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 for a lot of work

- Go to as many of the student presentations as you can, and ask questions. That's the most valuable part of this course. If you are not already confident about Bayesian inference you will struggle with the early part of the course and the first assignment.

- If you are interested in developing your research skills definitely take this course. Make sure you have a good background in NLP and machine learning. Do not be fooled by the "no exam" delusion. The course is very challenging.

- There is a lot of maths in it. The assignment is supposed to be easy but it is not, and you spend a lot of time doing it. It is quite a lot of work, so I encourage you to take it if the other subjects are not very challenging. If not, it will be a very busy semester.

Comments Report

What did you find most valuable about the course?

▪ It helped in different skills from speech to research.

▪ The course gives you a higher-level overview of many concepts seen in previous courses such as grammars, log-linear models and Bayesian inference. The referenced literature is very helpful to understand the problem of "linguistic structure prediction". Also, you are exposed to many exciting topics in NLP and find that some of your peers are great speakers.

▪ The learning process of preparing the presentation and essay.

▪ The seminar-style presentations from other students gave a useful overview of many NLP-related topics in a short time. That was the reason I chose this course, and I'm glad I did.

Comments Report

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

- Feedback should be improved.
Course workload is too heavy for a 10 credit course.

- For 10 credits it seems a lot of work. The weights of the different tasks (presentation, assignment, essay and brief response) should be distributed better

- For the classes of the first four weeks, it would be helpful to let students clearly see why the Bayesian approach is important for NLP field and see the connections between the contents and what they have learned in the other courses.

- I found the assessed workload far too heavy for a 10 credit course. The pencil-and-paper assignment was very difficult and marks were deducted for looking up information, even in papers that were given as assigned reading. The only feedback I got on the brief paper responses was a numerical mark (no comments). We have not yet received feedback or marks for the other two pieces of assessed work (presentation and essay).
There was no group work. I think if we had worked in pairs (perhaps on the pencil-and-paper assignment), that would have allowed us to get to know each other better and improved the quality of discussion in the later part of the course.
 I would have preferred to use the third lecture slot early on, so that the student presentations could potentially finish earlier in the semester, instead of starting with two slots a week and increasing to three later on.

- I would reduce the amount of work or, at least, make the subject a 20 credit course. It is a lot of work to handle during the semester.

Comments Report

Please add any other comments you have about workshops and tutors

- No tutorials, workshops or labs for this course.