

UG Exam Performance Feedback

Second Year

2017/2018 Semester 2

COMP24412 Symbolic AI

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Comments This was the first time I'd set this as four compulsory questions rather than a choice of three from four. My intention, obviously, was to keep it at the same level but make each question shorter. There were complaints about the exam being too long (and some scripts had comments to that effect), and it looks as though what I actually did was to keep the questions much the same length but make them easier. The overall outcome is a mean of 63.2%, which I expect to go up a bit when the labs are added in, so on the face of it the outcome isn't way out of line with expectation. However, this does mask the fact that there is a huge standard deviation, with six scripts getting 90% or better, six getting 30% or worse, and a median of 70% but not all that many in the 60s.

Q1, which was about Prolog, has the highest average, which I think is probably because it was a set of specific "what does this bit of Prolog do" questions which most people could do. Q4 has the lowest, which you could imagine was because it was the last one on a paper which turned out to be quite long. I don't think it's necessarily quite that simple, because actually the answers to Q4 were fairly short, and a good number of people got full or nearly full marks on it. There were a lot of 0s for it as well, but a substantial number of these were because they answered it wrong, with no obvious evidence that they'd run out of time (of course, time pressure could be a reason for getting something wrong: all I can say is that the writing didn't look particularly rushed, they hadn't used up loads of booklets, there's no obvious evidence of them running out of time).

There is no-one who is in danger of failing simply because of Q4. Everyone in the danger zone has at least one other question that they did badly on, and for several the other weak question is Q2, which they would have attempted long before they got into time trouble.

So I think the outcome of the exam is probably about right, though obviously it would have been better to get there by making the questions shorter but harder, and if I were teaching this course next year I would try to adjust things in that direction.
