

Meeting SAT CS – 21-02-2024

Present:

- Dan Witzner Hansen (HoSP BSWU)
- Louise Meier Carlsen (Co-HoSP BSWU)
- Patrick Bahr (HoSP KSD)
- Therese Graversen (HoSP BDS)
- Alessandro Bruni (substitute HoSP KCS)
- Malthe Rødsgaard Pabst Lauridsen (KDS)
- Lena Winther Jensen (KSD)
- Cristina Avram (BDS)
- Paolo Tell (guest)

- Trine Møller (Study & Career Guidance)
- Mette Holm Smidt (ProCoor BDS/KDS)
- Allette Bjørn Bundgaard (ProCoor SWU/CS)
- Marc Kellaway (ProCoor SD, Secretary SAT CS)

- Guests from SWU 1st and 2nd year for the first part of point 3

Absent:

- Theodor Christian Kier (KCS)
- Marco Carbone (HoSP KCS)
- Luca Maria Aiello (HoSP KDS)

Minutes:

1. Approval of agenda

2. Approval of minutes from meeting 31-01-2024

There was a correction regarding the percentages mentioned for the BDS evaluation. Apart from this, no comments to the minutes received within the 10 working days period, which means the minutes are approved.

3. Course evaluation autumn semester 2023 – continued

SWU

Dan: Generally, the response rate has been rather low so the numbers should be taken with a grain of salt, which is why we also look carefully at the individual comments. Overall, there is a small increase in the numbers, and all looks reasonable ok. I think we have made some good changes the last couple of years to various courses. Some of the older numbers might also be correlated with Covid and the fact the cohorts of students are changing over time.

Louise: I would like to talk about three specific courses on the first semester. *Discrete Math* has improved from last year. What we have changed is the order of the topics, and also making the mid-term online, so there has been more time for the lectures.

Projektarbejde og Kommunikation has been changed to have more focus on diversity when working in groups. There were some complaints about some sensitive issues, but I haven't been able to talk with Henriette about this yet. This is also the second year where Henriette has used her own book for the course, and some students have comments on how the lectures are too tightly tied to the book. Perhaps we will see if we can do something about this.

For *Grundlæggende Programmering* the number of students in the evaluation being very happy with the course is growing, which is super nice. A lot has been changed for this year: The order of the topics has been changed, a new topic has been introduced, there has been a better coordination with the Discrete Math course, and we have introduced weekly projects/milestones throughout the semester, which I think went well. I can see from the comments that a lot of students have felt the workload to be heavy doing the project, so we might change the exam a bit, but are still discussing this for the next iteration of the course. Overall, I think it would be good, if we could put more focus on scientific communication and structure.

Dan: I want to mention five courses from 3rd and 5th semester: *Analysis, Design and Software Architecture (BDSA)*; *Digital transformation og forretningsmodeller*; *Distributed Systems*; *Programmer som Data*; *Introduction to Database Systems*. There were new teachers for a lot of these courses, often coming from outside of ITU and/or Denmark, which means they have to learn about the ITU Students and how the Danish system work. So, there is still a lot of things to adapt. There has also – in addition to a change in teacher - been a change in the curriculum for BDSA.

The *Operating Systems & C* and *Security 1* courses had a lot of issues and challenges. I want to mention right away, that it does not necessarily mean that SAP is responsible, but there might have been some miscommunication between SAP and the teachers, which might have created issues. I will not go very much into details, but we tried to solve the challenges as they were discovered along the way. *Security 1* had a lot of technical issues with the outside based servers, so we tried to host it from inside ITU, but then the ITU Department was a little too hands-off to make it work. We are still working on it.

Finally, I have a couple of general remarks: We really appreciate students giving written comments in the evaluations, but also need to take the autonomy of the teachers into consideration. There have been several comments from students who want videos made available of the lectures, but unfortunately this is not a trivial thing to do. Students who do not want to be part of the video need to be edited out, due to the GDPR rules, which puts more work on the teachers. There have also been some complaints about the planning of the courses, but if changes are made to a course in the second week of the semester, it might make issues further on, so it takes a few iterations to implement things properly.

