

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?

- Be prepared to do a lot of reading of recent research as it is a fast moving field and no gold-standard textbook exists
- I am sorry to say this and as a non-native English speaker, I fully understand how hard it is to change accents. But honestly, I am so easy to be distracted from the lecture because of the accent (or maybe the explanation). So if you are non-native English speaker, consider this issue seriously. Sorry professor, I am not trying to offend you.
- It is a really interesting course and I loved it. The assignment is challenging but really develops your understanding of the topic. I would highly recommend this course.
- Stanford University has uploaded lectures about neural networks and other related topics on YouTube. They're helpful as a supplement to this course.
- Start some preparation in the winter break! e.g. readings, toy MT implementation, etc.
- The coursework was a lot of work, more than for any other classes I had, but worth it. You learn a lot. The content overlaps with NLU (both focus on neural nets).
- Start the coursework early.

Comments Report

What did you find most valuable about the course?

- Doing the assignment.
- Expanded my knowledge of neural networks, learned how to implement a NN-based machine translation system.
- Hearing about all the recent developments in machine translation research, it made the lectures super interesting.
- Interesting and challenging coursework, good lectures.
Rico is very knowledgeable and good at explaining/answering questions.
- Learning cutting edge techniques in machine translation.
- The content was really interesting. The recommended readings were very clear and manageable.
- The coursework feedback.
- The materials covered.
- Working with Dr Rico Sennrich

Comments Report

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

- Consider covering more traditional approaches and reduce the material on basic neural nets. As most of us already knew neural nets and many important ideas actually comes from traditional statistic machine translation.
- I would like it if the lectures were more in depth. There really should be labs for this course, especially before the assignment.
- I would prefer having two assignments for 50% and final exam for another 50%.
- Intro lecture on RNNs was about the 5th on the topic I had this year. Maybe talk to other lecturers so certain topics aren't repeated across courses?
- Less overlap with NLU would be better, as the first few weeks were very repetitive for people doing both courses.
- Less overlap with NLU.
- Not really about the course itself but the classroom (The Anatomy Lecture Hall in Medical School) has very bad acoustic effects.
- The content of the lectures was hard to follow, not because they were hard but because they were basically a list of different authors recent approaches to MT, which is great and valuable but it was presented in a "boring way". Maybe it was because of the slide. They should be more simple and less chaotic.
- Tutorials or practice exercises or something would be nice
- Tutorials with practical exercises would be extremely helpful.

Comments Report

Please add any other comments you have about workshops and tutors

- I did not attend any workshops/tutorials
- There was neither tutorial nor workshops to improve my understanding. I think adding some tutorials would help us to understand the material better.
- There were no tutorials or workshops for this course.
- There were no workshops or tutors which was an issue for me. I think tutorials or labs would really have helped my understanding.