Coursework commentaries 2015–16

CO3346 Sound and music

Coursework assignment 2: Creating a sonic artefact using an algorithmic approach

General remarks

At level 3 in the Creative Computing degree, it is essential to demonstrate an ability to undertake critical evaluation (of both your own and others' work), and to be coherent in that critical evaluation. Some students have clearly developed this ability well, which is encouraging, while others need to work on it.

Comments on specific questions

The first part of this coursework assignment required students to evaluate the work of another student in an area of algorithmic approaches to music creation. A disappointing number of students did not attempt this part. Also, some students did not indicate which of the available options they had chosen to evaluate, despite being clearly asked to do so. For those who did submit, there were a few excellent critiques that showed both an understanding of the area, and an ability to make insightful comments. Weaker attempts critiqued only the artefact and not the other material (the student's own critique and reports), and many missed the aspect of giving advice. Quite a few reports used language that assumed that the author of the project being critiqued was male. It is important to learn to write in a gender-neutral fashion. Some critiques were excessively personal; again, it is important to write in a way that is more neutral, although, of course, one's response to an artefact is a personal one. Most students managed to assign marks appropriately.

The second part of this coursework required the development of a sonic artefact demonstrably connected to generative or algorithmic approaches. A range of submissions were received, and most were either good or very good. A couple of excellent and innovative attempts included both a great artefact and a strong self-reflection.

There were many submissions that were based on L-systems, which seem to have come from a suggestion at one of the teaching institutions that this could be an appropriate approach. Some of these submissions were done in great depth, and clearly showed the connections between algorithmic approaches and the artefacts produced, but most did not. It is really important that students engage with the work themselves rather than relying on, and only using, suggestions made to them by lecturers at teaching institutions. Students who did their own investigations and provided their own insights ended up producing much better essays and much more exciting and innovative work, which is the basis of good creative artefacts.

Often, the critique provided was a description of what was done, rather than including any evaluation or comment on the quality or achievement.

At this level, students should understand that a report that simply is a diary of what was done is only part of the requirement. Self-reflection and insight are essential parts of demonstrating a higher level of understanding.

Overall, both coursework assignments this year were done well, and some of the submissions were extremely high-quality work. A final reminder: it is advisable to submit all sections for coursework, as this significantly increases the chance of obtaining a good mark.

References

Collins, N. '*The analysis of generative music programs*', *Organised Sound* 13(2) 2008, pp.238–48.

Eno, B. '*Generative music*'. *Motion Magazine* (1996) www.inmotionmagazine.com/eno1.html accessed 24 May 2017.