

Meeting SAT Computer Science 1 February 2023

Minutes Approved

Present:

- Dan Witzner Hansen (HoSP BSWU)
- Marco Carbone (HoSP KCS)
- Therese Graversen (HoSP BDS)
- Patrick Bahr (HoSP KSD)
- Louise Meier Carlsen (Co-HoSP BSWU)
- Marius Thomsen (Student rep., BSWU)
- Theodor Christian Kier (Student rep., KCS)
- Sofie Kramshøi Nielsen (Student rep., KSD)
- Juraj Septák (Student rep., BDS)
- Paolo Tell (Guest, faculty)
- Sara Gjerløv (Observer, Study and Career & Guidance)
- Marc Kellaway (Observer, Prog Coor KSD)
- Mette Holm Smith (Observer, Prog Coor BDS + KDS)
- Allette Bjørn Bundgaard (Prog Coor BSWU + KCS) (Minutes)

Absent:

- Luca Maria Ariello (HoSP KDS)
- Jesper Bengtson (Guest, faculty)
- Simon Johan Skødt (Student rep., BSWU)

Minutes:

1. **Approval of agenda:** Agenda approved.
2. **Approval of minutes from meeting 6 December 2022:**
No comments to the minutes were received within the 10 working days period and thus, minutes were approved.
3. **Information:**
Dan: ITU received the BSWU External Panel's Review Report just after New Year. It gives many suggestions to improve BSWU, some in the short run and other in the longer view.
Dan and Louise will present an overview of the main results on the meeting in April (the Study program reports will take up the time on the meeting in March).
Keywords are: Scaffold students learning throughout the program; Use electives/specializations to create a wider range of possibilities for BSWU students; The report pin points that TAs are important for the courses but students may have too high expectations to them e.g. when TAs are accessible.

Allette: Marc will take over the task as secretary to SAT CS from next meeting.

4. **Update from study programs:** / Students.

KCS, Theo:

Feedback from first semester students (ca 20 students gave feedback):

- Too many mandatory activities in the courses caused stress. Solving the mandatory activities to gain access to the exams made it very difficult to re-read and prepare properly for exercises and lectures.

Comment from Marco: Please, pinpoint specific weeks, courses, and other details. Course managers on the first semester courses meet with the Head of program before the semester starts to coordinate the distribution of assignments throughout the semester and detailed feedback on what is not working is valuable.

- Grades are delayed

- The exam schedule for second semester may be very tight for some students, due to so many electives.

- The cancelled exam on Security1 exam caused some kind of change in the atmosphere among the students.

BSWU, Marius:

- Discrete Math: The number of pages to read combined with the structure of the teaching and the amount of work makes it too heavy. The number of assignments as such is fine but the work required to do them is too much.

A proposal would be to mark the assignment according to level of difficulty.

- The assignments in Grundlæggende programming and Discrete math overlaps.

KSD, Sofie:

- Students still complain about Applied Information Security.

BDS, Juraj:

-Teachers running many different platforms in the courses confuse students.

Comment from Therese: This is true, but it differs which platforms work for the courses.

-Students complain that they were promised one day off in the week.

Comment from Marc, who is part of the Scheduling team: Students get a free day, if possible. But as there are many restraints to consider, it may not be possible.

5. **BSWU-students present experiences and challenges from their time at BSWU:** / Theodor.

Anne, David and Albert from 6th semester contacted Theodor and expressed a wish to present the experiences and challenges they experienced during BSWU to SAT CS.

They prepared a statement in which they explain the general challenge, state specific issues and general suggestions to solve some of them.

The three students stress, it is very important to them that SAT understand the reason for them to raise the voice is not anger but an honest wish to explain how the mental well-being of students have been affected by the sum of many inconveniences and mistakes encountered during the study.

The statement may be found in the bottom of those minutes.

SAT and the students focused the discussion on four specific issues:

1) Delayed publication of grades and no reasons for the delay.

2) Complain about a teacher makes students vulnerable.

3) Course evaluation comes before the exam.

4) Lacking course preparation, causing e.g., bad lecture plans, and the format of the teaching not aligning with the course descriptions.

Comments from SAT:

Ad 1) Faculty are aware of the problem with delayed grades for written assignments.

Moving the deadlines creates other issues.

Ad 2) Whenever there is an issue with a course, the students should contact the teacher first, as some problems may be easy to solve by adjustments to the teaching as the course are running. Problems may also be reported to the Head of Program (HoSP). He/she welcomes reports and can assist if the problem is not solvable with bare adjustments. The HoSP may be reached by going to his/her office or by sending an e-mail.

The students report that the problem often is that they talked to the teacher, without anything happening. Taking the problem further often brings an explanation but no solution.

Thus, the general feeling is that the practical solution to problems is widely missing.

Ad 3) The present course evaluation set-up is only a couple of years old, and a review group was formed to evaluate it. Theodor was part of the group and agrees, is very important to evaluate the exam form as well as the course. Including the exam in the evaluation will probably affect the response rate. Theodor explains that the task of a second examiner (internal or external) is to approve of the quality of the exam.

Comments from HOSP:

HoSPs examine the comments and report to SAT of findings. However, often comments on a course are biased.

