Here are some preliminary tasks that you should complete before starting to work on the first assignment. These will ensure that you have all of the tools and information you need to avoid any unnecessary difficulties later.

These tasks form part of the assessment for the first assignment and the Getting Started Form must be submitted by the deadline shown in the Schedule in order to obtain a good mark. We will expect these tasks to be completed before we offer support for the rest of the assignment.

Note that you will only be able to complete the git task and submit your form once we have received your course registration details and added you to the GitHub classroom.

For someone with a little previous experience of installing applications and programming, we would expect these tasks to take about a day. If you have less experience, then you should be prepared to spend longer. However: installing software on to your own machine can be an unpredictable process, and problems can take some discussion to resolve: so we strongly recommend that you attempt these tasks well before the deadline.

1 Course Information

Make sure that you understand the support that is available to you, and how the course will operate:

[1] Read the Course Information note.

2 The Piazza Forum

As you will have seen from the information note, there are a number of different ways that we can provide support when you need help. The Piazza Forum is the starting point for all of these and will probably be your most valuable resource:

[2] Follow the tasks in the Piazza note to create an account and post a message so that you understand how (and why) it is used on this course.

Do make use of the Piazza forum if you encounter any problems in the following tasks.

3 The Development Tools

Before you start trying to write your own code, you will need to make sure that you are comfortable with the basics of the development tools that we will be using. These are available on the DICE systems, but most people will find it more convenient if the tools are installed on their own machines.


[4] Install the necessary tools on your own machine, unless you intend to use only (remote) DICE machines.

4 Running a Simple Program

To make sure that your development tools are working, and to give you an idea of how to use them:
[5] Follow the tasks in the Simple Program note to compile and run a simple Java program.

5 BlueJ & the Course Textbook

The BlueJ IDE is a simple graphical development tool. You will need to use this to run the examples from the book. Don’t spend too long on this at this stage, but just make sure that you have access to the book and a working copy of BlueJ - either installed on your own machine, or on DICE:

[6] Make sure that you have access to a copy of the Textbook - either physically (recommended), or online via the library.

[7] Use BlueJ to run a simple Java program - either from the book, or from the examples included with the BlueJ download.

6 Git

Git is an important development tool. You will also need this for your assignment submissions, so you will need to set up your account correctly and understand how to use it:

[8] Follow the tasks in the Git note.

7 Finally . . .

So that we can identify any common problems, and help anyone who is having difficulty at this stage, you must complete a form to confirm that you have attempted the above tasks and provide some other information:

[9] Complete the Getting Started Form.