Minutes of Mid-Course Meeting
DAT076 / DIT126 Web Applications

February 26, 13:15

Present

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About the meeting

We talked over 40 minutes during the meeting and the discussion sometimes drifted away. Therefore, this document tries to collect the most important points that we talked about and the conclusions reached.

1. Difficult to connect the assignments to the project - it would make things easier if the whole group could work together on the assignments

Many students feel that it was difficult to connect the labs to the project and that it hindered them to start working on the project. The fact that we split the group into smaller “lab groups” made it more difficult to put work into the project as the different groups finished the labs at different times.

Comment from course responsible and conclusion

This was definitely an experiment. However, it is important to learn some core concepts about application structure and database design in JPA before you actually move on to the project. I think we can make this structure of the assignments work better by increasing the amount of lab sessions at the beginning of the course and to allow the groups to work together as one on the labs.

Having such large groups working on the assignments would definitely make things a little different, but just because something is a little different doesn’t necessarily make it a bad thing. A solution could be to limit project groups to 3-4 students.

The first prototyping assignment needs to be done in smaller groups – as we start it before the project groups are formed.

2. Big jump in difficulty for assignment 3

Paulina felt that there was a very big jump in difficulty from assignment two to assignment three. They had a lot of problems when working on the lab and found it very difficult to troubleshoot.

Comment from course responsible and conclusion

There are some core concepts in JPA that are important to learn and they take a bit of time to grasp. Error messages reported by the framework can be tricky to understand – especially if you have not seen it before. I don't think there is any way to get around this – it's just something we will have to live with. An alternative in the future could be to use JNOSQL which is a much simpler approach, allowing you to store plain objects with virtually no impedance mismatch (which you get with a ORM such as JPA). However, at the moment I don't think the database course here at Chalmers covers NOSQL databases in any depth. Maybe once NOSQL is covered more in-depth, or there is a separate course for it, we can make the switch in this course.

3. Somewhat confusing to tie together the different topics of the lectures

Some students feel that it was difficult to connect the different topics of each lecture and how they were connected to each other.

Comment from course responsible and conclusion

It's a complex framework. I tried to set up a coherent order in the lectures but there are some problems in the way the different frameworks in Java EE depend on each other. For example, when learning the basics of CDI you need to mention JSF and when covering JSF you need to mention CDI. From what I could tell the concept of dependency injection was somewhat hard to grasp for many students.

I tried to ask a lot of questions during the lectures but didn't really get much feedback.

So really, only after you have had all the lectures are you able to properly associate every concept and framework and how they are connected to each other. Maybe Robin can come up with some ideas next year to make this more clear. If possible, this should probably be covered early on.

4. Course website was good

Course web site is good. However, Paulina says it is unusual to have a course web site on Canvas that actually uses the feature-set of canvas properly. A lot of courses don't use the platform correctly – resulting in web sites looking very differently depending on who is course responsible. Some courses have used just the *"file storage"* area and dumped everything in there.

Comment from course responsible and conclusion

I actually think this is an excellent point. Chalmers does offer regular classes in how to use Canvas, but it seems like many teachers are not really taking advantage of this.

A common template among courses which should be followed would probably be a good idea and would help students to find resources more easily.

5. Comments on the course book

Most students that the course responsible has talked to that have the course book seem to like it.

6. Questions for the course survey

There will be no questions added to the course survey.