INFO 125 - Høst 2015

The course was executed without major obstacles. As last semester, the attendance to class was around and sometimes less than 50%. The lectures ran twice a week, which together with twice a week obligatory labs and seminars proved too much for the students that are in permanent employment.

As last semester, there were three obligatory assignments as a pre-condition to be allowed to take the exam. Last year, the requirement for passing was more than 50% of all three assignments. For students that have done sufficiently well on the first two assignments, there was no incentive to work on the third assignment. To change this I initially set the requirement for passing as more than 50% of each obligatory assignment. After the first assignment, there was one student who did not make above 50%, so I relaxed the requirement to the old condition. This was unnecessary as it was only the one student who did not meet the stricter requirement and who appears to have dropped out.

This year the exam was offered as open-book, which seems to have improved the results from last year. I am under the impression that the students who did not show up on class were somewhat unaware as to how best to take advantage of open-book.

The literature used is satisfactory in most. The exception being the material for the XML related part of the course. We need a new book, or to prepare a script, that has both the fundamentals of XML and XPATH and XQUERY, as well as RelaxNG. We used Beginning XML of Fawscett et al, and XQuery - the XML query language of Brundage. Furhtermore, Brundage is out of print. The students justifiably were dissatisfied with this part of the literature.

One note to the teaching assistants for the next semester: They need to ask the IT department for login credentials on the ORACLE database system, for the lab exercises to be executed smoothly.

Lastly, I would like to propose that the students are informed better about the difference between an online course and a course whose lectures are not mandatory to attend. They seem to be under the impression that the lecturer should prepare the material of the course so that the course can be followed entirely online. This is not the same as making slides and a pensum available. If a student does not attend the lecture, regardless if it is not mandatory to attend, the burden falls on the student to compensate with adequate alone-study time.

The students were encouraged to schedule office hours for help with covering the material, but none took advantage of this possibility.

It has to be said that the course is indeed vast and it is possibly best if it were split into Introduction to relational databases and Introduction to semi-structured databases. All the concepts presented are new to the students and they do not have enough time to "digest" them the way the course is paced.