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First Impressions of Using Stack Overflow for Education in a Computer Science Bachelor Programme

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ABSTRACT
Community Question Answering (CQA) platforms like Stack Overflow enable gamified and moderated community-driven knowledge creation. We report on our experiences of introducing Stack Overflow in our Computer Science BSc programme and explore whether these platforms can (1) reduce the workload of lecturers in answering questions in large-scale classrooms, and (2) create a community of learners in the large-scale setting of ~1600 students.

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1 STACK OVERFLOW FOR EDUCATION
Community Question Answering (CQA) platforms enable community-driven knowledge creation [1]. The knowledge thus created can be of enduring value to its audience, and their voting and reputation mechanisms help users identify the trustworthiness and accuracy of the content [1]. In this paper we explore how Stack Overflow 1, which is widely used by professional software engineers, can serve our educational programme. We hypothesise that a CQA platform can (1) reduce work pressure for staff, as students are stimulated to answer questions of their peers, (2) create a community of learners, as they get an opportunity to help each other out in a large-scale setting comprising some 1600 students, and (3) build an enduring knowledge base that is easy to query and to moderate.

We have piloted the use of a private Stack Overflow site for 27 courses in our three year bachelor programme in Computer Science comprising ~1600 students. We perform a quantitative and qualitative analysis for the student perspective, and compare the usage of Stack Overflow to the usage of the LMS' discussion forum. Importantly, we describe lessons learned for others interested in embedding a gamified CQA platform in their programmes.

REFERENCES