

Introduction to programming using Scala

– Experiences from 1st year of new course for CSE students

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Download slides:

[https://github.com/lunduniversity/introprog/blob/master/about/
course-experience-first-year](https://github.com/lunduniversity/introprog/blob/master/about/course-experience-first-year)

July 8, 2025

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- 3 Overview of new course
- 4 Experiences from first year
- 5 A very brief intro to Scala

Why a new course?

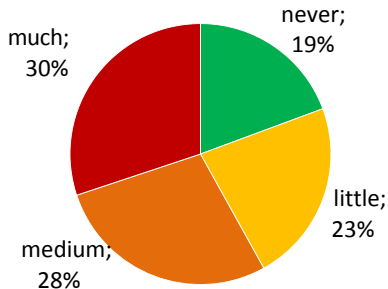
Why a new programming course for CSE students?

- Special teaching challenges when teaching introductory programming to CSE¹ program students at LTH:
 - Very large spread in pre-knowledge
 - Many students have very high ambitions
 - Some students have great difficulties
- The previous first course EDA016 needed an update after having the same architecture for many years

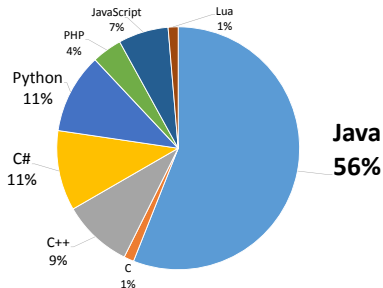
¹CSE = Computer Sci. & Eng., In Swedish: Datateknikprogrammet (D)

Course intro survey 2015, CSE (Datatechnik) EDA016 Programming, first course (Java)

Have programmed before?

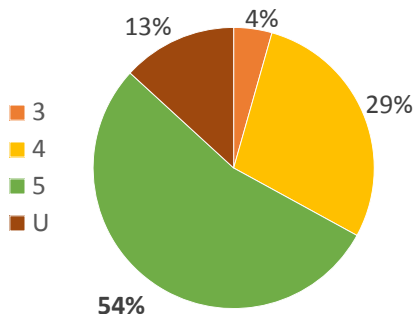


What language?



Course results 2015, CSE (Datateknik) EDA016 Programming, first course (Java)

Grades 2015, old Java course, 91 students attending first exam



Main goals with new course

- Increase the **challenge**
- Increase the **learning outcome**
- Make an **interesting & engaging** start for CSE students
- Try new concepts in introductory programming teaching:
 - Involve old students in an open source project
 - Increase learning collaboration among students
 - Pioneering Scala as a first language
- Enable students to continue with an unchanged second course

First language at LTH

History of first languages at LTH for CSE students:

(Algol, Fortran)	(pre-history ² using punch cards)
Pascal	1982, CSE program started
Simula	1990
Java	1997
Scala	2016

²Prof. Martin Odersky at EPFL, the inventor of Scala, wrote large parts of the javac compiler. He was once a PhD student of Niklaus Wirth, the chief designer behind Algol, Pascal, Modula etc.

Why Scala?

Why Scala?

Easy for beginners and interesting for non-beginners:

- Regular semantics; e.g. value types are real objects
- Concise, expressive syntax
- Interactive learning in the Scala REPL
- Multi-paradigm, pragmatic:
imperative, object-oriented, functional
- Rich semantics: can demonstrate many cs concepts
- Modern, evolving language: exciting for new students
- Free, open source language and tools

What is Scala?

- A scalable, pragmatic, real-world language
 - Used at Twitter, LinkedIn, The Guardian, Coursera...
- Multi-paradigm:
 - object-oriented
 - functional
 - imperative
 - concurrent
- Typing: static, strong, inferred, structural
- Designed by: Martin Odersky
- Developer: EPFL, Lightbend, OSS Community
- First appeared: January 20, 2004
- Platform: JVM, JavaScript
- License: BSD 3-clause
- Official site: <https://www.scala-lang.org/>

