

COMP23311 Examination Feedback January 2020

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The cohort overall performed well in this exam. The average mark was on the high side, at 69%. We'll be looking to add some harder questions to the exam for next year on this basis.

Students across the cohort showed good understanding of some of the core concepts, though performance on questions relating to software testing was weaker than in previous years. It is common for students to struggle with some of the more advanced testing concepts taught in this unit, but this year quite a lot of students were failing to answer questions on very basic testing concepts, despite unit testing being at the heart of much of what we covered in the unit.

The topics that candidates scored least well on were: refactoring, design for testability, design patterns and estimation. While some of these questions were designed to test deeper understanding, some of them related to basic concepts that we would expect all students to know. The concept of "effort" (which simply refers to a person doing work for an amount of time) caused difficulties for many students, and many students seemed to be unclear about the exact meaning of the Git operations "pull" and "fetch". Similarly, the concept of a test fixture was not well understood by a number of candidates.

We had less of a problem this year with incorrect answers to questions involving "not" and "least", and questions with "All/none of the above" as answers, than has been the case in previous years. Only 2 such questions seem to have confused candidates into selecting the wrong answer. We try to avoid such questions, but sometimes they are the best way to test a particular concept. It is worth bearing in mind that they can be tricky and to take steps to mitigate the risks (such as highlighting these words in the paper exam copy, so you can go back afterwards and check your answers).