ITU is a small university and students should contact the teacher with smaller suggestions instead of awaiting the course evaluation.

Please note that all evaluation procedures will have their pros and cons.

Ad 4) Lecture plans are not available before the course starts, meaning that students cannot get the course material and access the lecture plan and in other ways prepare for the course.

Comments from teacher: Many of the programs at ITU are young programs and thus, courses need adjustments. Additionally, courses often have new teachers. In general, this results in teaching plans being unstable until last minute. Students should contact the teacher, if they need information earlier than it is available on LearnIT.

Students remark that students in general, may be reluctant to contact teachers, as they do not want to be a nuisance. Other universities are capable to provide course information in due time.

A suggestions would be that ITU communicate to students why the course info in general may come late and make preliminary information available in the course description (this is already the case in some courses).

General discussion:

Students find, Institutional no-share of information is extensive at ITU and formalism is big.

However, changing the culture requires an effort from everybody at ITU on an individual as well as institutional level.

6. **Course evaluation autumn semester 2022:** (Appendix 5A.a)

Presentations and key points from the evaluation on each program / Heads of Programs) SAT should: - Discuss survey report (contains average scores by course, study programme, department and ITU)- Propose changes or initiatives as needed- Discuss proposals from heads of study programme and dean of education- Recommend decisions to Board of Studies as needed. Before courses run again- Decide and implement changes and initiatives as needed. More info on follow-up: <https://intranet.itu.dk/Quality-in-Education/Course-evaluation/Followup>

Postponed to next meeting.

7. **AOB:**

Next meeting: Wednesday 1 Marts at 14-15.30.

Appendix to point 5:

Statement

We primarily represent students from 6th semester of software development, and have joined this meeting to share a prepared statement, a list of specific issues and a list of general suggestions.

We have prepared this statement in an effort to try and create a bit more understanding for what students go through here at ITU. This statement is made after reaching a breaking point during the latest problems with the Security 1 exam, but is based upon 2 ½ years of small and large problems that have mostly just been accepted and then forgotten. At this point, however, we are so worried about the study environment and any student that follows us, that we have to try to break this cycle. We of course understand that mistakes happen, but when these mistakes repeat themselves and always end up with consequences for us, the students, we at least need to try to ensure that ITU are taking precautionary measures against them.

We currently have a list of more than 50 issues from just SWU 2020, that as far as we know have never been rectified or changed for future classes. In many cases, the consequences are only felt in silence by students, through added stress and declining mental health, and rarely reach the ears of anybody besides your fellow students. As a student you are so reliant on the good-will of your teachers, that it requires great trust in the system to make an official complaint. If people in the management are truly interested in hearing from the students, it needs to take this into account, and maybe look at how realistic it really is for an already exhausted student to write an official complaint, that mainly feels like putting yourself at risk. Really try to wonder why mental health among students is worsening, and what role ITU as an organization plays in this.

As a student, hoping for improvement requires trust, and at this point the trust in ITU is severely damaged, but we hope that you agree that it needs to be restored. In this effort we share our issues and suggestions with you, not because we want to be angry about everything, but because we are tired of having to accept just anything.

We hope that this statement is taken to heart by the management, and supports the general work that motivated students already do here in SAT.

Specific suggestions

Delayed publication of grades

We have very rarely tried getting our grades on time, and those were on the last possible dates.

We suggest a complete overhaul of the grading deadlines, that take into account the different resources needed to grade different classes, so deadlines can be set more realistically from the time of the exam, and then help teachers with e.g. planning and what else is needed, to then actually reach those deadlines.

In most cases, we have also not been given the required information about length and reason for the delays, which you should ensure all teachers are aware they need to share.

The process of complaining about a teacher

Right now, making an official complaint feels like taking a huge risk, since it involves letting a teacher, with huge control over your participation in a course, know that you made it. If it is possible to simply talk to the teacher about it, most students will do just this, but the complaint process should be for those exact scenarios, where it is not a possibility, e.g. due to fear of retaliation from the teacher, making it really hard to understand why your names must be shared with the person in question.

It can also feel useless to even complain, as it seems like they are treated as a question, to be answered and explained, and not the call to action most students wish them to be.

Really consider having a type of complaint, where your identity is e.g. known to SAP, who can confirm that you are actually enrolled in the course, but not shared with the teacher.

Limited scope of course evaluation

We suggest adding an additional post-exam evaluation, how can you evaluate the academic content of the course before knowing how it matches the learning goals tested for during the exam?

If there are problems at the exams that should reach management, the only channel seems to be a complaint, that could jeopardize your progress, and requires a student to have the energy to go through those problems maybe on top of other exams. There are also lots of issues that are worth looking into but do not fit an official complaint, that just end up never reaching anybody in charge.

Lacking course preparation

Across semesters, we have encountered many courses that seem to really be missing something in relation to preparation and planning.

This shows up in badly prepared lecture plans, lectures, exercises, assignments or even exams, where the format is not always known.

Sometimes you cannot even rely on the official course descriptions, meaning you as a student cannot feel safe in relying on anything.

We honestly don't know how to solve this, but just know that all these things end up wasting student energy and time, and that you should have higher standards for the work of your educators.