

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>

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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?

- Buy & read over the book as the exam is open-book, as well as read over the lecture slides to get a general idea of what was focused on.
- Don't have big expectations. However, if you are already interested in the wider context that CS finds itself in (topics like ethics, discrimination, privacy, legal issues, management...), then maybe you'll find some of the resources presented in the lectures interesting. The guest lectures are also worth coming to.
- Don't.
- Go to class even if you don't want to.
- It was not nearly as bad as I expected. Actually, it was quite good. I would really recommend going to the lectures, trying to find interesting things in them, and starting discussions. This course has a lot to offer but you have to take it. If you expect it to be boring and useless then it probably will be. If you are willing to open your eyes and ears (and sometimes mouth (to speak, not yawn)), you will find PI very interesting and useful.
- Not a particularly interesting course but necessary.
- The course is a lot more relevant than you think. So pay attention because the information will come handy in the future.
- The guest lectures are actually really interesting. I would advise a student to go there as these lectures are also not recorded and the slides sometimes are not comparable to hearing the actual presentation.
- You will not want to go to all the lectures because some of them are quite useless (for example teaching you how to spell...) but the guest lectures are refreshing and quite interesting.
- You'll probably hear a lot of complaints about this course, but it does include a lot of content which you might actually use in life other than coding skills. Whilst it might not always be the most captivating, some of the content is legitimately useful. Also, a lot of the guest lecturers are really interesting.

Comments Report

What did you find most valuable about the course?

- Getting general knowledge about law, organisations, planning etc.
- Guest Lecturers were very informative. The course is well organized.
- Guest lectures. Open book exam. Review sessions were very useful.
- Guest speakers are good.
- I think some topics covered were really cool.
- Interesting topics such as implicit bias and information on opening your own business, business models...
- It gives a different perspective on IT
- It is very different from everything else computer science students do and it is a good change of scenery
- Nothing (2 Counts)
- Some of the guest lecturers' presentations were interesting.
- Some of the guest lectures were good.
- The articles are recourse put on the website.
- The content on implicit bias. I am much more aware of it now and also know a few ways of avoiding it.
- The guest talks (Karen Gregory and Burkhard Schaefer in particular) and the large number of pointers towards interesting resources.
- The overview of ethical behaviour in the workplace.
- The things with wide real-life applications, e.g. the parts about finance and business plans.
- The discussions about some topics were highly enlightening as well as the one session where we had to come up with a pitch on the spot. I liked the interaction and that we had to do something different compared to just taking notes.

Comments Report

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

- - The lectures on writing were useful, especially for non-native speaker, but I would condense it to just one lecture instead of two.
- What was the point of the lecture on PowerPoint? I found most of it quite controversial - it was arguing against things that are genuinely useful under some circumstances. Moreover, all of what it argued against was routinely used in the other lectures. I would use this lecture for one of three things. It could outline situations when it is not the best idea to use PP slides (work meetings). Or it could give pro (non-obvious) tips on how to make really good presentations when that format is appropriate. Or something else, ditching PP altogether.
- The contents of PI are generally considered boring or otherwise not at all appealing. I did not look forward to taking the course. Rather than reiterating the Issues that everyone heard about a million times, I would explain why they are important, why they are still not resolved when everyone knows about them, and how to resolve them. There is already a fair bit of this in the course which is why I do not regret taking it at all but it can be improved further.
- Mr Anderson suggested that it doesn't make much sense for electronic devices to be banned on the exam since in reality you can always google stuff. Then why not make the exam on the computers with internet access or ditch it completely in favour of coursework consisting of similar essay questions? It would also save a ton of paper that we now need to bring to the exam and would be easier for markers to read (compared to the handwriting of a stressed-out student).
- - Clear goals and progression through the lectures.
- Clean up the course webpage. It's too cluttered and it isn't clear what the objectives of each lecture are.
- A better structure of the breakdown of everything covered and example questions throughout the course.
- Cut out some parts about writing and presentation in the beginning.
- I understand it's a theoretical and inherently a bit uninteresting subject but the lectures sometimes were too boring. The lecturers could try something more interesting in the class, e.g. a bias test.
- It felt like a lot of things were not confirmed until very close to the date itself, and feedback from prior assignments was also not timely.
- It is quite dry and I find a lot of it seems to be material that can be learned independently, so perhaps a group project or presentation would make it more interesting.
- Make it more interactive! Like flipped classroom model, maybe? Would make it so much more interesting!
- Please, Stuart, just reading Mr Wadler's slides is ridiculous (not saying that the content of some of the slide decks is not ridiculous as well). Please, please, please, those topics are important, do something to make the lectures appropriately interesting. Otherwise, you won't ever spark an interest in those topics in CS students.
Secondly, Stuart, please, be at least a bit more punctual. Providing us with feedback on our GDPR reports just one day before the final report deadline? That's plain crazy.
Mike, please, be just a little bit less liberal when it comes to accepting unacceptable opinions. Yes, I mean primarily the faux pas after in the discussion on gender stereotypes, but there were other moments as well.
- Poor organisation, lectures were very slow and did not engage the class.
- Remove it.
- Shorter lectures. I think 4 hours a week for this course are too many.
- The aims are a bit vague, I would try to be more precise about the expected learning outcomes and maybe offer a better reason to take the course than the BCS accreditation. Also 4 contact hours for a 10 credit course is too much especially in year 3
- The content is not interesting, unclear and what is expected from us is not well defined.
- The courseworks should be better explained.
- The lectures were long and not presented in a dynamic manner; in particular, the lectures about discrimination/bias were poorly presented (which I believe did more harm than good in educating people about diversity), as well as being slightly tone-deaf. Getting feedback on the way that part of the course is presented from someone who is experienced in talking about these issues would be valuable.

Comments Report

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

- The requirements of the video assignment were not made clear until very last minute. Also I would rather have feedback from a lecturer on this than peer marking. I feel the content covered in most two hour lectures could be covered in one hour.
- We haven't had any feedback for the formative assignment yet - this was due mid-October, and it would have been helpful to have this for working on the other coursework. That said, I realise a lot was supposed to be peer-assessed, and there seems to have been a problem with getting students to actually do this, which has led to even less feedback. Four hours a week of lecture has felt like a lot for a 10 credit course, although the lecturers have tried to keep things short where they can and I appreciate that.

Comments Report

Please add any other comments you have about workshops and tutors

- No student comments.