COMP110: Key Skills for Computer Science

The Cheap Tunes Case Study
Consider the following case study:

> You are working as a software development manager in a small software development company based in Liverpool, which specialises in Internet/Web applications. The company is struggling to find work, and there is a real prospect that if you are not able to find some work for the company soon, then the company will go bust, with you and your colleaues losing your jobs. You are approached by a company called "Cheap Tunes", who are based in Ruritania. Cheap Tunes are interested in you carrying out a major software development project for them. The idea is that the Company will host a web site for buying music based in Ruritania. You are to develop both the back end (the music databases, e-commerce software, and server technology), and the client-based front end application to the service, which will be made available as a free download application (rather like Apple's iTunes software). It becomes clear, however, that Cheap Tunes are intending to exploit the notoriously weak copyright laws of Ruritania, by converting CD music to MP3 format and selling the MP3s without the artists or their representatives being payed any royalties. Some employees within your company take the view that the company should not accept the contract. Others argue that you should go ahead with the contract, as (i) the activity of Cheap Tunes is not illegal in Ruritania; (ii) the development of the software would in any case not be illegal – only its *use*; and (iii) if we didn't develop the software, somebody else would.

The Report
You are required to write a report on this case study, of *no more than 1000 words*. In this report, you should imagine that you have been asked by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the software development company to write the report, which should identify and comment on the legal, professional, and ethical issues raised by this potential contract, and should make a recommendation as to what course of action the company should take. You should make special reference in the report to the BCS code of conduct, and you should comment where appropriate on the likely legal status of the work.

Mark Allocation Breakdown
The marking scheme for this piece of coursework will be as follows:

- *Discussion and analysis of relevant legal, professional, and ethical issues*: 50%

You should present the relevant issues clearly and concisely, making reference as appropriate to the BCS code of conduct and other relevant documents. You are encouraged to refer to online resources such as the Federation Against Copyright Theft, and to investigate and comment on the legal rulings against such companies as Napster.

- *Report structure and standard of writing*: 30%

  You should think clearly about the structure of your report, and how you present and analyse your arguments. You are advised to use a formal report structure, with headings, sub-headings, etc. Marks will be awarded here on the basis of how clearly and appropriately you structure the document, and whether the issues you raise are relevant, and properly discussed.

- *Use of citations and reference to/awareness of literature*: 20%

  You should make proper and appropriate use of the available literature (e.g., web resources, library books, etc), and you should be particularly careful to avoid plagiarism.

You should word-process your report, and should staple it with a single staple in the top-left corner. You should use no other form of binding whatsoever.

Deadline and Hand-in Arrangements
The deadline for this coursework is 14 DECEMBER 2010. You should hand your work in to the student office.