

Proposal to differentiate titles of DL courses vs on-campus versions.

Summary:

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

This proposal aims to alleviate the problem while upholding the policy, by now renaming the *on-campus* versions of these courses so that at least the titles of the two versions will be different.

We propose that for each DL course X, the on-campus version should be called X (Level N), where N is the level of the course. This scheme has the advantage that the Level 10 and Level 11 versions of IAML will also now have different titles, again reducing confusion in registration.

PTs would still need to know that the "(Level N)" version is the one to choose, but at least the courses would show up differently in searches etc.

Further details:

Specific changes needed

The courses involved are the following:

- Introduction to Java Programming*
- Advanced Vision
- Image and Vision Computing
- Introduction to Vision and Robotics
- Introductory Applied Machine Learning
- Natural Computing
- Performance Modelling

Therefore the on-campus versions would become:

- Introduction to Java Programming (Level 9)*
- Advanced Vision (Level 11)
- Image and Vision Computing (Level 11)
- Introduction to Vision and Robotics (Level 9)
- Introductory Applied Machine Learning (Level 10)
- Introductory Applied Machine Learning (Level 11)
- Natural Computing (Level 11)
- Performance Modelling (Level 11)

*There is a separate proposal tabled for renaming and re-levelling IJP, so if approved both the DL and on-campus versions would change name and the on-campus version would be "<new name> (Level 11)".

Considerations/consultation:

There is some overhead in changing course titles, 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.

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.

Additional future issues

The main downside I see with this scheme is that whenever introducing a new DL course in future, we would need to rename the on-campus version. However, this Board has previously indicated its unwillingness to approve new DL courses anyway unless/until a clear School strategy on these has been discussed and approved by School management. And it is not clear that such a strategy would include adding more 'parallel' DL courses (instead it might focus on distinct DL offerings). So it's unlikely that this issue will arise much (if at all) in the next few years. Weighed against the immediate time and frustration cost to large numbers of PTs and to the course lecturers, I believe this proposal is still worth approving.