

Coaching Team For Independent Studies Course

André Filipe da Silva Bispo, Carlos Xavier da Silva Martins

Activities Report

Abstract—This report describes all the work performed during the execution of the coaching activity for the Independent Studies III course. The main objective as a coaching team group, is providing support to our colleagues which have other activities and need some guidance in order to successfully complete the Independent Studies course. Therefore, each team was assigned 15 students to supervise and support. Most of the communication with the students was done by exchanging emails. Another task as a Independent Studies coach, was to grade reports from our student group. Creating coaching teams was a good way to not only have constant support for our fellow students, but also to learn how to deal with real problems happening during the semester.

Index Terms—Coaching team, academic support, Independent Studies.

1 INTRODUCTION

THIS document reports the work done during the semester as part of the coach team groups. We decided to enrolled into the coaching teams even doubt we had other activities which fitted the independent studies criteria. Both of us had done summer internships, but since the teacher needed more people to create the coaching teams, we decided to take part of this splendid activity. The main objective of the coaching teams was to provide support to the students enrolled in other activities. This coaching activity could be divided into two stages: providing guidance to students and grading their reports.

2 COACHING

The activity performed consisted on guiding and providing support to other students enrolled on the Independent Studies III course

- André Filipe da Silva Bispo, nr. 66941,
E-mail: andrebispo@tecnico.ulisboa.pt,
- Carlos Xavier da Silva Martins, nr. 66956,
E-mail: carlos.martins@tecnico.ulisboa.pt,
Instituto Superior Técnico, Universidade de Lisboa.

Manuscript received February 2nd, 2015.

and also grading some parts of their final reports. Each coaching team was given 15 students to supervise, and since this is not a big amount of elements for a team of two coaches, the students were provided with good and adequate help. In this section, we will describe in more detail all the work performed to fulfill our coaching responsibilities.

2.1 Initial Workshops

Our work as coaching teams started by learning more about our job/duty as coaching members. Therefore we were asked to be present in some workshops provided by the teacher where we were informed what to do and how to react in some more specific scenarios. Some of these advices provided by the teacher were also based on his experience, since the coaching teams were originally created the semester before. The workshops were also a great place to bring to light our doubts to in front of all coaches present, helping each other out.

On the second workshop, most of the coaches had questions on how to proceed with certain situation, where student did not have certificates or did not have activities, and since we could relate to most of the question, it was a good way to improve our coaching skills.

(1.0) Excelent (0.8) Very Good (0.6) Good (0.4) Fair (0.2) Weak	ACTIVITY					DOCUMENT						
	Objectives x2	Options x1	Execution x4	S+C x1	SCORE	Structure x0.25	Ortogr. x0.25	Gramm. x0.25	Format x0.25	Title x0.5	Filename x0.5	SCORE
	2	1	4	0.8	7.8	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.5	0.5	2

2.2 Activities Available and their Approval

Besides our activity, there were two other options: doing a independent activity or accepting one of the activities proposed by the promoting entities. In the early weeks of the semester, there was a presentation where the promoting entities described their available activities as well as their correspondent requirements.

In the following weeks each student sent a proposal which either contained a description of their independent activity or three ordered choices from the promoting entities offers. These proposals were then evaluated by us, taking in account their conformity and consistency.

If the student chose to do an independent activity, we made him/her a few questions in order to assure that the activity was suitable to the course. For the students that chose an offer from a promoting entity, we contacted the respective entities for the students to ascertain the spots availability.

2.3 Contact with Promoting Entities

We started by grouping the students by their priority of their choices. Then we sent an email for the correspondent entity with the relevant information of each candidate. As each activity had a maximum capacity number, some of the students didn't get to stick with their first choice. For them, we had to contact the second or the third choice too.

In this phase with had some problems with some of the promoting entities that didn't respond or took too long to interview and to approve the students. Due to this delays, some of the student got more aggressive, because they were getting out of time to perform the activity, and needed to be handled carefully.

2.4 Students Progress

During the semester we tried to support the students and help them with all the problems or doubts they came up to. Nevertheless, we asked them some questions to make sure their activity was going accordingly to what was planned. The point of these questions was to find out three main aspects:

- Situation - if the activity was going according to time table set at the start.
- State - what is the state of the activity (started, concluded, to start, etc...)
- Date - expected date of delivery

At the end of the semester, where the activities were almost concluded, we also asked the student for feedback and suggestions that may be essential to help improve this course. Even in this information gathering phase we were faced with some unpleasant replies in which the teacher provide us some valuable help.

2.5 Grading Reports

Our final task as coaches was to grade the reports. Our main focus was to assure that the titles, abstract and conclusion were in accord to the course requirements. This task was a bit stressful, because we know we are influencing our colleague and a bad grading from was may change his final grade at Independent Studies course. Although the grade may not affect so much their overall mean, it is always a big responsibility in our hands. Therefore, in this last phase, we defined a template to perform the gradings in order to ensure its consistency and efficiency.

Grading reports was a very important job, providing us the possibility to grow and see how difficult it is to be on the professor side.

3 CONCLUSION

Coaching teams was one of the best new improvements in the evolution of the Independent Studies course. The help we were able to provide proved itself to be very handy to our student group.

Sometimes was hard to reach to them and we had to try harder and perceive with different types of approaches and more formal/informal ways of communication. The fact that we already knew each order, turn our duties as a coach team quite easy to perform together, and with the workshop's knowledge we made it much more efficiently.

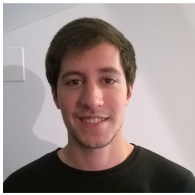
We think that we did all in our power to help the students assigned to us and it was a experience we would repeat if the opportunity arises.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We'd like to thank professor Rui Cruz for providing us with this awesome activity. We felt useful as a coaching team, helping our colleagues overcoming their problems and learning more about the other side of our academic path by being able to grade some of their reports.



André Bispo student at Instituto Superior Técnico(IST) attending a Masters degree of Computer Science and Engineering, specializing in Software Engineering and Distributed Systems. As hobby usually fancy learning how to play musical instruments and compose songs.



Carlos Martins student at Instituto Superior Técnico(IST) attending a Masters degree of Computer Science and Engineering, specializing in Software Engineering and Distributed Systems.