

Proposal to change assessment weights for ANLP

This is a proposal to revert to the 70% exam/30% coursework weighting that was used through 2019. As before, there will be two assignments which focus on practical implementation, analysis, and writeup.

Justification:

In 2020, we reduced the weight of the exam to 40% due to the pandemic, by introducing a mid-term test and weekly engagement points. However, this created too much work for students, so we removed these additional assessments in 2021, but we only brought the exam back up to 60%. We had originally planned to introduce a third very short assignment requiring some reflection on ethical and contextual issues (i.e., there would be two practical assignments worth 15% each and a reflection worth 10%).

However, it became clear that the timing of deadlines for this simply would not work, so we ended up reverting to the pre-2020 structure of two courseworks, with some ethics-related material on the exam. This meant that each practical coursework was worth 20% rather than 15% as originally planned.

We plan to keep this same structure for 2021, but reduce the total coursework weighting back to 30% so that each of the practical courseworks is worth 15% (as we had always intended). This weighting better reflects the learning outcomes of the course, since only one of the four outcomes is mainly focused on implementation. The exam addresses the other three outcomes and allows efficient assessment of a breadth of topics (since this course is effectively a review course where students are expected to learn a range of standard topics and methods).

Learning outcomes (for reference, no changes here):

1. Identify, construct, and analyse examples of different kinds of ambiguity in natural language (e.g., ambiguity in part-of-speech, word sense, syntactic attachment). Explain how ambiguity presents a problem for computational analysis, and some of the ways it can be addressed.
2. Describe and apply standard sequence and classification models; describe parsing and search algorithms for different levels of analysis (e.g. morphology, syntax, and semantics) and simulate each algorithm step-by-step with pen and paper.
3. For a range of NLP tasks, outline a processing pipeline for that task, including standard data sets, models, algorithms, and evaluation methods. Given a particular pipeline or part of the pipeline, identify potential strengths and weaknesses of the suggested dataset/method (including both technical and ethical issues, where appropriate), and provide examples to illustrate.
4. Implement parts of the NLP pipeline with the help of appropriate support code and/or tools. Evaluate and interpret the results of implemented methods on natural language data sets.