

UG Exam Performance Feedback

Second Year

2017/2018 Semester 1

COMP23311 Software Engineering 1

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Comments Please see the attached report.

Feedback on Student Performance in COMP23311 January 2018 Examination

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Candidates generally made a good attempt at this exam paper. The average mark was 65%, and the expected proportion of first class marks were achieved.

Marks were lost broadly evenly across the whole paper: no one topic covered by the course unit stands out as having been harder, or been less well understood, than another in the results. Topics where the most incorrect answers were selected were those that were covered towards the end of the course unit, where attendance dropped dramatically, including refactoring for software quality and software design patterns. For these topics, there was a broad spread of incorrect answers, suggesting that a significant number of students were selecting answers at random, rather than through common misconceptions of the material. One potential explanation of this is that these candidates found it difficult to catch up with these topics after missing the workshops, achieving only a surface familiarity with the key terms rather than the deeper understanding the workshops are designed to give.

The only really strong pattern discernible in the marks is that mistakes tend to be made on questions containing a negation or with an “all of the above”/“none of the above” type of answer. There were 12 such questions on the paper this year, and of these 9 had an incorrect answer that was selected by 10% or more of the class. In many cases, the incorrect answers selected would have been correct if the negation was removed from the question. For example, if the question was “What features of distributed version control systems like Git are *not* helpful for new developers?”, following this pattern a significant proportion of the class would select answers describing reasons why DVCSs *are* good for new developers.

This suggests that some candidates are not reading the questions carefully enough. We try to help by italicising negation words such as “least” and “not” but it seems that some students are still missing them. In future MCQ exams, if you have a paper version of the exam to hand, it might be worth circling or highlighting such words when you first read through the paper, to make them stand out further.