AI Case Study: MA953 Communications (part of MSc Applied Actuarial Science)

Centre for Actuarial Science, Risk and Investment (CASRI) an academic centre within the School for Mathematics, Statistics and Actuarial Science (SMSAS).

http://www.kent.ac.uk/casri/index.html

Key figures

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Nature of AI Engagement

The SLAS advisor provides presentation skills training to groups of 4-5 students. Most students on this module do not speak English as their first language and have never before given a presentation in English. Coaching is provided on public speaking (pacing, intonation, body language, confidence etc.) and organisation and presentation of information. All groups (usually 10-12) present at least once or twice, are videoed and receive detailed feedback on their performance and on how they can make improvements (individually and as a group).

Background

MA953 Communications is one of the compulsory modules that students studying for an MSc in Applied Actuarial Science take. It is a 15 credit module, and students must attain 180 credits in total to gain their MSc. The module maps onto the Actuarial Profession’s CA3 Communications course; students who do sufficiently well will be granted exemption from taking CA3 with the Profession. The minimum mark required to gain an exemption for an individual subject changes each year (based on the level of difficulty of the paper), but is generally around 60%.

MA953 module marks are allocated as follows:

- Written Exam: 50%
- Individual Presentation: 35%
- Team Presentation: 15%
In the past many students did reasonably well in the written paper but lost marks during the team and Individual presentations. After a student - on his own initiative – sought help from SLAS in order to improve his own and his team’s presentation skills, a few more students approached the advisor for support and coaching. Upon discussion with the MA953 convenor it was decided that these training sessions should be an integral and compulsory part of the communications module so that all students on the module had a chance to improve their presentation skills.

**Discussion/comments**

The practice sessions for group presentations are now part of MA953 since the academic year 2010-11. A spokesperson for each team books the session with the advisor via an online booking site. In 2012-13 the advisor started to video all group presentations and used the recording during the feedback discussion. The students seem to appreciate the opportunity to try out their presentations and work on their public speaking skills. Anecdotal evidence from the module convener indicates that the quality of the student presentations – group and individual ones - has improved dramatically since 2010. This is reflected in the average marks for the team presentations in particular which has been consistently in the 2.1 bracket. The marks for the individual presentations reflect the subject knowledge of the precentors and therefore tend to vary substantially.

AK 23/08/2016