Overview of new course

Summary of major changes

- New contents (selected):
 - Start imperative and functional, then gradually introduce OO
 - Start with objects as modules before instances
 - Immutable versus mutable datastructures
 - Use (but not implement) several structures: Vector, Set, Map, List
 - Use higher-order collection methods: map, foreach, filter, ...
 - Pattern matching to decompose data in case classes
 - Concept focus: compare paradigms, compare languages
 - ...
- Scala as a **first** language, with Java as a **second** language in the same course to make concept learning deeper
- Learning to code in collaboration teams
- New open source course material:
 - New lectures
 - New exercises
 - New labs
 - New type of written exam

Module structure (adapted based on experiences)

Home: <https://lunduniversity.github.io/pgk>

<i>W</i>	<i>Modul</i>	<i>Övn</i>	<i>Lab</i>
W01	Introduktion	expressions	kojo
W02	Program och kontrollstrukturer	programs	–
W03	Funktioner och abstraktion	functions	irritext
W04	Objekt och inkapsling	objects	blockmole
W05	Klasser och datamodellering	classes	blockbattle0
W06	Mönster och felhantering	patterns	blockbattle1
W07	Sekvenser och enumerationer	sequences	shuffle
TP	–	–	–
W08	Nästlade och generiska strukturer	matrices	life
W09	Mängder och tabeller	lookup	words
W10	Arv och komposition	inheritance	snake0
W11	Varians och kontextparametrar	context	snake1
W12	Fördjupning, Projekt	extra	Projekt0
W13	Repetition	examprep	Projekt1
W14	MUNTligt PROV	Munta	Munta
TP	VALFRI TENTAMEN	–	–

Students participation in teaching development through open sourcing of teaching material for Scala

<https://github.com/lunduniversity/introprog>

Anders Buhl,
Anna Palmqvist Sjövall,
Anton Andersson,
Casper Schreiter,
Cecilia Lindskog,
Christine Boghammar,
Emil Wihlander,
Emma Asklund,
Erik Bjäreholt,
Erik Grampp,
Erik Söderberg,

Filip Stjernström,
Fredrik Danebjer,
Gustav Cedersjö,
Henrik Olsson,
Jacob Bohlin,
Jakob Hök,
Johan Ravnborg,
Jonas Danebjer,
Maj Stenmark,
Maximilian Rundgren,
Måns Magnusson,

Oscar Sigurdsson,
Oskar Berg,
Oskar Widmark,
Povel Larsson,
Sebastian Hegardt,
Stefan Jonsson,
Tom Postema,
Valthor Halldorsson,
Viktor Claesson

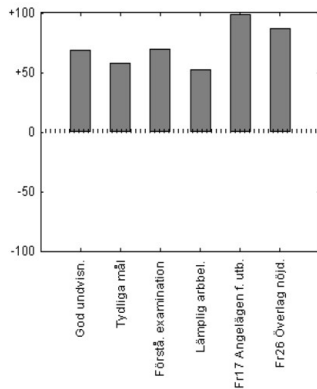
Experiences from first year

Summary of experiences

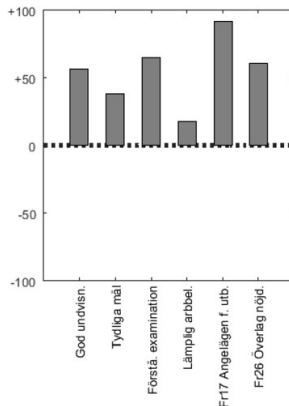
- Goals met:
 - Students with different pre-knowledge were all challenged
 - Higher learning outcome
 - Increased student engagement
- Scala is an excellent first language for CSE students and a pleasant to teach

Course Experience Questionnaire

CEQ 2015 Old Java course

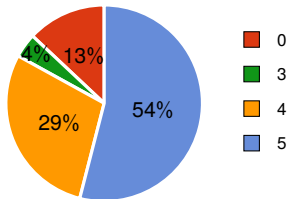
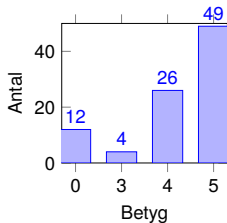


