Practical Lab Work

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Title: Practical Lab Work

Lecturer: Susan McKeever

Programme and year on which assessment was offered

- BSc Computing, Year 3
- BSc Computer Science, Year 3

Description

A pre-defined lab exercise done in the weekly lab session.

Why did you use this Assessment?

The exercises demonstrate that the student has grasped the practical aspects of their technical programming subjects.
Useful as a sub component of the non exam component of a module.

What have you found are the advantages of using this form of assessment?

- Encourages students to keep abreast of material
- Very clear and accurate picture of student performance available week by week
- More engaging for students to work on the same exercise each week with a "purpose"
- Attendance of labs vastly improved

What have you found are the dis-advantages of using this form of assessment?

- High dependence on reliable infrastructure in the labs
- Risk of over rewarding weaker students - grades allocated need to reflect level of completion, not just attendance.
- Labour intensive for lecturer during the lab to evaluate each week (but efficiencies available)

Assessment in Practice

- Suitable for practical technical subjects that require actual "usage" in order to grasp the concepts. eg programming
- Can be challenging for larger classes as lab assistants will not be the lecturer so the lab assistant must be very up to speed in the technologies in order to grade and support within the lab session.
- A very clear and accurate pattern emerges quickly of how each individual is performing and engaging on the module.

Assessment Time

- Preparation time (lecturer) - Labs must be planned and solutions clear to lab assistants in advance. Marking spreadsheet(s) must be available to all and scheme clear.
- Student time to complete – within schedule lab time –part of learning.
- Marking time - Done within the lab – preparation time allows for this.
- Ease of Feedback – Can be covered at tutorials within the same week – excellent for feedback.

Writing guidelines for staff

Clearly planned lab exercises, broken into parts, with marking clear for each part completion.

Templates / Marking Grids / Rubrics

Very simple – marked between 0 and 1 each week - with accumulated marks for the semester then pro-rata'd to whatever the total module % is allocated to this assessment.