

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?

- Go to all the lectures.
- Have a clear understanding of probabilities and math. Furthermore, at least a basic understanding of computer security topics is needed. Attendance is highly recommended.
- If you want to delve deeper into the material get also a textbook and study it in parallel and solve exercise from there. The lecturer provides 3-4 problems (including the assignment). If you know good maths you'll find the course very easy.
- Learn group theory fast.
- Make sure to attend all lectures, and use another textbook if the notes aren't too clear (e.g. Introduction to Modern Cryptography by Katz and Lindell covers many of the same topics, but offers a different perspective).
- Only take this course if you have strong foundations in proofs and probability theory, and make sure to take good notes during class and ask questions whenever explanations are not clear
- Revise the material many times at home and seek explanation in the recommended reading.
- Very mathematical. This course is about why (mathematically) something is cryptographically secure.
- For the course in its current form, make sure that you have a solid background in probability and are comfortable with probability questions. If you are not very interested in cryptography you may find this course unrewarding and very difficult.

Comments Report

What did you find most valuable about the course?

- Detailed walkthroughs of the proofs in lectures.
- Interesting topic.
- The depth, rigorousness and meticulous, clear tackling of problems
- The first few lectures of the course were very good, it gave us a nice understanding of the discrete logarithm problem. The homework assignment. At last we were given some exercises to work on
- The lecture notes are very well structured. I found them useful and well-explained.
- The notes on the website are good.
- ρ and p are different.
- Touches on cryptographic fundamentals.

Comments Report

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

- From the third lecture on, quality seem to decline rapidly. Explanations on the algorithms were often rushed to finish the proofs, and the notation used was overwhelming, inconsistent with the notes and within the lecture itself. The notes also are not comprehensive, and the lack of daily lecture slides makes it very tough to go back and remember what the proof was like, and taking notes in class was hard because of the fast pace. It was really frustrating that we had recording equipment in the class, but it was never used. Since the exam requires a thorough understanding of the proofs, the notes will not be sufficient for revision, and the May date will make it extremely hard to recall information from the class that we have no record of.
- The website was never up to date, and the topic of the last lecture (which doesn't seem to be even covered by the notes) is not even mentioned.
- It would also have been nice to have some extra information on the coursework before its release.
- I am sorry to say that I am disappointed with this course. First of all, lectures were chaotic. For example, at one lecture we were given a proof without the context -- the lecturer had been writing it for a straight hour before saying why we are doing this. Questions were welcome, but we were so confused that we didn't know what to ask about. There were also problems with mixing notation and because of that, I found my lecture notes confusing.
- I'd see more structure in the lecture, maybe dividing some big problem into sub-problems -- the material would be much easier to understand (because this is not a trivial course).
- Introduce lecture recording from the first lecture. The depth of this course is too much.
- Record lectures. Add tutorials for students to discuss and ask questions. Ensure substitute teachers are better prepared.
- Record the lectures. Write clearer on the board as it can be hard to read it and there are no slides. Make coursework clearer. Have a discussion forum
- The course material is far too easy for a level 11 course. I think it should be given at a much faster pace. Also exercises are needed to reinforce the material. The lecturer has given very few. Ideally we should have weekly or biweekly tutorials. If this is not feasible the lecturer could distribute weekly problem sheets without organising tutorials but instead setting up a piazza site where he, the teaching assistant and the students themselves can answer the questions of one another.
- The lectures don't really seem to follow the provided notes and no other reading material is given - it would be helpful if a clearer syllabus was established, and additional reading given from books.
- Weekly slides, homework in smaller chunks instead of one big coursework
- Add tutorials as it is incredibly difficult just having lectures.
- Record lectures as if you miss a lecture it is impossible to catch up.
- It is very difficult to study for this course as there is only a textbook/notes from class to learn from. There is also 1 practice exam question and 1 sample exam. None of which have solutions. This means throughout the course there has only been theory covered in lectures and not once a chance to properly look at a worked through question. There was also no feedback or solutions for the coursework.
- Seems like this course needs to be restructured to aid student learning and create clarity. The course is very difficult in its current form.

Comments Report

Please add any other comments you have about workshops and tutors

- No tutorials, workshops or labs for this course.