Definition of Informatics

A Google search on “school of informatics” produces links to schools, departments and faculties of informatics in the UK at:

- University of Bradford
- City University
- University of Manchester
- University of Northumbria
- University of Strathclyde
- University of Ulster
- University of Wales, Bangor

and at

- Indiana University (USA)
- SUNY (Buffalo) (USA)
- Kyoto University (Japan)

Quotes from their websites are included below. (A search on just “informatics” produces lots of health informatics links. The equivalent word in French and German (and doubtless other languages) simply means what we would call computer science.) All have different definitions of what informatics is (sometimes only implied by the list of degrees or departments), so unless we really think we have exclusive rights to defining the meaning of informatics, any statements about what informatics is at Edinburgh should start with “Informatics at Edinburgh ...”

I would like to propose that at least in presentations to prospective undergraduates, we should use the following:

“Informatics at Edinburgh is concerned with ways of representing, processing and communicating information in computing systems ranging from embedded microprocessors to the largest computing grids, with natural systems such as the human brain, and with the ways in which people and computing systems interact.”
What Other Universities Say

City University

“At City, Informatics encompasses computing and information sciences, software engineering and a number of specialities. These include information management and retrieval, information-related legal and policy issues, library studies, geographic information, health informatics, human-computer interaction design, new media, computational creativity, artificial intelligence, component and service-based systems, requirements engineering and software dependability.”

Indiana University

“Informatics is...
* understanding the impact technology has on people.
* the development of new uses for technology.
* the application of information technology in the context of another field.

Informatics is a new field of study that gives students the skills to apply information technology to another field - from health care to journalism to biology to economics.

Informaticists can then use technology to harness the power of information and make exciting new discoveries that make us more productive at home and at work.”

SUNY

“Buffalo School of Informatics brings together the Department of Library and Information Sciences with the Department of Communications.”

University of Wales, Bangor

Has a School of Informatics with Divisions: Computer Science, Electronic Engineering, Mathematics, Communications.

University of Bradford

“The School of Informatics offers a full range of courses in the areas of Computing, Media and Cybernetics. These range from the Informatics Foundation Year, completion of which guarantees entry on to one of our honours degrees, to BA and BSc honours programmes.”
University of Kyoto

“Informatics in Kyoto University is study of information in natural and the study of artificial systems. Informatics studies the creation, recognition, representation, collection, organization, optimization, transformation, communication, evaluation, and control of information in complex and dynamic systems. Informatics has human, social, cognitive, biological, linguistic, computational, mathematical, and engineering aspects. It includes systems science and communications engineering. Informatics has close relations with a number of disciplines in the natural and human sciences. It is developed employing contributions from many different areas; in turn, it can contribute to their further development. Informatics to human and social areas, mathematical modeling, and information systems are the three pillars of Informatics in Kyoto University.”

University of Manchester

“Informatics is the meeting place of people, organisations, information and computer technology. Informatics research focuses on the multi-disciplinary process of designing complex computing systems, building on and developing ideas drawn from psychology, sociology, management science, design, and computer science. Academic staff and research degree students are focused upon data and decision engineering, information systems, and interactive systems design research groups.

University of Northumbria

“The School offers a range of developing courses allowing different perspectives upon the fields of Computing and Mathematics to be taken.”

University of Strathclyde, Graduate School of Informatics

“The School brings together a complimentary set of Post Graduate courses from the recently merged departments of Computer Science and Information Science to provide a comprehensive coverage of the highly critical areas of Information management, Business Computing, Computer Science, and Library Studies.”

University of Ulster

Has a Faculty of Informatics, but doesn’t offer a definition.