Assignment 1B

Giving peer feedback on assignment 1

Deadline February 17, 2025

Handout for the *Natural Computing* lecture, February 10, 2025

For questions, please contact Inge Wortel

Objectives of This Exercise

1. judge the quality of the design, implementation, and execution of experiments with the CPM
2. assess to what extent the experiments are suitable to answer the research question
3. evaluate analyses, visualizations, and written reporting of (CPM) experiments
4. provide concrete and constructive suggestions for improvement.

Assignment

Your team has been assigned to a "pool" with other teams (see Brightspace → Activities → Discussions). You will write a constructive feedback report aimed at helping the other teams improve their work. This means that you might give tips even for reports that are already very good, or that you can draw inspiration from a report even if it has some problems in other respects. Use the following instructions:

- First give *all* the other reports a quick read to see a couple of examples.
- Download the **peer feedback form** (on Brightspace) and answer the questions in the yellow boxes to assess the report you are reviewing. Each section starts with a list of concrete questions followed by an open feedback field.
- My suggestion: divide the sections of the feedback form, so that each member assesses the *same* criteria for *different* reports. This allows you to compare between reports. For example: team member 1 takes the lead on section A, member 2 takes the lead on section B, member 3 takes section C, do D-E together at the end.
- Afterwards, discuss your findings with your team before completing the final text box of each section ("group assessment and feedback") together. You can give both positive feedback on what is going well, and constructive suggestions for further improvement (use Appendix A to ensure your feedback is constructive). If you have many suggestions for improvement, you can choose the most important ones. If you truly cannot find *any* points of improvement (note: this is unlikely!), explain what makes this report so good.
- Finally, discuss with your team: did you agree with each other? Is the feedback constructive? Which minor and major issues did you come across, and to what extent can you learn from that for your own report?

Important

- Before submitting, carefully read the tips in Appendix A below to ensure that your feedback is constructive.
- Please use the feedback form, this is a separate document provided on Brightspace.
- The deadline is February 17, 12:00.
- You need to hand in your feedback forms in ***two places***:
  - Brightspace > activities > assignments > assignment 1B (so I can give you a pass for completing this part)
  - In the Brightspace discussion forum shared with other teams, so they can read and (later) use your feedback.
- Once you receive the feedback for your own report, feel free to use the Brightspace forum to discuss it. We will later work on implementing the feedback.

Appendix A: How to give constructive feedback

Constructive feedback can be both positive and negative. In both cases, there are some guidelines to follow to make the feedback as instructive as possible.

Negative feedback (suggestions for improvement)

Good negative feedback consists of three components: what is, what should be, and what next.

1. What, specifically, did this team actually do? (If possible, refer to a specific sentence/figure/page. If it is a structural issue, provide specific examples).
2. Why do you think this is not ideal? What would the ideal scenario be, and why?
3. Which (concrete) suggestions can you offer to accomplish this "ideal scenario"?

Examples:

Not very constructive	**More constructive**	**Explanation**
"Your writing was sometimes not very clear."	"In section X, you wrote [...]. I did not understand what you meant because [...]. Could you explain?"	The second version is more specific (Q1). It also addresses Q2 ("I did not understand ...") and Q3 ("Could you explain?")
"Figure X was not clear to me."	"Figure X shows [...], but it took me a while to figure out what the take-home message was. I would suggest to highlight [...] with an arrow and to adapt the figure caption, such that a reader can see quickly what the take-home message is."	The first version addresses only Q2, and does not specify what was unclear or how it can be improved. The second version addresses all three questions.
"You should fill the simulation with cells completely to answer the research question."	"Your current simulations only contain 5 migrating cells. Because there are so few, the cells barely interact and it is difficult to study collective migration. Consider filling the simulation with cells completely to answer the research question."	The first version addresses only Q3. This makes the feedback less useful because it does not become clear *why* this is a problem. Note that when responding to feedback, you might sometimes choose a different solution to the same problem ("the cells barely interact"). For example, you might fill the simulation only halfway with cells, which is not entirely the same as the suggestion but still addresses the problem.
"Not all conclusions were supported by evidence"	"Not all conclusions were supported by evidence. For example, your report mentions that '[quote]' and '[quote]', but it is unclear what those statements are based on. Can you support these claims?"	Again, the original feedback was not very specific and did not address all questions.

Positive feedback

You can also learn a lot from positive feedback. This works best if the positive feedback:

1. is as specific as possible about *what* was done well, and
2. explains *why* this is good.

Example:

Not constructive	**More constructive**	**Explanation**
"I really liked your report."	"I really liked your report, especially how you used visualizations to support your conclusions. It was very easy to see from the figures which simulations were being compared and what the main conclusions were."	Note that the first version is a nice ego-boost, but the second (a) sounds more genuine, and (b) is more informative to learn from.
"Your experimental design was well-suited to the research question, because you considered several obstacle densities and compared those to a baseline without any obstacles. "	"Your experimental design was well-suited to the research question, because you considered several obstacle densities and compared those to a baseline without any obstacles. This allowed you to investigate in detail how those obstacles affected collective migration."	The first version is already quite specific (Q1), but did not yet address Q2.