Small Group Instructional Diagnostic Summary Report

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Position: Graduate Teaching Associate
Department: Computer Science and Engineering
Course: CSE 2221 – Software Components
Date: March 3, 2020
Students: 33
Consultant: Taylor Neal

At the initiative of the instructor, the consultant conducted this midterm student assessment. Students first formed small groups and responded in writing to the three open-ended questions as indicated below. After a 10-minute discussion, these groups took turns sharing their comments with the rest of the class. General comments were gathered and included in this report. Anonymous written comments for each group are indicated below. The number of students in each group is indicated in parentheses, and all in each group agreed on the comments unless otherwise indicated in parentheses next to that comment. All comments were collected, typed, and included in this report.

1. **What are the strengths of the course and instructor that assist you in learning?**

General Comments:
Most students appreciated the use of TopHat to facilitate asking questions and seeking clarification. Specifically, they liked that it is an anonymous way to ask questions and reduced the pressure to filter what they try to ask. Approximately three-quarters of the students reported that learning by example or doing, including projects, homework, etc., was helpful for their learning. Nearly all students felt that office hours were very helpful and demonstrated that the instructor cares about helping, and about half of all students also expressed that quick email response times were beneficial. Roughly two-thirds of the class appreciated that the labs are ungraded.

Group-generated Comments:
Group One (4):
- He goes out of his way to make sure we understand the content (4)
- Lecture is conceptual/lab is hands on (4)
- Projects give us enough practice to help be successful on exams (4)
- TopHat beginning of class no shame questions (4)

Group Two (3):
- Example questions & code to explain (3)
- Open Q&A (3)
- Explaining projects and how to approach it (3)

Group Three (4):
- Learning by example/by doing (4)
- TAs are friendly, intelligent, and reliable (4)
- Labs are useful (4)
- Slides for presentations (3)
- The components website is full of good methods (3)

Group Four (3):
- The slides on Carmen (3)
- Good examples in class (3)
- The TA's during the lab (2)

Group Five (3):
- Good at explain concepts and communicate with students (3)
- Have responsibility and help us review knowledge before midterms (3)

Group Six (4):
- Good explanations and examples (4)
- Tophat questions can be helpful (4)
- Lab's aren't graded, takes off pressure (4)
- Piazza is helpful (4)

Group Seven (4):
- Giving explicit examples w/ details (Interactive learning (like tophat)) (4)
- Personalized teaching (vs. lecturing at us) (4)

Group Eight (3):
- The labs b/c they help understand the content & you can ask questions (3)
- Lecture ex that he makes up for us (3)

Group Nine (5):
- Highlights material he believes is important (5)
- Amazingly helpful during office hours (5)
- Knowledgeable about his subject and cares about teaching his students (5)
- Tophat questions and feedback (5)

2. What things are making it more difficult for you to learn?

General Comments:
Most students reported that they sometimes felt "thrown into" projects without enough background information, requiring them to seek clarification or contextualization during office hours in in class. About a quarter of students expressed that they don't always know where to look for a list of methods (RSS, xtml, etc.) despite the resources at the OSU library. Nearly all students agreed that there are not enough test cases; for example, for Project 5, they didn't know how to test their code. One or two students reported difficulty in seeking help on projects because they are due an hour before class.

Group-generated Comments:
Group One (4):
- Time, sometimes we don't get through lecture (4)
- Courseload (4)
- Refusal to provide test cases on projects

Group Two (3):
- Moves really fast (3)
- Skips parts of lectures (3)
- Project feedback tells whats wrong but not how to fix it.

Group Three (4):
- Labs should be worth points to encourage attendance (1)
  - At least should get solid feedback (2)
- Projects are not discussed in class unless we ask about it (4)

Group Four (3):
- <blank>

Group Five (3):
- Sometime the topic is disrupted by random thoughts. (3)

Group Six (4):
- Recursion is confusing, Freelunch is a little confusing (3)

Group Seven (4):
- More explicit instructions for the labs & projects (in class or lab) (3)

Group Eight (3):
- HW due before class (3)
- Presentations aren't that helpful (2.5)
- Projects & lab instructions can be unclear.

Group Nine (5):
- Gets off topic and gets behind in syllabus

3. What specific changes would you recommend to the instructor that would assist you in learning?

General Comments:
Many students requested that the instructor review projects in class before they're due, and then go over them again after they're turned in. Nearly all students expressed that while they do get told what's wrong with their work, they don't always receive guidance for how to fix it. One student shared that despite feeling good about one particular assignment, they missed points on something they didn't know to test for had no chance to apply the retrospective feedback. This student thought it would be better if there were a pre-set test case instead of just hoping that theirs will work. About half of all students feel like the graders try too energetically to break their code during evaluations, and one student thought that labs should be graded to provide more motivation.

Group-generated Comments:
Group One (4):
- Sample Exam 2 would be a massive help (4)
- Limited accessibility on Mondays

Group Two (3):
- Nothing.

Group Three (4):
- Change the order in which we're taught things (3)
- Homework and projects should be gone over after they're do in class, possibly dedicate in-class time to breakdown the lab before it is due. (4)

Group Four (3):
- More top hat questions (3)
- Less theory more hands on examples (3)

Group Five (3):
- Less assignment

Group Six (4):
- The slides aren't that descriptive. A lot of the stuff that you talk about isn't on the slides. Maybe use notability and the projector to write stuff down then upload the notes to Carmen (4)

Group Seven (4):
- Remove ` lab; + 1 lecture (2)
- Add more test cases (3)

Group Eight (3):
- Example of projects after they are due

Group Nine (5):
- Grading could be less harsh (5)