

Sol Course Proposal Review Form

Version: Nov 2021

Reviewer Name: John Longley

Name of Proposed Course: Standards Compliant Software Development

Date of review: 24 November 2021

Instructions to reviewers: please read through the course proposal and answer the reviewer questions below. Return your completed review form to iss-bos@inf.ed.ac.uk by the review deadline. If you are new to the School or to reviewing course proposals, it may help to read some of the guidance provided to course proposers, mostly included as prompts in the course proposal form itself (including links to external reference materials).

1 Course overview and case for support (Sec 1 of proposal)

1.1 Course name and acronym

Given the course description, are the name and acronym appropriate, or would you suggest any changes?

Appropriate and clear.

1.2 Summary and Description

Do the Summary and Description make the course sound attractive, including a student-friendly overview of the learning aims, content, and style of the course, and (if need be) who the course is aimed at? Are there any issues with content or wording that you feel should be addressed?

Both the Summary and Description are clear and informative, and communicate well. The Description will give students a good picture of what the course involves. Minuscule suggestions:

- Second sentence of summary: to emphasize the three-point structure, consider adding a comma before the 'and'
- Last sentence of summary: maybe replace 'considering' by 'discussing' (as 'consider' has been used earlier), and maybe add a comma before this word.
- End of first paragraph of description: missing full stop after 'system'.

1.3 Target audience and contribution to the School's curriculum

Please comment on the case made for this course and its contribution. For example,

- Is there good evidence that it would attract students, or is otherwise necessary (e.g. strategically)?
- Do you have any concerns about how it would fit in with other courses (or even concerns about other courses that come to light here)?
- Is the description of the target audience consistent with the requested SCQF level? Are there any cohorts of students (degree programmes or years) that may not have been considered, including students from outside the School?

Note that even if a course is academically sound, BoS can still reject it if the case for support is not convincing (ie if developing and delivering the course is unlikely to be a good use of resource).

The rationale for the existence of such a course is very clear (e.g. as a replacement for SAPM). Given the previous popularity of SAPM and the clear relevance of the present course to modern software practice, it is likely to attract a good number of students. Making it available to Years 4, 5 and MSc is clearly the right choice, given the level of maturity that the course presupposes.

1.4 Learning Outcomes

Please comment on the Learning Outcomes. Questions to consider include:

- Are the verbs specific enough that it is clear what type of assessment could be used for each Learning Outcome, and what level of cognitive skill/understanding is needed (e.g., Bloom's taxonomy low levels such as recalling or defining, medium levels such as applying or explaining, high levels such as evaluating or designing)?
- Are the Learning Outcomes appropriate to the level of the course, and at an appropriate level of generality?
- Are there any LO's that you feel are missing, or other suggested changes?

All Learning Outcomes are appropriate.

1.5 Other comments

Do you have any other comments about anything in Section 1 of the proposal?

No other comments.

2 Course delivery, assessment, resourcing (Sec 2 of proposal)

2.1 Use of time

After reviewing the proposed content, use of timetabled activities, and plans for assessment, please comment on the use of time, in light of the guidance to use no more than 6-7h/week for a 10pt course, or 13-14h/week for a 20pt course, including all course activities. For example,

- Does the course appear to be keeping within those guidelines, is it over-ambitious, or is that difficult to determine based on the proposal so far (and if so, why)?
- Is the balance of activities reasonable (e.g., will students have enough self-study time outside of timetabled activities and assessment)?
- Do plans for support activities (labs, tutorials, etc) look appropriate or could they be improved?
- Are there any inconsistencies between what is stated in the text, and the "breakdown of activities" table? (This table is notoriously confusing; if you're not sure just say so.)

The student time requirements seem appropriate. The high proportion of guest lectures envisaged is a definite plus. The 10 tutorial hours are more than the 'typical' 4-5 hours for a 10-point course, but this is justified by the central role that the group work plays in the course and its assessment.

