1.5	1.5
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	1	1
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	1	1

The workload was considered appropriate.

General Comments

- Students thought the course would be useful but that it is difficult to understand and learn from the lecturer.
- Some students find the lecture notes are good.
- Students would prefer if there were tutorials/labs, more assignments with better goal descriptions.
- Students are having trouble contacting the lecture over email/message board.
- Some feel they are not learning much during lectures, and they are instead watching lectures on Youtube (notably Richard Buckland's) to keep up.
- They felt the assignment was to test Java coding ability rather than algorithm knowledge.

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	3.2	3
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	3.2	3
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	2.8	3
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	2.6	3
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	2	2
Would you say the course is well organised?	3	3
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	3.2	3
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	2.4	2

The workload was considered appropriate.

General Comments

Complaints including:

- the lack of lecture recordings, especially to postgrads
- more content to computer architecture - not AVR
- lectures notes could be improved
- lecturer could be more engaging

COMP9242 - Advanced Operating Systems

Positive

Sample: 5 (of 18)

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	4.71	5
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	4.57	5
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	4.57	5
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	4.57	5
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3.43	4
Would you say the course is well organised?]	4.29	4
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	4.71	5
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	4.71	5

The workload was considered appropriate.

General Comments

- Gernot knows everything.
- The course is considered fun - at the price of one's own life
- The daily consultations were considered very useful
- The NICTA building could be rotated to account for the sun
- Milestones could be layed out more clearly.
- More bonus marks should be made available.

COMP9315 - Database Systems Implementation

Positive

Sample: 2 (of 67)

General Comments

There was little feedback that could be extrapolated, besides John Shepherd being cool.

COMP9321 - Web Applications Engineering

Mixed

Sample: 4 (of 75)

Qualitative Responses

	Average	Median
Is the course interesting?	3.8	3.5
Does you feel this course is useful for your future?	3.4	3.5
Do you find the content of appropriate difficulty?	2.9	3
Would you enrol in another course with this lecturer?	3.2	3
Would you enrol in this course with a different lecturer but same content?	3	4
Would you say the course is well organised?]	3.4	3.5
Are you satisfied with the level of tutoring you've received?	3	3
Would you recommend this course to a friend?	2.6	2

The workload was considered appropriate.

General Comments

Students enjoyed the content. One student commented that he/she didn't like the lecturer's teaching style. Another student noted that they didn't enjoy using WebCMS for forums. A more modern, up-to-date language could be used.