

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?

- Do a system building project, if you want to know exactly what you are getting into from the outset. Investigative and evaluative projects are tough but very stimulating. You do however have very little idea what mark you are going to get until the end regardless.
- Don't be afraid to say that you do not understand something.
- It's compulsory, and also hell if you don't choose your topic carefully and invest 90% of your time on it, so good luck
- Plan your work so that you can make continuous progress, and communicate any issues with your supervisor as soon as they arise.
- Start thinking about projects way too early; probably at the end of second year. Weekly meetings with supervisor. Start work over the summer and if you get stuck, unstick yourself.
- Try to get a solid plan made over summer so when you start semester 1 of 4th year you can hit the ground running with your project.
- Unless you are very confident in the area your research concerns and you have a clear idea of what to do, I would advise you to pick a supervisor/project that has a clear outline of sub-goals and goals.
Set up weekly meetings.
Set up goals for every week and discuss them with you supervisor.
Write literature review/background earlier on.

Comments Report

What did you find most valuable about the course?

- Ability to explore a new area into more depth. Close collaboration with other academic staff which is not normally the case for other undergraduate courses.
- Good research and overall experience but this is very supervisor dependent (read below).
Not all good researchers make for good supervisors. Make sure you have a selection process; some great researchers turned out to be very lousy supervisors. If everyone is allowed to do this, then students will definitely have very varying responses here (and experiences).
- I learned how to cope with my crippling anxiety
- Performing an independent research project is really valuable experience, particular at such a research driven institution. It gives a real taste of academia at large.

Comments Report

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

- Be less pushy with your emails, Mr Sanella
- Don't let the subject of the project to be changed. The supervisor should be clear about what he expects from the project and what steps need to be taken. It was very stressful when the subject of the project changed and I didn't know how to progress.
- Having set rules that supervisors must follow. For example, my supervisor is not going to read a full draft of my final report whereas other supervisors are giving their students a lot of feedback about their final reports and this is not very fair.
- Limit the number of projects that can be supervised by one person further, or make it mandatory that supervisors should meet their students at least once a week. Some professors are extremely busy and this may not be apparent to students in the project selection phase.
- Make project selection happen in September. It's way too early to pick a project at the end of May and most people (like me) go for random that sounds interesting, simply because we have had little time to research it. Proposals go out in the middle of the semester, which makes it that much harder. Self-proposing is out of the question, unless you have been looking into it from the previous summer.
- The presentation in January should take place in first semester. Most of the advice they gave us could have been applied from the very beginning of our work on Honours Project.
- Unlike a real research paper, this course has strange constraints that would not be enforced in research. Such as, being graded to criteria that is generic to all projects. In a project that does not involve building a system, the marking criteria does not really fit and the marking criteria rewards completion of work over research contributions from my experience. Additionally, the quality of your project depends greatly upon which supervisor you happen to get.

Comments Report

Please add any other comments you have about workshops and tutors

- No student comments

[Please note that some content has been removed due to offensive language used]