

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?

- Always go to the tutorials I guess?
- Don't skip the lectures, can be difficult to catch up from just the slides.
- I would recommend it, as long as they are aware how much the focus is on the side of modelling methods etc. compared to a more traditional course about cognitive science.
- If you are interested in Cognitive Science - this course is definitely worth taking!
- It is a challenging yet very nice introduction to the area. Warning: There is a lot of probabilistic theories/concepts/thinking involved, turning theories from psychology into computational models is assumption- and maths-heavy :-)
- Make sure you know maths, up to and including differentiation and logarithms (and differentiation of logarithms!).
- Only take this if you like statistics and cognitive science.
- Refresh your probability and calculus knowledge before starting this course! It's a fairly gentle course if you keep up with the lectures and tutorials and the recommended textbook is fantastic for supplementing these.
- Be prepared that this course is rather challenging but do not be scared to actually open up because once you're through the worst bit it actually all starts making sense.

Comments Report

What did you find most valuable about the course?

- An opportunity to see some of the theory I had been introduced to in other courses applied to interesting topics in cognitive science.
- As a MSc Cognitive Science student coming from a different field, I found this course most useful - it builds a solid foundation for other model-based courses, as well as introduces to the key research in the area. Chris is great at explaining complex concepts and encouraging discussion. Also, I believe that the Matlab part of the course (mostly examining and modifying existing code) was very useful - I've learned a lot from working with different models and trying to reproduce some of them myself. Overall, I'm very happy that this course was recommended to Master students.
- Chris Lucas is probably the best lecturer I've had here at Edinburgh. His passion and enthusiasm for the subject, his friendly demeanour and always going the extra mile to answer any single question made this course a delight. The course is also super cool
- Course was clear and lectures well structured, but this was an extremely difficult course with no help provided for struggling students.
- Fantastic level of help from Chris Lucas on piazza. Engaging lectures covering interesting topics. As a Cognitive Science student I liked seeing all the threads from different courses combine together in this one (linguistics/psychology/probability/statistics).
- That it was extremely challenging but in a good way and it still managed to get most people to understand it
- The course was interesting from a number of perspectives, both on the technical modelling side but also the psychological side. For me, I've always pretty much just skipped the 'maths bit' of the method on most papers, but I really feel that not only can I understand it now, but actually gain insight into models from it.
- The lectures were pleasantly challenging, keeping me stretched. I also very much enjoyed the format of the coursework.
- The mathematics, even if I found it hard.
- This course was good, so it's unrelated that I had to realize that cognitive science really isn't for me.
- Very interesting, and introduced to a new subject matter.
- I found the content (models of thinking processes) fascinating.

Comments Report

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

- After the first few weeks, when we were working through the Lewandowsky and Farrell section, I sort of lost focus on what we were doing in the course. It just kind of felt like we were taking random models and examining how they worked, which was interesting, but I'm not really sure what the learning aims of it all was.
- Could we please get the lectures in a room which permits recordings?
- Course content felt a bit disjointed, and it felt that we were just learning specific models for a few cases of the subject.
- Give the dates of release/deadline for the coursework earlier if possible so that people can plan ahead. Maybe have more questions that relate to the code in the assignment because we didn't have to use the code for much of it unlike the hand-out stated. I liked the first quiz on learn and found it useful - I think it would be good if a few per semester were uploaded on there.
- I think it would be more attractive for people if we touched upon not just older and simpler models, but also some of the recent ones (without necessarily understanding them in their full depth). I would also welcome more than 2 weeks of time for the coursework. It was nice, yet not so enjoyable under the stress (especially as it was clashing with other coursework).
- I understand that the course is a level 10 course, however including a broader overview of papers (i.e. including more papers into discussion) would have been great - Chris has mentioned a lot of interesting papers. Probably a discussion group/tutorial would have been amazing. I feel like going a bit more into modelling/model evaluation would have been awesome.
- It's not necessarily a bad thing (at least not for me), but I wasn't aware quite how much the course would simply use cognitive science as a convenient way to study different types of model, rather than go into the theory/study of the cognitive science a bit more.
- Using python instead of Matlab. That'd be great.
- While I recognize the importance of being able to evaluate models, I would have definitely preferred being introduced to more different models instead. Felt like only the second half of the course actually dealt with cognitive models.
- Lectures were given in a room with no recording capability. Disappointing.

Comments Report

Please add any other comments you have about workshops and tutors

- Borislav Ikonov was great at explaining all sorts of concepts with examples and at a good pace, he also was good at including everyone into discussion and making everyone feeling comfortable with asking any sort of questions regarding the material. I feel like the tutorials were well structured and helped my understanding a lot.
- Borislav was a fantastic tutor and went so far beyond just the questions on the tutorial sheet. He was very willing to help and regularly checked that people understood his explanations.
- Excellent tutor
Explained things very well.
- I had Borislav as a tutor and I just wanted to say that he did a really good job. I know we probably weren't the easiest tutorial group to have, but he really did do a good job at engaging me and making difficult concepts understandable. Exactly what I want from a tutor.
- I liked the tutor. He was pretty good.
- More tutorial groups. Possibly longer tutorial slots because the stretching lectures were causing many people to be unclear on the actual content of the slides, and then the tutorial time was spent on explaining the stuff one more time rather than going through the exercises and further solidifying our understanding. Our tutor Borislav also sometimes came across as not well-prepared, especially when he confused himself and couldn't answer someone's question clearly and concisely. On the other hand, he was very approachable and doing his best in the sessions.
- Tutorials were generally good, although sometimes it was difficult to talk about questions on the sheets that required looking at/ editing code.
- Tutorials were where I learned the most on this course.
- Tutorials worked very well, the lecturer was very informative and approachable.
- in the beginning the exercises for the tutorial were uploaded rather late so it was hard to go through them in time before the tutorial