CEQ 2016 New Scala course

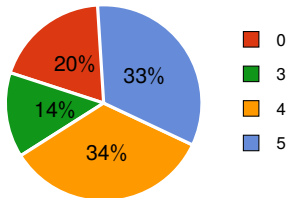
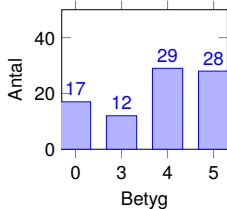


Betygsfördelning, D-are, totalt 86 st

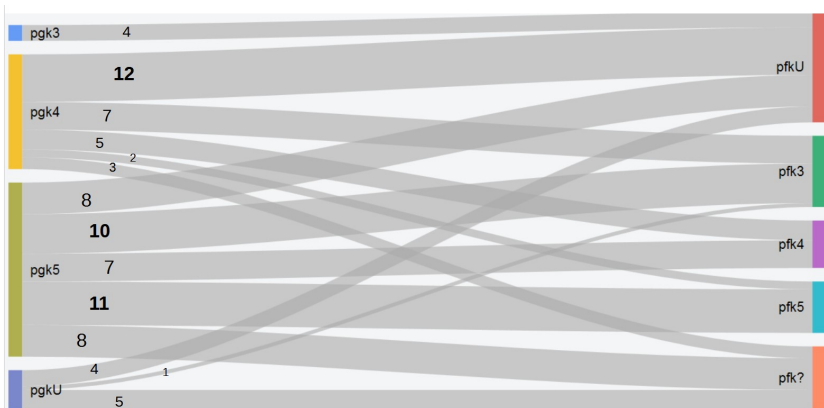
2015, 91st



2016, 86st



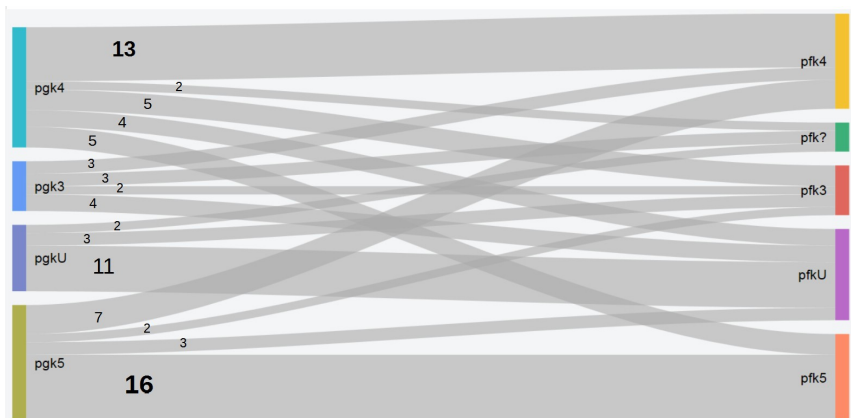
Grade progress 2015: EDA016 Java => EDAA01 Java



<https://jsfiddle.net/dyb0kpvh/>

pfk? resultat saknas
på ordinarie tentamen

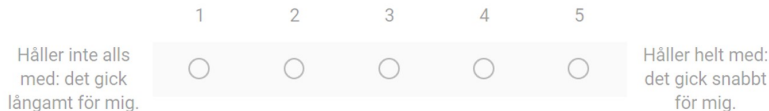
Grade progress 2016: EDAA45 Scala => EDAA01 Java



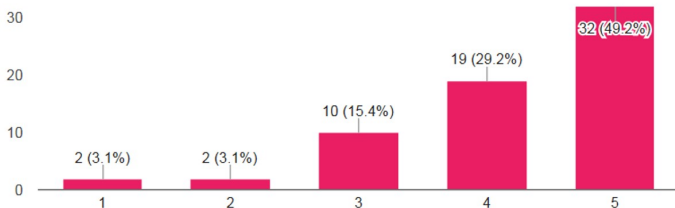
<https://jsfiddle.net/wa7fr8po/>

"I learn fast if I make an effort"

Mina programmeringskunskaper växer snabbt om jag anstränger mig. *

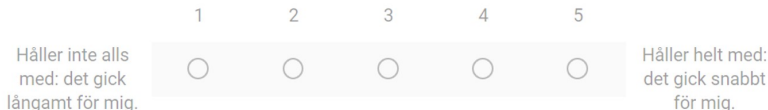


(65 responses)

