Computer Programming: Skills & Concepts (CP) Introduction

J. Bradfield

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Today's Lecture

- Structure of the CP course
- What is programming?
  - Imperative Programming?
  - C programming?
- Hello World.
- Any questions?

People on CP

- Dr Julian Bradfield (lecturer and course organizer)
- Dr Ajitha Rajan (lecturer)
- Dr Cristina Alexandru (lecturer)
- Mr Paul Anderson (Informatics UG1 organizer)
  - probably only if things go wrong!
- Informatics Teaching Organisation (ITO)
  - They take care of the admin for assigning students to Tutorials and Labs. We have a link to their contact form on the course website. They also give extensions for the coursework.

Structure of CP

- 2 lectures per week:
  - Monday 14:10–15:00: Meadows Lecture Theatre, Old Medical School.
  - Tuesday 11:10–12:00 Teviot Lecture Theatre, Old Medical School.
- One 2-hour lab starting **Thursday of week 1** in the Appleton Tower labs:

  Thu 10:00–11:50 (5.05) or Mon 15:10–17:00 (6.06)
  or Tue 12:10–14:00 (5.05)

  We hope that space permits you to turn up to whichever lab suits you best. **Straw poll now!**
- One 1-hour tutorial per week, starting **week 3**.
  You will be **assigned** to a specific tutorial group. If it doesn't work for you, then use the self-service portal `https://student.inf.ed.ac.uk` if possible, or ask for a change using the ITO contact form.
- If enrolment is higher than expected, we may need to change things at short notice: **check your Uni email regularly**

Resources

Course webpage:
`http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/teaching/courses/cp`

(we will put all slides, lab sheets, tutorial sheets, lab/tutorial allocations etc on this webpage throughout the semester)

We do not use Learn, except perhaps for lecture videos (if it works!).

Course textbooks:

- *A Book on C: programming in C* by Al Kelley and Ira Pohl (4th edition). A standard text, comprehensive – also quite large and expensive, but many second-hand copies.
- There are dozens of other books – any of them should be fine, so browse and see what you like the look of.

Assessment

Your overall grade for CP will be based on two things:

- 90% from a 3-hour computer-based programming exam, which will take place in the exam period after semester 1 and before Christmas. We will run a mock exam on Thurs of week 8, and Mon, Tues of week 9 for practice.
- 10% from the coursework for CP, which will be released on Friday of week 5 and will be due on Friday of week 9. We aim to return feedback within two weeks.

The practical labs are very important, if you want to become proficient enough to pass the computer-based exam, and more importantly if you actually want to learn to program!

What is Programming?

Writing a program to solve a problem involves several steps:

- understand the problem (a very important step!)
- represent the problem in a precise way, using numbers, symbols, and other data types we will introduce you to
- work out how to compute the answer to the problem: design the algorithm
- express the algorithm in the programming language by writing instructions that conform to the syntax (permitted expressions) of the language
- This creates a program.

When the program is run according to the semantics (meaning of the expressions), this will perform the computational task the programmer intended.

- If, that is, you're perfect. Otherwise:
- find the first mistake in your algorithm or your program, fix it
- rinse, lather, repeat.

What is Imperative Programming?

- The original style of programming-languages, and closest to what actually is done by computers at the 'machine-level'.
- In Imperative programming, the expressions of the language are instructions or commands to the machine to perform some action:
  - Often the actions involve a change of state in the environment of the program (more in lecture 2);
  - Sometimes these are input or output actions.
- Writing an imperative program is like creating a 'recipe' to solve a problem:
  - The instructions will be carried out one at a time;
  - The order of the instructions is important.

C programming

- C is an imperative programming language.
- Originally developed by Dennis Ritchie between 1969–1973 when he was working at Bell Labs.
- Our version of C (used on all modern platforms) is ANSI C (ANSI means 'American National Standards Institute'), standardized in 1989.
- C is a **small** programming language, in terms of the number of operations and programming constructs which are supported:
  - There are many libraries of functions used to 'fill-in the gaps'.
- There are several later ANSI standards for C (1995, 1999, 2011), and we'll silently use one or two features of C99; C11 is not yet widely available with full support.

`hello.c`

```
#include <stdlib.h>         /* Include Standard Library */
#include <stdio.h>          /* Include Input/Output Library */

int main() {                  /* Exactly one "main" function */
  printf("Hello, World.\n"); /* Output function printf */
  return EXIT_SUCCESS;        /* "All ok" signal returned */
}
```

- Even basic Input/Output functionality is missing from the kernel of the C-programming Language.
- We needed to include the I/O library `stdio.h` in order to print to standard output.

Making `hello.c` active

- First need to translate our program into machine-level code ('executable') that the computer can understand - this is called compiling the code:
  - The name of the compiler we use is `gcc`.
  - To compile `hello.c`, we type
    `gcc -Wall hello.c`
    at the command line.
  - The compiler creates the executable in the file `a.out`.

You will get experience with command-line, files, compiling in the first labsheet.

Output from running `hello.c`

- The process of executing a program on a computer is also called 'running' a program.
- It is not really our original `.c` program that gets executed, but the executable code created by the compiler.
- To execute the program, we just type

  `./a.out`

On my computer:

```
zagreb: ./a.out
Hello, World.
```

What will you get from CP?

- Will learn how to convert simple computational problems (eg, solving quadratic equations) into a series of steps, convert these to C code, and run them;
- Will learn to apply the structured programming constructs of branching, iteration, functions and recursion towards solving more complex problems.
- Will learn the basics of working within a Linux/Unix environment, when working on our Informatics network.
- Experience with debugging, a necessary part of a programmer's life.
- *Maybe you will find a new career.*

Wrapping Up

- If you aren't already enrolled, and want to take this couse, please email your Personal Tutor immediately and ask them to enrol you, if you plan to take this course.
  - We cannot allocate your Informatics (DICE) username/password unless you are formally registered.

Any Questions/Comments??