Meeting SAT Computer Science – 10 October 2024

Present:

- Marco Carbone (HoSP KCS)
- Patrick Bahr (HoSP KSD)
- Michele Coscia (substitute HoSP BDS)
- Luca Maria Aiello (HoSP KDS)
- Louise Meier Carlsen (Co-HoSP BSWU) – senere
- Malthe Rødsgaard Pabst Lauridsen (KDS)
- Tommaso Cammelli (KCS)
- Paolo Tell (guest)
- Mette Holm Smidt (ProCoor BDS/KDS)
- Allette Bjørn Bundgaard (ProCoor SWU/CS)
- Marc Kellaway (ProCoor SD, Secretary SAT CS)

Absent:

- Dan Witzner Hansen (HoSP BSWU)
- Nicklas Ostenfeldt Gardil (BSWU)
- Cristina Avram (BDS)

Minutes:

1) Approval of agenda
The agenda was approved.

2) Approval of minutes from meeting 05 September 2024
No comments to the minutes received within the 10 working days period. Minutes approved.

3) Course evaluations - spring semester - KDS, KCS, KSD

a) KDS
Luca: Like last year, the response rate was high. The scores are all very good, with an overall improvement from last year.

Algorithmic Fairness is back on track with Vedran back as teacher. The score is good, but there are still comments on how the feedback on the assignments work. It is also not clear to all students what is mandatory activities and what is exercises, so the way this is presented could be better.

Advanced Machine Learning: t has been a long journey, but the course seems to have been streamlined nicely now. There are still comments about overlapping with things learned on BDS, but this will be hard to get rid of entirely. Perhaps we can do some minor pruning of repetitions still, but nothing major is planned to be changed.

Data Science in Production: This is a very stable course with the same score as last year. We introduced industry lectures, which seem from the comments to be appreciated. There are still some challenges with the exercises – issues with the software, uneven workload etc. – so perhaps we can still do a few things better. In the longer run, we will probably expand the content and split it into two separate courses – one mandatory and one elective. It will probably come up with the revision of the programme later this year – I will encourage the external evaluators to look especially at this.

Geospatial Data Science: This is also a stable course, so not much to remark. A potential challenge is that we have a PhD to teach it next year. The teacher is an expert on the subject, so I am confident that he will do a good job, but we probably need to pay a bit of extra attention.

Malthe: I think the comments on Algorithmic Fairness are quite right – the issue was the structure. We also got the feedback very close to the exam, which was a bit late. For Machine Learning there was an overlap with content from the BSc for the first two lectures, but it was actually nice to get a kind of recap of it. Data Science in Production was also a quite nice course, but I agree that the workload was a little too big, and that technical issues in setting up the software should be handled earlier next time.

b) KCS

Marco: I was on leave doing the spring so have not followed the courses, but have talked with Allette and Allesandro for a bit of context. I do not have much to report though. A few courses were below 4 in the score.

Modeling Systems and Languages – I do not know what happened this year to cause this score, but I know there was an staffing emergency, so it was done in a bit of a hurry, which probably have something to do with this. The course is being refurbished for the next time - we have a new hire taking over the course, and the content will be slightly changed.

Ethical Hacking – again I have no idea what happened to cause this very low score, but as only 8 people was responding, it is not very informative. Perhaps Paolo can say something about the Scrum Master?

Paolo: I have looked into the comments, and some students are saying that they benefitted from the course, but that it was not very well organized. There might have been a few hiccups, but I do not think there are any systematic issues. Usually, the course performs better than this.

Tommaso: Regarding Ethical Hacking: I haven't experienced the course myself, but in general from the Study Lab and speaking with the other students, what I have heard has been in line with the feedback from the evaluations.

Marco: We do not know yet if it will be offered for 2025.

Allette: I am curious about what your peers say about the course.

Tommaso: I think it was mostly about the deliveries, and also that it was a conference type of course, which people did not expect. The topics changed a lot between classes, and people might have preferred a bit more continuity.

Louise: Perhaps more meta communication on how the course run could be needed?

Marco: I will investigate this.

Partrick: Linear Algebra has a great score at 5.95!

Marco: Yes, and thanks for reminding us that we should also notice the courses doing good. It is really amazing – it was created as a kind of service course, but a lot of people are taking it now. Other courses also build on top of this, and it seems it work very well. The teacher is doing an excellent job.

c) KSD

Patrick: From the overview of the scores compared to last year it looks positive, but the response rate is so low that the scores really does not say anything. We need to do something for next time to get more responses.

Apart from this, it looks positive. Introduction to Database System has a massive improvement, and also lot of comments from the students. Some have mentioned that they would prefer if the course used Python instead of Java, but otherwise it looks like it is working ok.

Frameworks – we always has problems with this course. There is not much we can glean from the comments from the students, but the underlying issue seems to be a mismatch between teacher and student expectations. But as we only have four people responding, we do not know so much.

Algorithms is a super difficult course for our students, but it scores very well, and seems to be well run.

Louise: For algorithms the meta data on the mandatory activities have been changed.

Marc: The course base has also been updated with a lower number of MAs needed to be passed to access the exam now - that seems to be in response to our previous discussions of the course with the course managers here in SAT.

