Course Report AS7021 VT17

Respondents: 1
Answer Count: 1
Answer Frequency: 100.00 %

. Teacher

Teacher
Daniel Mortlock

. Number of students who took the exam

Number of students who took the exam
11

. Number of students who passed the course (at the time of answering this survey)

Number of students who passed the course (at the time of answering this survey)
11

. Description of changes since the previous time the course was given.

Description of changes since the previous time the course was given.
Not applicable (as this was the first time this course was taught).

. What are the course's strong points according to the students (summary based on the numerical results as well as their free text answers)

What are the course's strong points according to the students (summary based on the numerical results as well as their free text answers)
The students found the theoretical lectures clear and found the hands-on programming classes useful. The students also found the take-home assignments an appropriate form of assessment. Some students remarked explicitly that they felt they would be able to apply these methods to their own research.

. What are the course's weak points according to the students (summary based on the numerical results as well as their free text answers)

What are the course's weak points according to the students (summary based on the numerical results as well as their free text answers)

Many students found the example problems (and some of those in the assessed assignments) difficult compared to the presentation of the underlying theory. There were a range of conflicting opinions about the level of difficulty of the material, some wanting additional material to be covered (possibly in extra lectures) and some wanting the existing material dealt with in more detail, with more examples/problem classes. There were a few suggestions that the feedback was lacking and the marking was harsh for the assessed assignments.

. The teacher's analysis of the course

The teacher's analysis of the course

The basic structure and form of the course (i.e., the combination of lectures and hands-on classes; take-home assignments for assessment) seems appropriate, although it's clear that more classes working through example problems are needed. The course materials - a combination of bespoke lecture notes and problem sheets - also seems appropriate, although there was a shortage of simpler introductory problems to ensure all students can make the jump to using these methods to solve research problems.

. Conclusions as well as suggestions for improvements

Conclusions as well as suggestions for improvements

Overall, the course was fairly successful, but most of the students' criticisms are reasonable, and addressing these will result in an improved course for the next time it is delivered (in Spring 2019). Specifically:

- More of the contact hours will be devoted to worked problems, and more introductory problems will be added to the problem sheets.

- The lecture notes will be revised to make more specific links to the problem sheets and the suggested texts.

- The pass criterion will be simply based on the (weighted) average mark of the submitted work, rather than requiring that each component be passed separately.

- The possibility of lengthening the course or of providing some optional (and non-assessed) extension or discussion sessions throughout the year will be investigated. This could have the added benefit of providing research students with the opportunity to incorporate the methods taught in the course into their own work.