

Informatics Student Course Feedback 2017/18

<http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/teaching/surveys/2017-18>

This report contains feedback from students about a course taught in the School of Informatics during the 2017/18 academic year, in response to the following questions:

- What would you say to students interested in taking this course?
- What did you find most valuable about the course?
- What improvements, if any, would you make to the course?
- Please add any other comments you have about workshops and tutors

Each course organiser receives this report as well as statistics on multiple-choice responses. All these reports, together with student feedback about individual members of teaching staff, are collected and sent to the Director of Learning and Teaching.

Please note that these are personal responses from individual students: some courses only have a few responses and a small sample can be unrepresentative.

Stereotyping and bias, especially unconscious bias, is a serious concern in any survey gathering personal responses. All students received the rubric below before completing the surveys, and you can read a brief introduction to issues of unconscious bias on the university web pages at <http://edin.ac/2iypZBv>

This information is provided for students and staff at the University of Edinburgh: **you may not redistribute or reuse it without permission**. If you would like the information in another format or want to use it in your own publication then please contact the Informatics Teaching Organisation at <http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/teaching/contact>

Rubric given to all students taking the end-of-course feedback survey

We value your opinions on the courses you take here at the University, as they allow us to shape future delivery and development. We welcome constructive comments about your courses, whether positive or negative, and ask you to give details about any issues in order to help the course organiser to understand and address them.

We encourage you to be aware of the potential for bias in the completion of these questionnaires, so we have developed resources which may be helpful to you:

- Equality, Diversity and Unconscious Bias (<http://edin.ac/2iypZBv>)

You also have a responsibility to provide feedback in a manner which does not breach the University's Dignity and Respect Policy:

- University of Edinburgh Dignity and Respect Policy (<http://edin.ac/1Cq0VZY>)

The results of the questionnaires will never be analysed in a way that seeks to identify individual students from their responses. However, should you wish to remain anonymous, please do not identify yourself in your answers to the survey questionnaire implicitly or explicitly.

Comments Report

What advice would you give to a student taking this course in future?

- Brush up on Haskell, don't start your assignments too late
- Do take this course, but be prepared for some discouraging surprises.
- Don't worry too much if you don't understand something right away, do all of the tutorial questions and ask your tutor or ask on Piazza if you don't get something. Also read the textbook, it's really good and explains things better than the lecture slides do.
- Get started on the coursework early, they're both really short (second one literally takes a day) but can be a bit confusing when you first get started. Especially the first coursework can feel a bit funky if you've forgotten most of the Haskell you learnt in first year.
- Get the textbook and actually read it. Start the coursework early.
- Good luck.
- If you're interested in AI, take it. The material is interesting, but be prepared that the delivery may not be the best.
- Ignore negative comments from previous years (2017) - the course has been much improved.
- Mug up on Haskell, the biggest hurdle to starting cw1 is remembering the syntax and functional mode of thinking, so different to object-oriented programming.
- Please take this course - it opens up your mind to all sorts of solutions to very abstract problems people have tackled over the years and you won't believe all the cool theory that's out there just waiting to be used.
- Study the slides beforehand, familiarise yourself with Haskell and don't lose track of the course, everything is connected!
- The probability derivations use generalised bayes' rule! (I hadn't heard of the generalised version so I didn't understand them for a while)
- Try not to take it, if you do, do the coursework early
- Pay attention to your lectures it is vital. Just spend more time.
- you will learn a lot, beneficial to do it as a CS student even though it is optional

Comments Report

What did you find most valuable about the course?

- Alex
- Alex's lectures, coursework.
- Coursework, search & games was fun, PDDL was a bit trivial, I've never been able to do an Informatics coursework hand-in in less than 2 days...
- Courseworks
- Formal teaching about logic
- Getting an insight into what AI really is.
- I thought the lectures were well-done and well organized, if a bit basic. This is likely because I am a year ahead of most students in this course, and not the fault of the lecturers.
- It gave me introductory insight into the basic algorithms behind agent design. I enjoyed the coursework because it definitely helped me understand the concepts from a practical point of view.
- It's pretty interesting. I LOVE Haskell so I liked getting to return to it in the coursework.
- Learning about different methods of calculating what a computer should do next, and ways to work that out.
- The book
- The lectures were quite good and easy to follow, as were the tutorial sheets and the coursework.
- The lectures were very interesting and I find great that anything that was unclear to me could be found in the book discussed very carefully. I mean, it is a great plus that course strongly follows the book.
- The lectures.
- The tutorials and the amazing feedback on the piazza forums. Also the course schedule with all course slides available beforehand, and occasionally relevant links to documents provided.
- Well-designed courseworks
- coursework, learnt a lot from it
- knowledge about agent and decision making

Comments Report

What improvements, if any, would you make to the course?

- At the beginning of the course the lectures ended very early most of the time, I feel that because of this the lecturer could have gone into more depth with certain things.
- Clearer goals/motives
- I didn't really enjoy the first two lecturers. It seemed to me that Stefano didn't really look at the lecture slides before the lecture and then tried to explain the slides on the spot. Also they simply repeated the lecture slides which made the lectures a bit boring. For the last part, I did enjoy the lecturer but I would appreciate a few more examples for the probabilistic models. The definitions and equations were often quite abstract so it would be helpful to have examples before the tutorials.
- I would like to have received feedback from the first coursework by now but I suppose the strikes might be the cause of that.
- More Alex
- Not have Dr. Stefano Albrecht skim through the lecture slides without really explaining stuff. Have the first coursework not be written in Haskell but in a debugging-friendlier language, i.e. somewhere where you can use print statements - because we basically either got the code right or we didn't, no good way to check the internal behaviour of the algorithms.
- Slides in first 1/2 of course need review - as sometimes felt as if content was not in right order & some lectures were more content heavy than others
- Some labs to familiarise us with the languages used in the courseworks, like the content for prolog for last year
- Stefano could spend more time explaining his part of the course, and not to finish each lecture in 20-30 minutes
- Stephano to give a full lecture instead of doing 30minute ones
- Supplementary practise exercises outside of tutorials. Perhaps lecture notes similar to INF2B, as I believe the textbook is a little overkill for many parts of the course. Cut the lectures on basic logic. We already learnt this in previous classes.
- The first assignment was basically impossible if you don't know Haskell, which was very frustrating. There were not nearly enough office hours/resources for students who have not previously studied this language. The second assignment was fairly straightforward, but it was incredibly frustrating to have to change three pieces of work when one error was found in any of them. Just make one deliverable and be done with it please. The grading was also appalling. I lost almost half the overall points on a project that worked and fulfilled almost all the project specifications because the grader did not like how I did my implementations. I didn't realize their opinion would factor so highly into my marks, something that is obviously incredibly frustrating for me.
- Well... there is a lot of new things, and not much enough time to explain in lectures so maybe some more drop in workshop would be helpful...

Comments Report

Please add any other comments you have about workshops and tutors

- I liked my tutorial instructor, though was frustrated that the things I learned in my tutorial were marked incorrect on my second assignment.
- I was very fond of my tutor and encourage him to work to tutor undergrads again. Unfortunately for us he chose to strike ardently. Can't be helped.
- My tutor Sarrene Wallbridge is very helpful.
- My tutor was OK and the material discussed in tutorials was helpful.
- Ramsey El-naggar is the best
- The tutorials were always a good practice for the lecture material and my tutor was brilliant.
- The tutorials were very helpful in understanding the topics. I like that the last few tutorials had more detailed explanations of the topics related to the tutorials.
- Tutor is good.
- Were useful to learn.
but a lot of tutors went on strike