Louise: I know Thore and Riko also have worked on being clearer in communicating that the students should not spend too much time on the exercises, but use the TAs, if they are stuck.

Patrick: Some students always say, "when I am stuck I am told to talk to the TAs, but the TAs can't help", so this does not always work.

d) Discussion of response rate

Luca: I think we can only get a higher response rate if we do the evaluation in class. Could we systematically do this?

Marco: We used to be told to push the teacher to do this in class. Personally, I think this is good, but sometimes you really do not have the time at the course. It depends on the type of lectures you need to do.

Luca: I am not saying we should mandate everyone to do it, it should still be for the teacher to decide, but we could help the teachers remember - perhaps notify them in a systematic way, like "This week, you should do the evaluations in class." We all share this problem, so might as well centralize this.

Marco: It would be interesting to see, if the teacher has mentioned the evaluation or not for the courses with the lover response rate. To see if it makes a difference.

Luca: I think measuring this is pointless, when we already know that doing the evaluations in class work.

Mette: You should also be aware, that it is actually already decided by ITU that the courses are expected to offer students time to do the evaluations in class. You can find it in the Teaching Guide. So, this is not up for discussion, but what you can decide is how to communicate this. Perhaps you could ask the teachers when they did it, how it went etc.? We have already expanded the period to help those courses where the last part of the semester is projects or similar, and it might be possible for a CM to reach out to Christian for an opening in a different week.

Louise: This is the university I have worked on where the response rate is the lowest.

Luca: For me it is easy, since I have only few courses to manage as head of programme. I understand it can be harder with many courses. But perhaps it would help to ask the teachers to acknowledge the evaluation.

Allette: Do you remind the teachers to do it in class?

Luca: I write individual emails. Clearly these things works.

Marc: I am curious if our student representatives has an idea of why the response rate is so low? And how we could improve this?

Malthe: We discussed this last time also. As a student it is nice to know something actually happened as a result of the evaluation - then it make sense to do it. So perhaps something like a follow up email on the changes or results could work.

Marco: In past it was easy to do this, when we used another system that forced us to write a statement. Now, when it is in LearnIT, it is more a question of finding a way to communicate this. Another thing is that when the feedback takes place during the course, it is harder to make the students do it, as they will not be the ones to have the benefit of the changes.

Mette: Maybe we could make an insta story on how we spend time handling this?

Louise: We also show this at the semester meetings - telling the students how many people read the evaluations, and that we take it very seriously.

Marc: Perhaps we could also communicate to the students that the evaluations are only usable, when enough people reply? The numbers are important, and with low numbers, the results cannot really be used for anything. Which strictly speaking means that by not participating, students themselves create a situation, where the evaluation does not work as a tool to create change - and spoil the process for those students who does. Perhaps this connection can be made clearer?

Allette: Could Student Council could do something to communicate to their fellow students the importance of doing the evaluations seen from perspective of the students? Perhas our student members of SAT could talk with their representatives here?

Paolo: Could we make it a mandatory activity that they need to do before being allowed for the exams?

Marc: This has been mentioned before, and besides the fact that it would create a huge overload of applications for exemption, and probably influence student wellbeing also, I am quite sure that we are not legally allowed to do something like this either.

Louise: Another thing we discussed at the retreat is that the comments has over the year turned very negative and harsh. I can sort of understand why a teacher does not want to push the students to do this, if they just get more bad feedback like that. Perhaps we should also make clearer what the intention of the course evaluations is? It is to allow the students to say whatever is on their mind? Or to give contractive feedback we can use going forward? In a way, the students are in a very powerful position evaluating other people's work like this, and perhaps we need to make them more aware of this?

Malthe: Perhaps we could split the comments field - make things more structured?

Marc: We have talked about this before I think. We could have a comment field for positive things, and one for negative things, to nudge people to remember to include the positives. But for these kinds of changes, you would need to take it to the Board of Studies, as they are the ones deciding the format.

Allette: Years ago, we had this system with a lot of questions, and then the issue was, that the students did not want to fill it in – so this is why we changed it to the current system. I think the main issue is not the format, but how we make students do the evaluations at all.

Michele: I think guiding people better to what to do and what we expect could be a solution.

Mette: We previously have had computers in the Atrium with coffee and cake, so the students could do it there. Perhaps we could try something like this again at some point?

Marco: I think the system right now is mostly to produce numbers for our management.

Mette: it is correct that the management insisted we kept the numbers, which is understandable, as they need a form of overview. But the owners of the evaluation are the head of education in collaboration with management.

Louise: Was it ok, if we tell the CMs that they can change the time of the evaluation?

Mette: Probably only in special cases – I will check with Christian, and produce info to Marc for the minutes, if I have it before the minutes goes out.

[No info received yet – so no further info for now.]

4) Information from SAT Members

Malthe: Nothing really new here. The semester startup of the courses has seen to work well.

Tomaso: Beside a bit of confusion in the begning – we had two courses in one, which are now split into two courses – the semester also seems to go well at CS. The start up for the Research Project was good also.

5) AOB

Louise: Just FYI at SWU many of the courses has more chaotic beginning the usual. I talk with our SAT representative tomorrow, and might also talk with Peter if necessary.