Under 'Anticipated Resource Requirements', I suggest explicitly saying '20 students per tutorial, i.e. two groups of 10 students each', to underline the intended meanings of 'tutorials' and 'groups' here. Since the core of the work would be done in the groups, I do have a question about the precise function of the level of 'tutorials'. It's mentioned that they will leverage the presence of two groups to promote discussion, but not spelt out how. I wonder whether this complication is really worthwhile or whether it would be merely felt as eating into the group time? Perhaps an alternative would be for the meetings to be mostly in groups, but with an occasional multi-group 'plenary' session to exchange ideas and experiences?

2.2 Assessment and feedback

Aside from the amount of time spent on assessment (discussed above), are there any other issues with the plans for assessment and feedback? For example,

- Is the number of items of assessment reasonable (normally, no more than 1 summative coursework for a 10pt course, or 2-3 for a 20pt course)?
- Is it clear which learning outcomes are assessed by each piece of assessment, and that all LOs are covered?
- Are there any concerns about whether the assessment will scale effectively if the class is larger than expected, or whether the assessment design will make it difficult to align marks with the Common Marking Scheme (e.g., due to automarking)?
- Do the plans require tight turnaround times which may not be feasible?

The amount of assessed work seems reasonable. It seemed to me a bit odd at first to say that the case study 'will not be assessed but will be the primary source of evidence that they have achieved the learning outcomes of the course'. Although the outworking of this is made much clearer by the details given in Section 3, I guess it's still not very clear to me why one *wouldn't* assess the case study itself – somewhat in the way that the SDP is assessed (or used to be). E.g. is there a danger that each student's contribution looks individually plausible but the case study as a whole is not coherent? Also the plan still leaves me with a sense that the case study is the 'primary' work and the portfolios are 'secondary', or at one remove from this, so it seems strange to assess the latter and not the former. I'm sure the proposed plan is workable so this is not a serious concern, but perhaps the thinking behind it could be clarified.

As a minor point of detail, it's not entirely clear to me what a 'portfolio design' would look like, and how this would differ from one student to another at this early stage in the work. Again, not a major concern.

2.3 Decolonisation, inclusion, and ethics

Are you satisfied with the plans for making the course inclusive and decolonising the content and delivery (including designing for accessibility; gender, racial, cultural, and other issues)? Do you have any suggestions for improvement in these areas?

This all looks good.

If the course proposal does not already mention social or ethical issues related to the course topic, should these be addressed in the course somehow? This is especially relevant for 20pt courses. If so, please provide suggestions if possible. *(Note that if others agree, the proposer may be asked to modify the course description, Learning Outcomes, and/or Graduate Attributes, as appropriate.)*

No further suggestions. There seems to be a strong social/ethical dimension to the whole course.

2.4 Resource requirements and other comments

For now we will mainly have SG and/or BF evaluate the resourcing section, but if you have any comments about that, or anything else to say about Sec 2, please say so here.

No further comments.

3 Sample course materials and publicity (Sec 3 of proposal)

Do you have any comments about this section? *(You may wish to consider whether the materials provided teach or assess the types of learning outcomes listed in Section 1.)*

I think these give a good idea of what the course will be like. The details of what the portfolio should contain helped to flesh out my understanding of the intended assessment.

4 Requisites, timetabling, and other details (Sec 4-5 of proposal)

4.1 Delivery period and requisites

Do the delivery period and co-/pre-requisites present difficulties for any particular cohort of students? If so, who? *(Consider all years/degrees for whom the course is intended, both UG and PGT. Note that most PGT students will not have taken any of our UG courses, so “other requirements” or recommended prerequisites should often be used instead of required prerequisites).*

No problems here. No other courses are specifically listed as required pre-requisites or even as recommended ones, but it is clear what kinds of background the students are expected to have.

A couple of typos in ‘Feedback Information’ (which will be visible to students): strentght, couese.

4.2 Other requirements

For courses open to PGT students or other courses without formal prerequisites, does the “other requirements” box provide sufficiently specific guidance about required background in mathematics, programming, or other areas, and is it reasonable to expect most target students to have this knowledge? Please highlight any concerns.

Yes, this is fine.

4.3 Tags

If this is a level 9-10 course, do the chosen tags (Sec 5) seem appropriate? If not, please suggest changes. (SG will also review this section, in case you’re not sure.)

All fine as far as I can tell.