

Informatics 1 -- Cognitive Science (INF-1CG)

Response to student feedback in 2018/19 course survey

We have taken note of the feedback from students in this course survey, and in response we have the following comments and planned changes to the course.

Labs

Some students without prior programming experience struggled with the labs. Contributing factors included (1) less contact with demonstrators than we had hoped for, (2) lab materials that assumed more familiarity with programming concepts than some students had, and (3) large lab groups that were mixed with students who were not in the course. To address these issues, we have spoken with course reps and other students, and are planning a rewrite of the laboratory materials in collaboration with a volunteer who is familiar with the course. The course organisers are also planning to take a more hands-on approach to the delivery of labs, with more explicit guidance for demonstrators and potentially some participation in early labs. We will also look into whether smaller labs groups can be arranged, in rooms that don't have students from other courses.

Assignments

Some parts of the programming-based assignments could have been clearer, and while our adoption of Noteable and nbgrader as platforms made some things easier -- such as allowing students to complete assignments without installing jupyter notebooks on their own machines -- they also introduced some unforeseen problems, such as making it difficult to fix or clarify assignments that had already been released. These tools also broke down during marking, which caused significant delays in returning feedback to students. The assignments are likely to undergo dramatic changes for the next run of the course, but we have found ways to avoid recurrences of this year's issues, and have already re-written parts of the assignments to make them clearer and less dependent on programming experience. The tools we relied (especially the marking and distribution system) on have also been updated, and we will assess their suitability for the course nearer to the start of the course.

Chris Lucas, Frank Keller, and Richard Shillcock, 10 June 2019