Course Summary for NGEA07 HT 2019

Course coordinator: Jonathan Seaquist

Teachers in the course: Marko Scholze, Thomas Holst, Harry Lankreijer, Oskar Löfgren, Erica Jaakkola, Hans Chen

Number of students: 41 originally registered, 25 completed the course requirements, 3 discontinued, the remaining remain registered but have not finished their assignments (not much different in previous years in terms of proportion)

Grade distribution: 13 G, 12 VG (no difference compared to previous years in terms of proportion)

Evaluation

Summary of the course evaluation

Number of survey responses: 23, which is 92 % of the students who completed the course, and 67% of all registered students.

The course was affected this year by number of students registered (>2.5x the number of students that usually take this course) and the pandemic, which prompted 100% digital teaching and exam solutions through Canvas and Zoom. It was therefore very challenging for both students (no face-to-face contact with each other or with the teachers) and for the teachers (large volume of students and therefore difficult to keep up with the grading, as well as having to learn Canvas functionality on the fly).

Despite the various hiccups, the level of student satisfaction was reasonably good (though lower than in recent years) and the instructors were generally deemed to be helpful under the conditions. Without face-to-face contact, what is generally judged to be a tough course in terms of concepts, and volume of workload was perceive to be even more challenging, leading to difficulties in keeping up with the material. A minority of students felt they were approaching burnout by Christmas.

Comments from the teaching team

The teachers thought that the students performed quite well despite the pressure they were under, in terms social distancing. Students' quantitative skills were perceived to be generally higher this year, in spite of student volume. Frustration expressed by the teachers include unusually heavy marking load due to large number of students, meaning that it was difficult to provide feedback to students in a timely manner. It was also noted students don't keep to assignment deadlines, and many students that wrote and passed the exam could not pass the course as their assignments were not finished. Instructors are generally reluctant to help students and mark assignments after final marks are submitted, and when the course is not running (creates a lot of extra work). Despite the fact the course generally worked, instructors acknowledged the generally high email traffic and administrative load associated with HT20's course iteration. Some instructors felt a little overwhelmed. It is widely acknowledged that students lose out with an

online teaching model as face to face communication and problem solving cannot occur as effectively, thereby causing student stress.

Additionally, it was noted that students struggled with Excel later in the course despite it being introduced and taught at beginning of the course.

Despite the pandemic, large student numbers, and teaching model, student grade distribution and success rate do not differ appreciably from previous years.

Additional comments included how to better deliver the course to students should it run again online, or even in campus mode (see IV below).

Evaluation of changes implemented since the last time the course was given

R was eliminated altogether and AC was dropped in favour of Canvas. Zoom was extensively used. The move to Canvas, created a more seamless experience for the students, providing a one-stop-shop for delivery of educational material, evaluation, and communication. Additionally, specific assignment deadlines (dates) were given students this year in order to encourage timely hand-ins (requested from previous course evaluations). However, this strategy did not work as well as hoped (possibly because of the pandemic) given the proportion of students with incomplete work was the same as previous years. Another major change was almost total digital immersion for course delivery. The basic approach was to run it similar to the campus course in digital mode but this did cause some issues. Since last time the course was given, one two instructors exited the course (VG, ELJ) and one new instructor was brought in (OL).

Suggestions for changes to implement before the course is given the next time

If social distancing is the norm for HT21, providing greater incentives for timely hand-ins will be a priority (bonus points?). Tinkering with the timing/pace of hand-ins may also be a strategy. Should the course be run digitally again the instructors will need to think through some aspects of delivery by e.g. providing (pre-) recorded lectures/be more creative in interactions online (better use of breakout rooms) as well as checking in with students more frequently. A lecture on how different course components fit together will be considered in order augment an understanding of why the material is important. Additionally, strongly encouraging or facilitating students to meet online (without supervision) for problem solving may improve the situation. Distributing assignments more equitably across the teaching team will be a solution for attempting to avoid the risk of teachers feeling overwhelmed, particularly if student numbers remain high). Indeed, at least some of these solutions could even be considered if the course runs in Campus mode.

Regarding Excel, a more in-depth introduction for the students will be considered together with a later hand-in date, as well as Excel follow-ups throughout the course where the different instructors specify which Excel functions are to be used along the way.

2021-03-29, this summary was done by Jonathan Seaquist