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### DM536 Introduction to Programming, Fall 2012, Action Plan

The course DM536 Programming A was evaluated as it is a first year course. Out of the 120 students, 58 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. While this is true for the average, there were some students for which the course was too easy and some for which the course was too hard. 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 75% of the participants were satisfied with the teaching material, where in contrast to 2011 the slides scored lower than the course book. Otherwise results are in line with 2011, i.e., compared to Fall 2010 with less than 40% satisfied and more than 40% unsatisfied, the shift to Python and the subsequent use of a different course book clearly have paid off.

While once again popular with the majority of students, the “live programming” sessions during the lectures again received some critique. According to the action plan from Fall 2011, I had reduced the amount of “live programming” in the second half of the course, i.e., for the more complex examples. Still, students with no programming experience complain in the comments about being unable to follow. For the

next edition of the course, more time should be allocated to the live programming. This time can be gained by removing some of the less important, more technical Python-specific topics from the course.

The use of projects for the exam was received very well and seen as appropriate by more than 92% of the students. It seems logical to continue with this exam form. Like in Fall 2011, two tracks were offered, but no comments on these were found in the evaluation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that students like to have a choice.

Students were overall quite satisfied with the teacher (academic level >96% positive, pedagogical 91% non-negative, preparation >92% non-negative, commitment >92% non-negative).

The comments on the teacher are all very positive except for two points. First, two students complained about the teacher having arrived late for some of the lectures. Second, some students complained about the speed of the lecture. The former does not require any action as external factors that are unlikely to be repeated were responsible for the delays of a few minutes. The latter will be taken care of by removing some of the more technical Python-specific contents and, thus, freeing time up for a slower pass through the remaining topics.

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 action should be considered:

- Revise the course in order to reduce the number of technicalities even further. In this way, even more time will be available for handling topics and live programming with less time pressure.

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