Guidelines for Course Leaders & Learning Assistants

Computer Science II - Spring 2020

Department of Computer Science & Engineering

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Overview

The instructor sets policies in the syllabus which all students are expected to read, understand and adhere to. Every Course Leader (CL) and Learning Assistant (LA) is expected to read, understand and also follow these policies. Often, students will attempt to violate these policies or ask for special consideration. Do not speculate or otherwise discuss possible exceptions to these policies. Direct them to the instructor and follow up with the instructor if necessary.

- Be prepared. Be aware of the course content and expectations. You are responsible for knowing the material so that you can effectively explain, demonstrate and guide students. Be able to complete the assignments, labs, etc. yourself. If you have doubts or concerns engage with a Course Leader or other LA. If you cannot resolve the issue, ask the instructor for clarification.

- Manage your time. You have made a commitment to this course and will be expected to fulfill it. Work and plan ahead. Be aware of upcoming due dates in this course as well as your own courses, research, personal obligations, etc. Plan ahead and make appropriate accommodations if you know there will be an excess of work during a period of time.

Course Structure

This course is structured with a single large lecture section. Despite the size, it is our goal to foster a greater sense of community among these students in our department and in our discipline.

In addition to a traditional lecture, we've produced dozens of lecture/tutorial videos for students to view before and/or after lecture. The actual lectures will also be recorded and made available. We also have extensive required reading (mostly from my free textbook but also supplemental resources).

During the weekly labs, students will be randomly paired up and expected to complete several peer programming exercises. They are expected to complete the labs in the lab time and are graded only on completion.

The course is structured such that each assignment is a phase in an overall project. The topic and specifics change from semester to semester, but each has the same basic structure of iteratively building a full database-backed application. Each phase is due on Fridays at midnight. Preceding each phase, students will submit a design document draft that will be evaluated and returned to them for improvements. The design document serves several purposes including giving students an early experience in technical writing, providing an impetus for an early initial design phase, and to keep students on track and thinking about the project as a whole.

General Responsibilities

Learning Assistants will have several responsibilities in addition to the responsibilities and expectations of the Learning Assistant program.

- Assisting in 2-3 weekly lab and hack sessions

- Grading all materials (assignments and design document drafts)

- Mentoring and helping students in office hours and online via Piazza

- General administrative duties (entering grades, paperwork, etc.) as needed

- Other duties may include course development, materials development (solution keys, future exercises, etc.) and other tasks identified by the instructor.

Course Leaders will have the following general responsibilities

- Supervising lab sessions and assisting students in them

- Supervise grading and ensure that all assignments are graded in a timely manner, shifting of responsibilities when issues arise, and ensuring quality and consistency in grading

- Holding regular office hours in the designated area for the course

- Be in regular communication and attend weekly coordinating meetings with the instructor

Communication

- Piazza is our primary means of communication, use it and encourage students to use it.

- If you receive email or canvas notifications from students, answer them but redirect them in the future to Piazza. If the question/answer would be of benefit to the class as a whole, post the question/answer to Piazza and inform the student they can find the answer there.

- For communications among instructor(s), CLs and LAs, use Piazza but make it a private message, viewable only to instructors or the individual(s) that it is intended for.

- If a question has been asked/answered before, link to the original post as your answer.

- Be professional in all your communications, be courteous and helpful.

- Be prompt in answering communications. No question or email should go unanswered for more than 24 business hours.[1]

Grading

Timeline

- Assignments are due on Fridays at midnight. Randomized grading assignments will be sent out prior to the due date/time. We will use a combination of https://codepost.io and our online webgrader, https://cse.unl.edu/~cse156/grade/grader.php

- LAs should provide extensive line-by-line comments (including positive comments when appropriate) through codepost. Grade according to the provided rubric and in a consistent manner.

- LAs are required to have completed their assigned grading by 5PM the following Tuesday (or within 48 business hours of the due date). Upon completion LAs should be available via Piazza and/or email for any issues that need to be resolved.

- If LAs face any impediments or issues to completing their grading on time, they should discuss this with the instructor team as soon as possible. Course Leaders may be responsible for helping to resolve the issue by either temporarily helping with grading or shifting grading assignments.

- CLs should have everything reviewed and any issues resolved by 5PM the following Thursday at which time grades will be released to students.

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[1]Within 24 hours but only on business days, i.e. excluding weekends and holidays

- Design document drafts are due (hardcopy) in class on Thursdays 1 week prior to the due date of the phase.

Directives

- All assignment grading is done through the online webgrader system.

- Time is limited and it should not be wasted trying to troubleshoot code that won't compile or run. If the code is ungradeable or does not compile/run then take at most 5 minutes to look over the code. If the issue can be fixed within that time frame, back up the original, fix it, note the differences (via code comments) and grade accordingly. If you cannot resolve the issue within 5 minutes, assign the student a zero and move on. This will require you to login to the command line and edit the files directly. Note that the original copy stored in the webhandin system will remain.

- Grade in accordance to the rubric. If the rubric does not address something or there is a *reasonable* uncertainty, discuss it with the instruction team.

- Grade in a consistent manner, both between individual assignments and with other graders. There should not be a significant variation in points deducted or awarded for similar mistakes or work. Consistency and grading quality will be checked by your CL supervisor.

- When you deduct points, give clear and reasonably detailed reasons and justifications for doing so. Good feedback is essential for the students' learning experience. Put in efforts to provide constructive feedback and positive feedback for good work.

- Be professional, positive and encouraging regardless of how well the student did. Include comments for any changes or other administrative items (corrections, regrades, etc.).

- In general, unless otherwise stated, the formatting of output is left up to the student. As long as output formatting is reasonable and conveys *just as much* information as the expected output, it should be graded as correct.

Checklist

The following is a list of items that should have been provided to the instructor and/or collected by the Learning Assistant program as well as a checklist of administrative items necessary for all CLs and LAs.

- An appropriate photo to be used on the canvas instructors page so that students can easily identify you

- A short bio to be included in the canvas instructors page

- Your NUID

- Your canvas login (so as to be added to the course)

- Your CSE login (so as to be added to the webhandin)

- Your availability for each lab section so the instructor can assign you to to particular lab section(s)

- Your availability for weekly coordinating meetings (all Course Leaders are required to attend)

- Establish weekly office hours (5 each week)