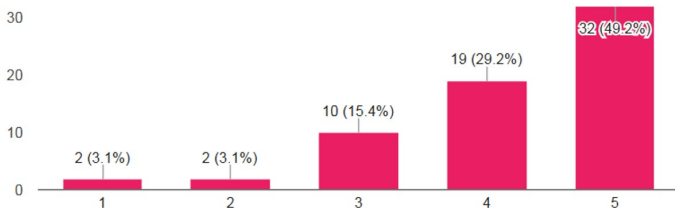


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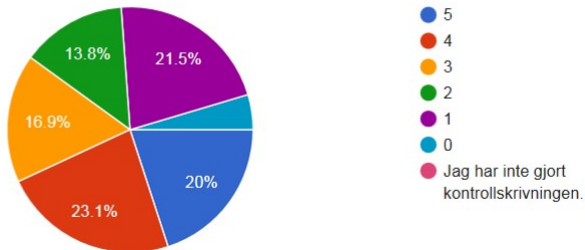


(65 responses)



"How did you make it at the diagnostic mid-term test?"

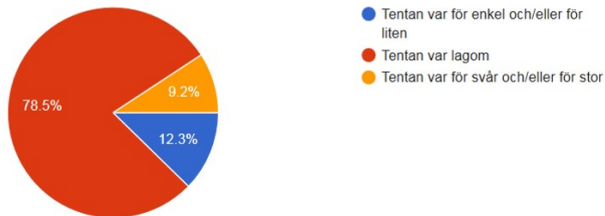
Hur gick det för dig på kontrollskrivningen? (65 responses)



"What did you think about the level of the exam?"

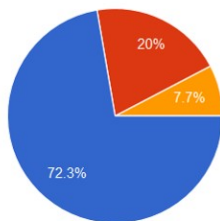
Vad tyckte du om tentans svårighetsgrad i förhållande till kursmålen och undervisningen?

(65 responses)



"Scala or Java?"

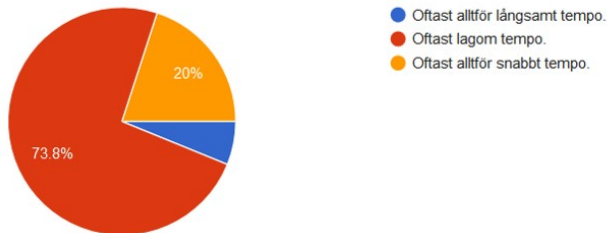
Scala eller Java eller annat? (65 responses)



- Jag tycker Scala som huvudspråk var bra för mitt lärande i grundkursen
- Jag tror Java som huvudspråk hade varit bättre för mitt lärande i grundkursen
- Other

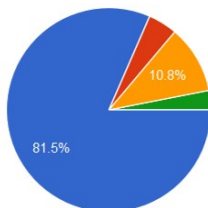
"What do you think about the course tempo?"

Vad tycker du om kursens tempo i genomsnitt. (65 responses)



"How do you value your learning outcome?"

Hur värderar du dina kunskaper vid kursens slut? (65 responses)



- Jag har lärt mig mycket som jag kommer att ha nytta av framöver.
- Jag har i och för sig lärt mig mycket, men jag tror inte jag kommer att ha så stor nytta av det jag lärt mig.
- Jag har inte lärt mig så mycket som jag hade velat, men kursens innehåll är relevant och viktigt.
- Jag har inte lärt mig så mycket som jag hade velat, och kursens innehåll är inte relevant och viktigt.

A very brief intro to Scala

Official home of Scala



www.scala-lang.org
with tutorials, docs, etc.

Scala – the simple parts

Lecture by **Martin Odersky**: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecekSCX3B4Q

Scala for every-day dev actions:

- 1 **Compose**: everything is a composable **expression**
- 2 **Match**: decompose data with **pattern**-matching
- 3 **Group**: everything can be grouped and **nested**
- 4 **Recurse**: compose at any depth, loop with tail recursion
- 5 **Abstract**: functions are objects
- 6 **Aggregate**: collections aggregate & **transform** data
- 7 **Mutate**: local, private mutability to optimize perf.



