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Det naturvidenskabelige Studienævn
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DM502 Programming A, Fall 2011, Action Plan

The course DM502 Programming A was evaluated as it is a first year course. Out of the 108 students, 42 have answered the course evaluation sheet.

The course seems to have been at an adequate level for most of the participants as demonstrated by their use of time and their relative assessment of difficulty and work load. The only remarkable trend here is that some students use too little time and seem to perceive the course as rather easy. This can very likely be explained by the diverse entry qualifications of the participants. A significant part of the students had previous experience with programming (from school, previous educations, job experience, or self-taught) while another significant part had no prior experience at all. In the course, I included optional challenge tasks for both parts of the exam project in order to stimulate the former group of students.

The vast majority of the participants considered the course to be well-aligned, meaningfully integrated in their studies, and both well-planned and well-executed.

More than 80% of the participants were satisfied with the teaching material, where the slides scored higher than the course book. Still, more than 75% were satisfied with the course book while less than 20% were unsatisfied. Compared to Fall 2010 with less than 40% satisfied and more than 40% unsatsified, the shift to Python and the subsequent use of a different course book clearly have paid off. In accordance with last year's action plan, the number of extra notes was reduced to keep the course literature more manageable for the students. While popular with the majority of students, the "live programming" sessions during the lectures received some critique. It seems that with more complex programming examples, it was hard to follow these sessions for some of the participants. In a next edition of the course, the amount of "live programming" in the second half of the course could be reduced.

The use of projects for the exam was received very well and seen as appropriate by more than 97% of the students. It seems logical to continue with this exam form. There were no comments on the fact that two different tracks of projects were offered (fractals, lindenmayer-systems and turtle graphics vs basic DNA sequence processing). Thus, no conclusion can be made on its impact.

Students were overall very satisfied with the teacher (academic level >92% postive, pedagogical >87% positive, preparation >92% positive, commitment >90% positive). Compared to Fall 2010 with pedagogical >75% positive, the teacher was perceived to be significantly improved. This is likely due to two factors. First, the course was redesigned from scratch for Fall 2011 while in Fall 2010 it continued based on previous instances of the course. Second, the shift from Java to Python allowed the teacher to focus less on technicalities and more on concepts.

The comments on the teacher are all very positive except for one complaining about unavailability of the teacher directly before the delivery deadline. This unavailability was due to holidays and had been announced nearly a month in advance.

Students were also quite positive about the three teaching assistants. Some minor comments should be taken up with them, but no further action seems to be required.

For the next iteration, the following actions should be considered:

- Be more careful with using "live programming" sessions, in particular for complex examples.
- Slightly revise the course in order to reduce the number of technicalities even further. In this way, even more room will be given to the underlying concepts.

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