INFO125 autumn 2014

Lecturer assessment of implementation

INFO125 was executed for the second time. The course followed closely the lecture plan and material of INFO125 held in Autumn 2013. The classes were given according to the established plan.

I do not have experience with the failure rate and dropout from previous years, therefore I am not able to compare. Class presence was on average 40% of the number of students who took the exam in December.

The crash course on set theory preceding the INFO125 was attended by 30%-40% of all the students, yet more students who did not attend the crash course commented that they are not comfortable with the math during the course. The math during the course is basic set theory. Students have commented that the topics that they found most difficult were normalization and relational algebra, which was also witnessed from the exams. I would not devote more time to teaching these topics, but I will change the approach. The current approach assumes that the students have the necessary abilities for critical thinking and mathematical analysis but this is not the case. The topics need to be explained from the ground up.

I would like to remark that the students appear to have expected a schema of exam problems to occur on the exam and that just studying how to solve these particular tasks leads to passing the exam. A very basic exam question from theory was answered fully correctly by a surprisingly small number of students.

It is my opinion that for this type of subject there should be an open book exam. There are several programming ``languages'' that are thought (SQL, XPATH, XQUERY,RELAXNG) whose syntax should not be subject of examination. We aim to teach students how to learn topics in the subject by themselves not the syntax of a specific programming method by heart.

Access to relevant literature

After some initial confusion, all literature was found promptly.

Exercise sessions

No problems.

Specific suggestions

1. The crash course should be recommended to all students. A reference book for the crash course should be added to the pensum. I recommend "Sets, Logic and Maths for Computing" by David Makinson. This is a very very gentle introduction to the basic concepts we use and the students can use it as a reference book.

2. Exam should be open book.

3. No previous exam should be published before the exam.