SF Scala: Martin Odersky, Scala -- the Simple Parts

Some similarities between Scala and Java

- Both are object-oriented and imperative
- Both are statically typed (~ 100 times faster than Python)
- Both have C-like block syntax { }
- Both have lambdas (Java 8)
- Both run on the JVM
- Both can execute each other's byte code

Some differences between Scala and Java

- Scala is a more "pure" OO language:
instances of **Int**, **Double**, **Char**, etc. are **real objects**
- Scala is a more advanced functional language:
easy to transform immutable data in functional collections
- Scala unifies OO and functional programming:
functions are objects with an apply-method
- singleton **object** instead of Java's static
- Some syntax differences:

Some differences between Scala and Java

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easy to transform immutable data in functional collections
- Scala unifies OO and functional programming:
functions are objects with an apply-method
- singleton **object** instead of Java's static
- Some syntax differences:
 - semicolons are inferred; newline btw statements is enough
 - no need for **return** as blocks are values
 - Type *after* names and colon: **val** name: String = "Kim"
 - generic types in [T] instead of <T>
 - Five types of members: **def**, **val**, **lazy val**, **var**, **type**
Methods: **def** isChild: Boolean = age < 18
Immutable fields: **val** gender = "Female"
Delayed init: **lazy val** r = List.fill(1000)(math.random())
Mutable fields: **var** age: Int = 42
Type alias: **type** Matrix = Map[Int, Map[Int, String]]

Classes in Java and Scala

```
// this is Java

public class JPerson {
    private String name;
    private int age;

    public JPerson(String n, int a) {
        name = n;
        age = a;
    }

    public JPerson(String n) {
        this(n, 42);
    }

    public String getName() {
        return name;
    }

    public int getAge() {
        return age;
    }

    public void setAge(int a) {
        age = a;
    }
}
```

Classes in Java and Scala

```
// this is Java
```

```
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  public String getName() {  
    return name;  
  }  
  
  public int getAge() {  
    return age;  
  }  
  
  public void setAge(int a) {  
    age = a;  
  }  
}
```

```
// same in (non-idiomatic) Scala
```

```
class SPerson(n: String, a: Int) {  
  private var name: String = n  
  private var age: Int = a  
  
  def this (n: String): Unit = {  
    this(n, 42)  
  }  
  
  def getName = name  
  
  def getAge = age  
  
  def setAge(a: Int): Unit = {  
    age = a  
  }  
}
```

Classes in Java and Scala

// this is Java

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public class JPerson {
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  private var name: String = n
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  def this (n: String): Unit = {
    this(n, 42)
  }

  def getName = name

  def getAge = age

  def setAge(a: Int): Unit = {
    age = a
  }
}
```

// this is idiomatic Scala

```
case class Person(
  name: String,
  age: Int = 42
)
```

Live coding: code-along

Start the REPL:

```
$ scala
Welcome to Scala 2.11.8 (Java HotSpot(TM) VM, Java 1.8.0_65)
Type in expressions for evaluation. Or try :help.

scala> case class Person(name: String, age: Int = 42)
defined class Person

scala> Person("Björn", 48)
res0: Person = Person(Björn,48)

scala> Person("Kim")
res1: Person = Person(Kim,42)
```

Functions are first-class values; Try this in REPL:

```
def öka(i: Int) = i + 1

val nums = Vector(1, 2, 3, 4, 42)

nums.map(öka)

nums.map(i => i + 1)

nums.map(_ + 1)

def mappa(xs: Vector[Int], f: Int => Int) = xs.map(f)

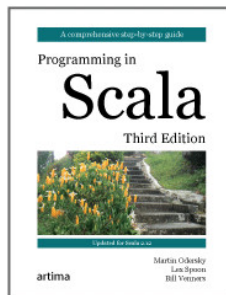
mappa(nums, öka)

def upprepa(n: Int)(block: => Unit) = for (i <- 1 to n) block
```

Recommended book for further reading

"Programmin in Scala", 3rd Ed., by Odersky et al.

https://www.artima.com/shop/programming_in_scala_3ed



First edition available online:

<http://www.artima.com/pins1ed/>

Questions?

`bjorn.regnell@cs.lth.se`