There have also been some comments that *Digital transformation og forretningsmodeller* should be an elective. I think this points to a misunderstanding of the construction of the SWU programme, that it is about programming only. We try to prepare the SWU-students for a life after ITU, and we know from the industry, that while multifaceted, programming competences are needed, you also need to understand business plans and other parts of software development. Regarding recording of lectures, you should also be aware, that this is nothing formally required of the teachers, but just a bonus, just like the sharing of their PDF-slides.

Guest SWU: For me as an SPS student, I forget things, and might be overwhelmed during lectures. Videos are a good help afterward to help me remember what happened during the lectures.

Dan: In a case like this you could ask the teacher, if it is ok that you record the lecture for your own use on your phone or similar, and in general talk with the teacher on what is possible.

Guest from SWU: But do you understand that this is about that differently abled students might have different needs.

Dan: Yes, but it is still up to the discretion of the teacher. They can say yes or no, but in the end it is SPS who has the responsibility the students getting the needed help, and not the teacher.

Guest SWU: The issue is that SPS has a limited reach in what they can do and need to work with Københavns Kommune, so alleviating things can be a slow and difficult process.

Dan: But recording also puts much more constraint on teachers.

Lena: I think this issue also is that the teacher might say things during lectures, that they might not feel confident being recorded.

Marc: From the semester workshop with the CS faculty, we know that the teachers in general very much want to help, but an issue is that due to the GDPR rules, SAP are not allowed to inform teachers if anyone in their class is receiving SPS or what their needs might be. So, talking to the teacher yourself is really important.

Guest SWU: I have a different point regarding the ECTS credits for the courses. When we had Discrete Math everything seemed very important and the course was hard, but some of the other 7.5 ECTS courses felt less hard, which made the difference between hardness and workload for courses with the same amount of ECTS seem really weird.

Dan: It is correct that 7.5 ECTS equates to a specific number of hours of work expected, but as ITU can only do courses of either 7.5 or 15 ECTS, we instead try to look at the semester overall, so the workload in all corresponds to 30 ECTS.

Guest SWU: Perhaps it would be valuable to share this with the new students at the beginning. I think a lot of students starting at the university expect all courses to be equally hard, and might feel demotivated and that it is their own fault, if some courses are harder than others.

Dan: I actually already say this on the first day of studies, but I know you get a lot of information here, so it might not be something you remember as a new student.

Guest SWU: I think the information could be more clear on this. It might have helped me if I knew up front that this course might be harder than this one, so I would know the issue were not me, but just the course being harder.

Lena: I think one of the big differences between high-school and university is to learn to take responsibility for your own time. When I started I had to figure out which courses I needed to put extra energy into. Part of it is to learn how to assess this, as we are all different. Something might come more natural to me compared to other people, and they might have things they find easy that take more time for me to learn.

KSD

Patrick: Let me start with the positive things. In general, almost all courses except one either stayed the same or saw improvement in the scores. I am especially happy to see the improvement for *Data Mining*, which has gotten a new teacher. Another positive thing is that *Technical Interaction Design* has been very good at getting the students to give feedback. *Introductory Programing* has also seen an improvement, and I am happy to see how the teachers has approved the course.

Then we have the not so good things. We have the usual low score of our problem child *Software Engineering*, which still has the issue of basically being in the wrong semester. Many years ago, we had it later in the programme, but then it is not really clear what else we could place on the 1st semester instead. The course also had a couple of smaller issue – I will talk with Elda about this.

Applied Information Security and Security 1 were co-taught and had some issues. One problem is the mandatory activities, where the workload seems to have been very big. Another was the virtual machines, which did not work well, as Dan has already told about. We are working on giving the teachers access to the technical infrastructure needed. There also seems to have been an issue with the gap between the very theoretical lectures and the very practical mandatory activities, in particular the SD students have been struggling with this. There are a couple of video lectures available before the semester starts to help people get up to speed, but they need to be more integrated with the course. We also need to be more clear about the prerequisites for the course, so it can be explicitly taught in the Study Lab and emphasized in the first lecture to make it more clear for the students. At the moment I am not very happy with how the course has developed, and have seen a regression in the numbers, so I think we have to be careful. I am not entirely sure about it is a good idea to have the course being co-taught.

