1. Background and Current Status of BSc in Software Engineering

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of engineering principles to practising and applied Computer Scientists. The granting of Chartered Engineer status to professionally qualified members of the British Computer Society (BCS) has reinforced this position. The Computer Science BSc degree programme at the University of Durham has been accredited by the BCS for a number of years as is the more recent Software Engineering BSc degree programme. The first cohort of 16 students to complete this three year Software Engineering BSc programme graduated in July 1998, followed by 27 students in July 1999.

2. Proposal for a MEng in Software Engineering

In order to improve the depth of the Software Engineering degree course, the Department of Computer Science at Durham is proposing to offer students a four year single honours MEng degree in Software Engineering. One of the reasons for the new degree is that it will give students a stronger academic basis for their professional development as software engineers while at the same time easing their transition into professional practice as software engineers in industry. This degree will be similar to the current BSc in Software Engineering in its first three years. In their fourth year of study, students will undertake an industrially based group project in Software Engineering and attend two seminar-based modules, one on advanced technical aspects of software engineering, and the other on professional issues: economic, legal, managerial, organisational and social aspects of software engineering in practice.

The following key issues remain respect to the proposed MEng degree in Software Engineering:

1. Should the MEng be broadened to Computer Science, or remain initially restricted to Software Engineering?

2. What support within the department is necessary to ensure that we are able to maintain uniformly high quality and suitable industrial projects for MEng students year on year?

3. What should be the relationship between companies and MEng project students? E.g. the companies could be sponsors, employers, or a mixture of these.

4. Is it realistic to assume that video conferencing can be used to maintain communication between students at the university and staff in companies?