

Proposal to help PTs differentiate DL courses vs on-campus versions.

Summary:

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The problem

Due to a new University policy stating that distance learning courses cannot indicate so in their titles, we were recently forced to rename all our Distance Learning courses, giving them the same titles as their on-campus counterparts. However (as expected) this caused considerable confusion and hassle at course registration time.

Proposed solution

At last BoS I proposed to solve the problem by renaming the *on-campus* versions of these courses so that at least the titles of the two versions will be different. I proposed that for each DL course

X, the on-campus version should be called X (Level N), where N is the level of the course.

Feedback was that the principle of differentiating is good, but that perhaps the mechanism was too clunky. It was suggested instead to investigate the use of different course code prefixes. Student systems have now confirmed this is possible.

The new proposal, therefore, is to introduce a distinct prefix for DL course codes, INFD. The course names would still be identical, but when registering students it would be much easier to tell which course code to pick: Euclid displays both the name and code, but at present PTs must look up (or memorize) the string of numbers in the code for the correct option.

Further details:

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Specific changes needed

The courses involved are the following:

- Introduction to Practical Programming with Objects (formerly IJP)
- Advanced Vision
- Image and Vision Computing
- Introduction to Vision and Robotics
- Introductory Applied Machine Learning
- Natural Computing
- Performance Modelling

We'd need to create a new course for each of the DL versions (because codes can't be changed without creating a new course), and each of these would be given a course code of the form INFDxxxxx. The existing courses have course codes of the form INFRxxxxx.

Considerations/consultation:

There is some overhead in changing course codes, because it actually requires creating an entirely new course and course code in Euclid, and links would need to be updated. However, this is a one-time cost weighed against a large expected benefit each year for PTs and lecturers in sorting out registrations.

This scheme is more robust to future changes in curriculum than the previous proposal, since any new DL courses can be created with the new code, and no changes to existing paired on-campus versions would be required.

Vicky checked with Student Systems to confirm we can use the new prefix.

Other consultation was with respect to the previous proposal (see below), although I am currently checking this updated version with the course lecturers and Alex to make sure no new issues.

Consultation from previous version

The current lecturers of the relevant courses were asked about this proposal. Of those who replied (3 out of 6), all said it was fine.

Alex Burford (our Learning Technologist) confirmed that it should be possible to roll over the existing courses into the renamed versions in Learn. We currently feed all students registered on any version of these courses through to a single 'master' Learn page, and this general procedure would not change. However it might be desirable to use the DL version of each course as the 'master' since the DL version will have an unqualified title. Using one of the other versions as the master (we currently use the on-campus one) might cause confusion for students, especially for IAML where there would now be two different levels indicated in the title for the on-campus versions.

Possible alternative for future

A question was raised by one of the lecturers: rather than having separate versions of these courses, why can't we have a single version, with students registered using different delivery modes? (EUCLID supports a 'distance' delivery mode in addition to 'course+exam', 'exam-only', etc).

However, this appears not to be possible at present. It seems that a course has to be specified as distance/on-campus at course creation time, and this is a fixed property of the course. Alex Burford says she will try to get an update on University's thinking about this, but in the meantime we should go forward with the proposed plan. If it does become possible in future to run both versions as a single course, we could simply shut down one version.