

Comments My first concern is always to check that the exam was do-able—that I didn't ask any impossible questions and I didn't ask any questions about material that I hadn't covered in the course. Every part of every question was answered correctly by at least one candidate, so the exam was OK from that point of view.

Of the optional questions, Q2 was very popular and Q4 was very unpopular, but Q4 was done by candidates who were able to answer it almost perfectly as well as by people who had no real idea about anything and just hoped to pick up a couple of marks by writing something random. It was always going to be the case that Q2 was going to be done by almost everyone, because it's the bit where it's most obvious what you have to revise. That's OK, some part has to be the most popular.

The marks are extremely widely spread, with a long tail. If you discount people who got less than 20%, the average is still only 53% and the standard deviation is 20%. Basically, if you did the labs you got 70% or over, if you didn't do the labs you got 50% or under. The first part of this is what I would want: the labs are there to consolidate the material, so if you do them you understand the material and you get a good mark. The disappointing thing, then, is how many people didn't do the labs. I suspect that this effect will be intensified when the lab marks are integrated with the exam, because the people with low exam marks are going to be the people with missing labs.

A lot of students find it hard to grasp Prolog. I did everything I could, including turning one of the labs into an unassessed class, but the attendance at the labs still wasn't great (attendance at lectures was quite high right till very near the end). Perhaps if we reverted to teaching Prolog as the first language they see and didn't do Java till later, as used to be the case in other places I've taught, we'd get the reverse effect as we did then of everyone finding Prolog easy and imperative/object-oriented programming hard!
