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?

- Brush up on linear algebra

- Don't?

- Only take this class if the required courses were taken (R:SS, and some kind of control theory/ optimization class)

- This course is very interesting and challenging. It covers very useful topics in robotics.

Comments Report

What did you find most valuable about the course?

- Exposure to new methods of robotic control and new research ideas

- Sethu Vijayakumar's section of the course is well thought out, useful and informative, and clearly honed over years of teaching the module.

- The course teaches a lot of useful material in robotics and covers very important topics. It is also extremely challenging which is a good thing. The homework were very interesting and helped to understand the material a bit better.

- Various fields of Robotics from a more advance point of view than the course R:SS
Mixture of theory (optimization, MM part) and praxis (videos, SV part)
Homework and paper assignment gave a very good outlook of the practical possibilities

Comments Report

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

▪ First of all, the lectures taught by Michael Mistry were very useful but also quite confusing. It would be good if he had powerpoint slides which explained a bit better each steps as they are all very mathematical and going over the slides later on gets very confusing. His homework was very interesting but also extremely hard to do and a bit confusing especially homework 1 part 2 question 3. For the homework 2 which included the presentation I think it would be nicer to have more interesting papers which directly talk about what we learned in classes.
Mainly, I think that this course could have two improvements:
1) have tutorials for the course - these could cover exercises about control theory and some of the programming needed as suddenly have a homework where you need to apply all the theory is a big step up and tutorials could be very beneficial also to make sure students understand each step needed to solve the problems.
2) I think this course could benefit from having a group project where students get to apply the theory to a robot/simulation a bit like in RSS but without having to deal with faulty hardware.

▪ Less content, but more in-depth or applied. The class covered so many topics without providing a comprehensive overview. Especially the connection between the two lecturers was not clear. It seemed to be two different classes: RLSC & Optimal Control. Although RLSC was using OC techniques, the link was not very clear.
Organisation of the class: The SV & MM parts seemed to be independent on each other.
Mostly no breaks between the classes made it very hard to focus for 2 hours straight.

▪ Michael Mistry's section of the course has confusing notes with an insufficient quantity of examples, a lack of a bank of additional questions, no indications of the type of questions we can expect in an examination, and very little coherent structure. His homework had multiple errors in it that he didn't correct; however, did confirm when students asked in personal emails that it was indeed an error.
The section has seemingly been put together last minute and is consistently under explained.

▪ Somewhat incomplete, sometimes incorrect assignments. Mistakes in assignments should be communicated to whole class, not just individuals. Assignments should be released as stated or change their release dates from the start. The optimal control section assumed a substantial prior knowledge of and fluency in quite complex mathematics which was not advertised beforehand to give a chance to revise; it was very easy to be lost right at the start of a lecture and not follow most of it. Motivation needs to be given before introducing new methods rather than presenting ideas as a list

Comments Report

Please add any other comments you have about workshops and tutors

- No tutorials, workshops or labs for this course.

Comments Report