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?

- Beware to ask as many questions as possible, as there may be ambiguities, or a missing expectations from questions.

- Even if you are interested, do not take unless the room (Appleton Tower 5.05) changes. It was almost impossible to hear what lecturers were saying.

- It's a very broad overview, and due to the nature of the field there isn't always a single "right answer" it's worth considering if this is a type of field you would be comfortable with (coming from a maths background this was an adjustment for me)

- Make sure you understand the Jupyter notebooks

- Read the recommended texts before doing the assignments and taking the exam.

- Think about taking another course!

- This is NOT an informatics course. Actual coding is an absolute minimal part of this course, if you take this, you will spend the semester learning biology. The course is mostly about using the BioPython python package to do research into genes.
Unless you're a biologist or you are a computer science student absolutely set on pursuing bioinformatics in your career, this course is a pointless waste of time.
If you are a biologist, take this course, it does a very good job of explaining how to use biopython and provides useful examples

Comments Report

What did you find most valuable about the course?

- The subject is so broad and gave a good overview of the field

- Core topics covered

- It wasn't that great

- Receiving information on the actual work done by researchers in this field.

- The assignments and lectures

- The combination of theory and practice helped me understand better the topics.

- The introduction to Central Dogma was very insightful.

- Infomatics knowledge

Comments Report

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

- As I entered the course in week three and because the room had extremely bad acoustics, I found it difficult to catch up – the slides, readings, and other material provided are not useful on their own.
There were way too many "cookbook" style lectures rather than actual information in the lectures. Challenges seemed to be "Outsourced" to the assignments, where it was not always clear what was asked for, consequently.

- Clarity on coursework aims; a rough marking scheme for each course work assignment; it was unclear what skills were expected to be demonstrated, and to what degree.

- I would give more importance to the assignments for the final mark, and probably the slides need more text.

- If possible, it would be really good to keep a classroom with computers, because the combination of theory and exercises on every class was very didactic, but, as we said on the midterm survey, the classroom was awful, mainly because it was always full of people that didn't belong to the class and it was difficult to get a front seat where you could listen properly.
It would help to have specific readings for each class for the people who don't have a biology background to understand better the context of the class, because I sometimes had the feeling like I wasn't understanding the whole concept.

- It needs to be completely rethought.

- The proteomics section lecture was confusing. It wasn't really clear what the main idea is and how to analyse the data, which is important as it is part of the exam.

- The room needs to be reconsidered, it was untenable. The lab sheets were very helpful, but it was just a matter of clicking to execute the sheets, there wasn't really much independent development required which I was disappointed by.

Comments Report

Please add any other comments you have about workshops and tutors

- The lab sheets contained everything necessary, but it was just a matter of clicking to execute the sheets, there wasn't really much independent development required which I was disappointed by.

- Noise free space; Appleton Tower 5.05 has wind issues.

- The Jupyter notebooks were very helpful for the assignments.