Lena: I followed the course, and I think the co-taught lectures were confusing – they felt like being on a different level for the SD students.

Patrick: You felt that they were not meeting you were you were?

Lena: I can understand the rating. I was looking forward to the course, but was quite underwhelmed. First we got the virtual machines that did not work correctly, and then the servers had no internet connectivity. We where then told to use a different system, that was not implemented, and that the TAs could not help us with. And then there was the whole exam thing, were we were going into the exam being told that we did not need to prepare presentations, and then found out from the students taking the exams the day before, that it was expected after all. So, there could have been a lot better communication between the teachers and the students. I think Sofie, who used to be in SAT, might be a good resource, as she has written her Research Project and Thesis on the implementation of the course.

Patrick: I will talk to her. Often I hear, both in evaluations and in persons, that people do not understand why this course is part of the Technical Interaction Design specialisation. Any idea why this is a question?

Lena: Perhaps it has to do with another issue, that the course does not feel very applied. When it gets very technical, people do not understand what to use it for. It is also something I heard from the feedback from the exam. The course is called Applied Information Security, but the exam felt very theoretical rather than applied.

Paolo: Can you comment on what were the issues with Software Engineering?

Lena: I was a TA in the course, and I think a lot of the new students are having a hard time comprehending what programming or discrete math is, so what we learn at Software Engineering feels very abstract at that point. I see people who have postponed it and done it later, and in general they are doing better.

Paolo: So, the issue is that you do not yet have the experience needed to understand the point of the course?

Patrick: They learn programming in parallel with taking the course, so that makes it very challenging.

Paolo: Are there plans to move it?

Patrick: Unfortunately, we do not have another course we can place there instead.

4. Study Program Reports

Therese: Let me run through the BDS report. Taking stock of the year, things are generally looking fine. The new courses will hopefully settle over next year, and the new structure seems to work.

Kristina: I can tell that the 2nd and 3rd year students are very envious of new courses, so all agree it looks better. I have heard from some 1st year students that felt like lab-rats, but that is probably expected.

Therese: 1st and 2nd years are better aligned now, but perhaps the 3rd year should be aligned better with the technical courses the two first years. I have had some discussions with Paolo on how to make *Software Development and Software Engineering* more relevant to Data Science students, perhaps we could try tying it more to what you learn in Machine Learning the year before.

Technical communication is generally liked, but the idea of making it an elective is floated regularly. Another idea could be aligning it more with the other courses, more specifically focusing on disciplines making most sense in the programme. It could be a nice opportunity to take stock and talk about what kind of documentation the students have seen up till then, and how to make these kinds of things in a nice way. We also need more electives, but this is probably very dependent on the people above us. Most things on the to-do-list have been done, but we still do not have our own electives, which is hard due to resources. I think the main action point for next year is the revision of BDS and getting electives. The rest are mostly things we have already discussed. If you have anything you think I should include, just send me an email.

5. Information from the Student Counselling

Trine: Just two quick things. The student counselling is now open 5 days a week again. And there is a thesis workshop coming up in March. I can also tell that we are finishing up the mentor programme for this year

next month. We will aim to give more information on the mentor programme to all new bachelor students next year.

6. Information from SAT Members

Kristina: Only one quick thing I can share regarding Operating Systems and C course. I have been talking to other students, as I plan to take it, and everyone from BDS or KDS has said “Do not take it! This is only if you want to study Computer Science!” whereas SWU students in general said that it is really an amazing course.

Dan: We will work on making it more BDS friendly in the next iteration.

Malte: I didn't find it that relevant when we had it, but that might depend of your interests.

7. AOB

Nothing for this point.