

Course analysis DD2443 Parallel and Distributed Computing

Course round: Per 1, 2018

Course responsible: Mads Dam

Note: This course analysis is based on own course data and reflections and comments from student discussions in class. The standard questionnaire seems to have not been issued.

Basic data

Number of registered students: 29

Number of student passed by April 2019: 19

Degree distribution after first examination round:

- A: 3
- B: 3
- C: 4
- D: 4
- E: 2
- F: 3

Course structure

14 lectures, twice weekly, 7 exercise sessions, once a week, 1 seminar session, 3 labs

Oral exam, A-F scale

Grading based on:

- Exam
- Exercises
- Seminar attendance (obligatory)
- Seminar presentations (voluntary, gave optional bonus point)
- Peer review
- Labs

Student feedback and planned changes

No formal course committee was appointed. I take regular feedback throughout the course, and the final 30 minutes of the final lecture with all “surviving” students present was devoted to feedback.

Here are the main feedback issues:

Exercises:

- Proofs take time, too much of that

Mads's reflections: Proofs are hard for students, yes, but good practice too. Maybe This can be slightly reduced next time around

- Better real-time exercise feedback would be good

Mads's reflections: Agree completely, need TA to take care of this, as I don't have resources myself

- Would be good with biweekly exercise handins

Mads's reflections: Could be done but I don't really see the point. Some individual planning for students at masters level must be legitimate

- More differentiated difficulty in exercises, lacking a bit some easy, check-your-understanding type questions

Mads's reflections: Agree, I will look into this for next installment

- Good with some model exercises from the outset

Mads's reflections: Agree, really need some lecture notes to help with details here and there that the textbook and slides skin over a bit quickly, like basic techniques for lecture one and two, and some helper notes for some proofs given in lectures.

Workload:

- No major comments, in the 2017 version I had obligatory paper presentations. In 2018 this was eliminated due to student feedback. This year no major complaints about the workload, except from students taking more than two half speed courses in parallel.

Mads's reflections: This is a 7.5 credit course. As it is, the workload is half speed not more. Half speed over one period is 6 hp, not 7.5. So I will definitely not reduce the workload.

Labs:

- Indicate that Java is a prerequisite

Mads's reflections: Yes, that would be helpful, probably.

- Labs are a bit disconnected from the rest of the material, should be better integrated into the course

Mads's reflections: True. Originally the intention was to have labs to complement the course with some practical components not covered otherwise – I mean if DD2443 is the only course in parallel and distributed computing a student takes, besides a little exposure in year one, then some practical exposure is really essential. Haven't yet decided what to do about that.

- Work some labs into exercises

Mads's reflections: Yes, could be done in some cases, actually. Gong to think about it.

Syllabus:

- Could be more specific about the content of the course

Mads's reflections: Not sure I agree. This is very new material to all students, so I'm not sure more specificity is going to help anyone

Structure and content:

- Pretty good
- More reader friendly slides

Mads's reflections: Disagree. Too many students try to get by using only the slides, I think. Read the textbook and course notes instead.