

Changes to the course in 2025

Marcel Bollmann

Introduction

This document informs about changes to the course *Language Technology* compared to the previous course instance. The course is co-taught as 729G86 and TDP030 ; in previous years, it was additionally taught as 729G17 .

1 Previous course evaluation

In VT 2024, a total of 73 students were registered for this course, of which 17 students ($\approx 23\%$) submitted a course evaluation through Evaluate. Although the response rate was low, the majority of students who responded were satisfied with the course, as can be seen from the answers to the “overall evaluation” question in Fig. 1.

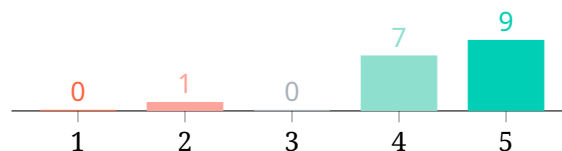


Figure 1: Aggregated responses to the question: What is your overall evaluation of the course?

2 Basis for the changes

Several changes were suggested by students through the free-text answers in the course evaluation. Additional feedback and potential for changes was discussed in a course evaluation meeting with student representatives from the Cognitive Science programme. Here is a summary of the student feedback:

- Students wished to have **more time for the labs**, particularly to solve the advanced (X) part; alternatively shorter/easier labs.
- Students suggested to have an **exam review**.
- The **difficulty of the exam** was criticized, in particular the small margin of error allowed for a passing grade.
- Some students formed **project groups** with a mix of Cognitive Science and Programming students, and found that the combination of their different knowledge backgrounds was very beneficial for their project work.
- The **project presentation** sessions were found to be too long, and the room too small for the number of students attending.

Teaching assistants in the previous course instance observed that a lot of the time in the first lab session is spent on **setting up the technical environment**, rather than on solving the actual lab assignments.

There are also administrative reasons for changes, namely:

- The course code **729G17** was retired; Cognitive Science students are now studying under **729G86**. As a consequence, the grading scale U/G/VG no longer exists in the course, which we used as an opportunity to **revise the grade requirements** throughout the course.
- **Lab 0** used to be given for all student groups *except* **729G17**, due to the different knowledge backgrounds of the students groups; with the removal of this course code, this distinction no longer works.
- The **optional tests**, a course module that allowed students to take small tests throughout the course in order to gain bonus points for the digital written exam, created many administrative difficulties. While it was appreciated by the students, we found the system too complicated to keep it as part of the course.

3 Changes being carried out

- The **grade requirements** in the course memo have been updated to be more comparable across the two course codes. There is now a clear mapping between the ECTS scale in **729G86** and the technical faculty's scale in **TDP030**.
- **Lab 0** is now mandatory for all students; the idea is to have a very simple “starter” lab that also serves as an opportunity for students to set up and get familiar with the technical environment, so that they do not lose time to this in the first more substantial lab session (i.e. lab 1).
- The **main lab series** (labs 1–5) is unchanged, but the grade requirements make it easier for more students to obtain a higher grade. For example, it is never required to solve *all* the advanced labs in order to get the highest grade. In the future, we plan to revise the lab content as well, updating its contents and possibly simplifying the advanced parts.
- The **format of the exam** will be changed. Previously, it used to consist of two parts; 12 out of 15 points in Part A were required for a passing grade, while Part B only needed to be attempted if students aimed for a higher grade. Many students perceived the small room for error (at most 3 points) to be quite harsh, and very few students attempted Part B at all. The new exam will get rid of the Part A/B distinction, and its grade requirements will be revised.
- The **optional tests** have been removed. We will make sure to provide examples for possible exam questions throughout the course, as well as a sample exam towards the end of the course, in order to allow students to practice for the exam (which is a function the optional tests had fulfilled previously).
- We now enforce a mixing of the student groups in each **project group**. After this course instance, we will evaluate if this is perceived positively by the students.
- There is now an **additional presentation session** for the projects, to have more time and space during each of them.