

# 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?

- Ask for as much help as you need. Don't be afraid of reaching out. This is a really amazing course, they will introduce you properly to research writing.
- Choose your group wisely. Some tutors require students to do a lot of (useless and unnecessary) work, while some understands the existence of deadlines from other courses.
- Do not leave the work for this course for the last minute.
- Have a narrow focus within a topic, and pick a topic where you learn things you can use in your own research (don't just compare other people's ML models)
- I don't know. This course needs a redesign.
- It's compulsory :P
- Read as much as you can at the start, as quickly as you can. You will not have time later in the term. Ideally start writing as soon as you know your topic.
- Reads more during extra time
- Start looking into the seed papers at the beginning of the semester, just to get an idea of what you find interesting. This will help you formulate a topic much faster.
- Start working on your review early on the semester, preferably before midterms or the semester will catch up with you
- The earlier you start thinking about it the better, if nothing else just pick some things that sound interesting and start reading!
- This course is interesting only if you choose a topic which you are really interested in.
- Start working early.
- take each lecture seriously
- to choose a topic from the beginning in order to apply all the knowledge saw in tutorial each week

## Comments Report

What did you find most valuable about the course?

- Meeting with the supervisor in small groups
- Going over previous papers and discussing what was good/bad.
- Good to do some literature review in the area of your interest
- I didn't. I thought the sessions were useless. All of the information we were presented I could have read myself in 1 hour.
- I feel like it's in general a good idea to have a prep course like IRR - coming from a new field, it was important for me to learn about the standards of presentation and research in my chosen area.
- I found the tutorial sessions really stimulating and helpful.
- I learnt a lot about researching and reading papers.
- Information
- Information about the structure of the research review
- It forced me to investigate topics I otherwise wouldn't have, and to get used to reading research papers in a subject area I am new to. It gave me the opportunity to read various papers on robotics.
- It gives us opportunities that we can explore new area and try to do whatever research that we want.
- It provides a good and clear methodology for doing research reviews.
- Receiving insights into research activities.
- Stuart Anderson is a good tutor.
- The feedback and guidance that were given to us.
- The feedback the tutor and the taught methods about how to do a research.
- The feedbacks from the lecturer.
- The insights from my tutor, Dave. He made a big effort to be as helpful as possible and steer everyone in a useful direction. His assigned work was useful.
- The meeting.
- The one on one help we were given and how flexible and understanding the tutor was with our schedules and work load
- The opportunity to get feedback on my personal approach to writing a research review, which helped me to improve.
- The opportunity to talk to other students about research. And I have a great tutor.
- The required reading and writing task
- The tutorial-style discussion groups were a great way to validate chosen topics and discuss different approaches.
- Tutorial sessions have a few number of students per group, hence each student usually gets good amount of personal attention and help from the TAs
- When the tutor gave personalised comments about our work so far. I learned in a general way how to read and write research reviews the writing skills are helpful for me

## Comments Report

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

- I would rather have 1-to-1 10-15 minutes meeting every 1-2 weeks with my tutor to discuss about the topics and the literature review that I will be doing, rather than wasting 1 hour every week in meetings, with the majority of the time listening to other students' (Completely irrelevant) topics.
- During tutorials, I could've used more guidance in how to approach the IRR, for example analysing a past IRR together, or doing some research review together (on a topic that none of us takes).
- The course organisers could put plenty of tutorial material online, i.e. notes on how to ace the IRR.
- Have it a bit more structured with bi-weekly meetings.
- I appreciate the flexibility given by my tutor (Stuart Anderson), but perhaps a little more structure to the weekly meetings (per meeting, and also on a week to week basis) would have been useful to make sure everyone kept up and was on the same page.
- Include an overview on the selected focus area.
- Make the lectures more interesting and engaging
- Many lectures were not useful if you already knew the topic (e.g., how to use Latex or Mendeley), but lectures were mandatory.
- Maybe clearer goals for each week - and help with learning challenging material: Often you're reading material far beyond stuff covered in lectures, but unlike lectures you don't know how to meet other students working on a similar topic.
- Maybe limit the group to a smaller size
- More communication among group members, maybe an online chatting group would be helpful.
- More discussion on the topic area. We chose an area of interest, but the tutorials were about academic writing and research reviews (which makes sense) but we didn't go into many discussions regarding our chosen topic.
- More help in deciding on a group, for example ML applications v models.
- More readings
- Please send the link to the seed papers before asking us to choose the groups - it was very confusing this time (and many had to switch).
- Spend less time on the basic principles of academic writing.
- Start early?
- The different tutors demand different things, I think this should not be the case. My tutor for example told us to summarise 3-4 papers in depth but have read 40 so the bibliography should contain approx. 40 paper, no other tutor did demand that many (as I found out from the discussion with other students).
- I would appreciate a general guideline (consistent over all tutorials) about how much we have to read.
- And I would find it better if the tutorial was optional, or at least not starting from scratch, as mentioned below, I am already a bit familiar with research as any student should be after a thesis.
- There is too much variation between IRR groups. I had no assignment, and no clear goals given. Others had deadlines and much more structure.
- Update the wiki to be a little more organized. It felt outdated and at times contradictory. This wasn't too big a deal though
- Fairly good.

## Comments Report

Please add any other comments you have about workshops and tutors

- As I have already done some literature research during several projects and my thesis in my undergrad I did not learn that much. The personal feedback on my first small draft was helpful but the tutorial sessions (even if my tutor did it really good) haven't been beneficial for me at all because I already knew the contents.
- Hope tutors provide us with more reading materials
- I do not understand the point of this course as it stands. The majority of people I have talked to have not done anything for the course, and will do their IRR assignment over the winter holiday. If you want us to learn from this course, have a more standardised approach per tutorial session, perhaps with a standard set of recommended assignments to help us along.
- I have a great tutor, Janie Sinclair, and think the quality of the course is largely down to the about of effort she puts into it. I'd like more of a chance to discuss with students working on similar topics.
- Ian Stark is friendly and easy to get along with. This made communication in a group session much easier.
- My tutor was very helpful and enthusiastic.
- Really nice
- Richard Shillcock has been a very good and entertaining lecturer, he has been happy to answer any questions that I had.
- Sam is approachable and gives you feedback about your IRR.
- See comments above in improvements section.
- The tutor was helpful
- Todor Davchev being the tutor really helped me through the course. Found out time to provide personal evaluation.
- Tutorial sessions were essential for me -- recommended exercises were great guidelines for writing.
- Very good. Patient tutor who gives feedback.
- We only had tutorials, which were helpful.
- Weekly tutorials are a complete waste of time. If you are not on tier 4, just skip all of them.
- admiring