

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?

- Challenging, but very interesting
- Don't take this course.
- If you want to learn about computer graphics, take this course. Check whether the course content is more clearly defined next year.
- If you're looking to take this course to understand what actually goes on behind rendering and graphics in general, do not take it. It is not taught on this course. Do what we're told to do and read the course book instead. You'll get the exact same education without having to risk your degree on such a poorly organised course.
- Expect to learn *everything* on your own. Lectures cover close to nothing; you will need to learn everything from books or other universities' slides online because no useful material is provided.

Comments Report

What did you find most valuable about the course?

- Introduction to computer graphics, practical exercises in tutorials.
- Kartic's lectures were really well elucidated and easy to follow. I enjoyed a LOT how much we focused on modern techniques in graphics.
- That it only impacts my degree by 10 credits.
- The coursework
 - The coursework was good as it gave a hands on practice of some of the concept mentioned in the lecture. Hakan's lectures were very good and the provided slides were good.
Also, I liked the use of the provided material on YouTube as watching a YouTube video on a specific topic helped understanding the topic better.
- The fact that Kartic used the whiteboard to explain his material. Board-assisted explanation is the best for getting the point across and very few lecturers do it nowadays.
- I think we learned a lot of good information in the lectures and in the readings.
- Very broad coverage of interesting topics.

Comments Report

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

- I feel that Kartic relied too much on the readings. The readings took me sometimes 4 hours to do, including understanding what was going on. I feel that he could not expect us to know everything by heart from the readings as most of the definitions and concepts were absolutely new to me. Further, Kartic's way of giving a lecture was okay, but I thought his white board graphics were absolutely unstructured and should be better organised. I had difficulties to follow even though I have been to most of his lectures. Additionally, with other courses recording the lecture, it would be amazing to have either lecture recording (as trying to make sense of Kartic's photo of the white board is impossible) or provide proper slides, so missed lectures due to illness or interviews etc. could be revised.
- I think that traditional slides would work better than Prezi, because the Prezi slides with videos and links to other third party slides do not show the structure of the content and do not distinguish what is examinable. Also, the third coursework's difficulty was unreasonable, given that it involved learning Blender and raytracing software from zero, writing a report and was weighted the same amount of marks as the first two courseworks. I think it would be reasonable if we had more time for it and also an introduction to Blender and raytracing software beforehand. Maybe first two could be merged, however, all these might be too much for a 10 credit course. Finally, I don't think it is worth to touch a lot of topics just by mentioning them. I also think that computer vision topics should be left to computer vision, and robotics to robotics courses. Now it is not clear to what extent those topics are examinable.
- Lecturers should focus more on teaching the concepts in detail rather than giving some vague, tangential "context" for 40 minutes and then expecting students to actually learn the topics from other, better courses via the provided links in the slides. Last year's course looked much better organized and better covered the subject. This course also featured what I see as the worst lecture I have attended in the five years that I've studied here. Its topic was Fourier transforms. This is a non-intuitive topic, and one that really benefits from teaching rather than studying. However, the lecturer ran through the slides, often without explaining what the uncaptioned diagrams represented, skipped over crucial information and delivered a very rushed and confusing explanation. Additionally their slides made little sense in places. Most notably where they demonstrated an image where one picture was superimposed over another and said that a Fourier transform would allow you to discover this. They then continued without actually showing what the result of the transform on that image looked like. The final 15 minutes of the lecture featured a separate presentation on the non-examined and unrelated topic of using machine learning to doctor images, which was something that the lecturer was interested in. Complete waste of time for all attending. The lecturers need to have a long, hard think about what they're actually delivering in what is essentially the only course in graphics that isn't vision or machine learning that the university offers. Though not I, I'm sure that others taking this course are interested in entering the game industry, and this course does nothing for them.
- More of a continual connection between the course material and the courseworks.
- On drps website, the requirements for the course are stated as: "Students are assumed to have mathematical knowledge and have substantial programming experience. Knowledge of algorithms and data structures relating to geometry will also be assumed." After participating all lectures this semester, I can certainly say that this course, at least in the way it was delivered this semester, had far more prerequisites than the ones declared above. A lot of physics knowledge is required to understand the material delivered in the course, and this knowledge was not delivered in full during the semester as we were told to "search on google" Also about the professors, one lacks the ability to make the subject understandable by students, and this is something other students agreed too, and the other was assuming that we will understand more about the lectures by "searching on google" which is exactly the opposite of why I came to study in this university. If the professors are not able to deliver all the curriculum in a clear way, then they should think about removing some chapters and try again.
- Someone needs to tell Hakan that this is not an art course or a machine learning course. While using WebGL sounds great, a much more suitable coursework would have been to implement the pipeline fully. Give students a blank canvas and a `setColor(x,y,r,g,b)` method, and have them implement rasterization, ray tracing etc. The way the coursework was done this year, none of us actually learned much about the pipeline (shaders are not everything guys...). Also please stop the Prezi thing. I know this is a Computer Graphics course and Prezi feels 'graphics-y', but Prezi slides cannot be searched or printed, making them useless during revision time.
- The tutorial for me is kind of difficult. But the assignment is ok.
- Video lectures!
- Do everything on your own slides or materials containing actual content. Just linking to a huge number of courses given by other universities, and several books, is not really helpful and just confusing. It is hard to tell what is important. If you don't have enough time to cover everything in class, you might need to change your style (speed) of lecturing, the selection of topics, or the number of lectures/credits. Explanations in lectures were very unclear at times.
- The readings were pretty dense. And the coursework was cool, but it seemed a bit unfocused from the lectures.

Comments Report

Please add any other comments you have about workshops and tutors

- I think that we should get less fill-in-the-blank type questions in our tutorials and assignments, because when we just get to fill in the blanks in some WebGL code, I don't think we learn as much as we would otherwise creating something ourselves.
- The only challenging thing about the coursework was having to look up WebGL methods, which the tutors helped with. Since this is, however, virtually completely irrelevant to computer graphics, the tutorials did not help with understanding the course content at all.
- The tutorials were a lot like labs. It would be useful to have actual tutorials, where we discuss and solve problems that are closer to the style of the exam, and keep the current tutorials as labs.
- tutorials is like working at home, except that instead of asking on Piazza you ask the tutor in-person
- The tutor (Lewis) was very competent and helpful. First two courseworks were rather easy given the provided code skeleton. Last coursework seems very difficult and unclear; this is still ongoing.