Evaluation of DM823, Fall 2010

Summary

There were 21 students originally signed up for the course. Of these, 20 signed up for the exam, and 19 actually showed up. There were 15 respondents to the questionnaire, which is a rather high percentage of the students active at the end of the course.

The distribution of grades among the students showing up for exam was:

Grade	−3	00	02	4	7	10	12
Number of students	3	1	1	3	3	5	3

Of these, all −3 grades were given to students leaving the exam immediately after drawing a topic (only showing up in order to be able to attend the reexam).

The responses of the students can be summarized as follows:

- Workload is described as average, which corresponds well with the median interval for work hours per week being 11–15 hours (the course is a 5 ECTS single quarter course, which corresponds to 1/3 of full workload). The level of the course is described as average to high, which is in line with the goal of the course (as being an advanced algorithmics course) and the fact that it is pre-approved for Ph.D.-students.

- The course is reported as fitting well in the study program curriculum, and the course objectives, lecture contents, and actual exam requirements are reported to be well coherent (except by one respondent, who disagrees strongly, but no details on what could be the problem appear in later comment boxes).

- There is a little more spread in the how the planning of the course is evaluated, but the median value (and the mode) is 4/5, so the large majority is well satisfied. Also the general knowledge, pedagogical competences, preparation, and commitment of the lecturer get similarly good reviews.

- The project is reported to be highly interesting, modest in size (and almost all use between 16 and 30 hours on it), but only to a moderate degree preparing for the oral exam.

- The teaching material is the only point receiving more mixed reviews. The main problem is the textbook, whereas the remaining types (teachers lecture notes, excerpts from other books, articles) get fair to good reviews.

Plan of action

Most aspects of the course were reviewed rather favorably, in particular when considering that the course ran for the first time. The main textbook was the single item with a fairly bad review. I agree completely with that criticism. The book was chosen for its very nice selection of subjects (fitting the intent of the course perfectly), and was written by experts in the field. However, it turned out to have many deficiencies on the detailed level (mainly inadequate or missing proofs), and many lecture notes had to be produced during the course to make up for this. Also, excerpts from other books and articles were handed out.

The book market was researched rather extensively before the course, and the problem is that there seems to be no really perfect book (the existing ones are either too elaborate and dry, too old, or, as the one chosen this time, too inadequate in the details). I debated this with the external examiner, who turned out to have the same opinion on the books available.

I will next time choose another solution, namely a mix of one other existing book (which is only moderately too elaborate), combined with polished versions of the handwritten lecture notes produced during the course this year.

Besides this, I see no need for major changes in the course.

Rolf Fagerberg, Imada, 12/12-2010.