DM582, Spring 2025
comments on the midterm evaluation

Kim Skak Larsen

March 12, 2025

On March 11, 2025, we conducted a midterm evaluation of DM582, Advanced Algorithms, taught by Kim Skak Larsen. The evaluation consisted of a multiple-choice questionnaire (attached at the end) and a free-text suggestion opportunity, where students could write any statement on the blackboard during the break (while the lecturer was away) which could then be up- or down-voted by fellow students.

Overall Brief Summary

In general, the students think that although

- earlier courses have established reasonably good prerequisites,

- the course is pretty hard,

- but also quite interesting,

- and that it's taught well by the lecturer/TA team.

In Greater Detail

Here follows some comments based on my impressions from the multiple-choice questionnaire (attached below) and the responses to the free-text contributions. The free-text contributions contained very few statements, some of which were of a joking nature, and rather few students expressed agreement with the statements, but I'll merge them in below anyway.

- *Most students think earlier courses have prepared them reasonably well for this course.*

  It should be added that about a quarter of the students disagree. However, the results on this issue are significantly better than last year, and we believe this is due to assuming less with regards to discrete probability theory, and teaching that early in this course.

- *The course is hard but interesting.*

  This is not too surprising. The students have learned about proofs in discrete math but it's the first time they really have to do proofs. It's also reflected in the free-text part where it's expressed that the lectures are nice but it's hard to do the exercises. To some extent this probably reflects that a proof can be very convincing and intuitive when presented but it's another matter to start the process yourself; and even worse if it requires some non-obvious proof idea. We try to work on that by giving some exercises that follow the same template as the proofs in the book and hope that, gradually, this will develop the understanding. The fact that students mostly find the course material interesting will hopefully help students to get the energy and spend the necessary time to get into "proof mode". In the free-text part, it was pointed out that the students at the "cafés", who can often help with programming problems and similar issues, were not equipped to help students in this course. I will look into that.

- *Most students like the teaching form using the blackboard, but about a quarter would have preferred slides.*

  Actually, it seems that a quarter of the students always prefer slides, independent of which kind of course it is. And all other students prefer the blackboard; at least in this particular course.

  There is the issue which was also brought up on the free-text part that some students would like to be provided with some review points that slides could facilitate.

- *The students think that the lecturer and the TA do a good job explaining the material.*

  We're always super prepared and have spent time thinking about the pedagogical aspects individually, as well as together at the TA meeting,

so it's good to hear that it works!

I don't want to make the TA evaluations public, but they were very nice!

Thank you for participating in the evaluation.

The Multiple-Choice Questionnaire

Midterm Evaluation: DM582, Spring 2025

Presented by: Kim Skak Larsen

Current run (last updated Mar 11, 2025 1:10pm)

6	34	34	100%
Activities	**Participants**	**Average responses**	**Average engagement**

Prerequisites: How do you feel your earlier courses have prepared you for this course?

Unsatisfactorily	3%
To the unsatisfactorily side	26%
To the satisfactorily side	50%
Satisfactorily	21%

Response options	Count	Percentage
Unsatisfactorily	1	3%
To the unsatisfactorily side	9	26%
To the satisfactorily side	**17**	**50%**
Satisfactorily	7	21%

100%
Engagement

34
Responses

Difficulty: How difficult do you perceive the course?

Easy	3%
To the easy side	3%
To the hard side	44%
Hard	50%

Response options	Count	Percentage
Easy	1	3%
To the easy side	1	3%
To the hard side	15	44%
Hard	**17**	**50%**

100%
Engagement

34
Responses

Lecturer Communication: How good or bad is the lecturer's abilities to explain the material?

Bad	3%
To the bad side	3%
To the good side	50%
Good	44%

Response options	Count	Percentage
Bad	1	3%
To the bad side	1	3%
To the good side	**17**	**50%**
Good	15	44%

100% Engagement

34 Responses

Interest: How interesting do you find the topics so far?

Uninteresting	3%
To the uninteresting side	24%
To the interesting side	56%
Interesting	18%

Response options	Count	Percentage
Uninteresting	1	3%
To the uninteresting side	8	24%
To the interesting side	**19**	**56%**
Interesting	6	18%

100% Engagement

34 Responses

Media: For courses in general (don't focus on this course; the next question will do that), do you prefer blackboard teaching or slides?

Blackboard	6%
Slides	24%
Depends on the course	71%
Don't care	0%

Response options	Count	Percentage
Blackboard	2	6%
Slides	8	24%
Depends on the course	**24**	**71%**
Don't care	0	0%

100% Engagement

34 Responses

For this course, do you think you would prefer blackboard or slides?

Response options	Count	Percentage
Blackboard	**22**	**65%**
Slides	9	26%
Don't care	3	9%

100%
Engagement

34
Responses