Informatics Student Course Feedback 2020/21
http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/teaching/surveys/2020-21

This report contains feedback from students about a course taught in the School of Informatics during the 2020/21 academic year, in response to the following questions:

- What advice would you give to a student taking this course in future?
- 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, tutorials or labs on this course
- Please add any other comments you have about the presentation of course materials online and their accessibility
- Reflecting on your experience of hybrid teaching and learning on this course, what has worked well for you?
- Is there anything else you’d like to tell us about your experience of hybrid teaching and learning on this course that would help us improve our approach?

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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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric given to all students taking the end-of-course feedback survey</th>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>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:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Equality, Diversity and Unconscious Bias (<a href="http://edin.ac/2iypZBv">http://edin.ac/2iypZBv</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>You also have a responsibility to provide feedback in a manner which does not breach the University’s Dignity and Respect Policy:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• University of Edinburgh Dignity and Respect Policy (<a href="http://edin.ac/1Cq0VZy">http://edin.ac/1Cq0VZy</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
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1. What did you find most valuable about the course?

Assignments

- Doing big projects instead of series of small problems.
- Fiona was extremely prepared for the semester, and she showed so much compassion towards us students. She was a wonderful course organiser and is a valuable part of the course.
- Gaining knowledge of the Java language and tools like IntelliJ and basic software design strategies.
- Getting experience using a new language and new approaches to software development.
- Having a lot of practice which is definitely crucial.
- High engagement from Fiona, very responsive to feedback to mental health into consideration.
- I believe that I benefited a lot from the fact that the course was structured around coursework and not a final exam. I think that all the skills I developed were due to the coursework which was fairly well organised and had clear aims every time.
- I enjoyed doing the first assignment, it was quite fun.
- I found the assignments the most valuable and the lecture materials were great.
- I found the course was valuable in filling in many gaps in knowledge I had about the concepts behind object oriented programming.
- I really enjoyed assignment 1 (and 3 at the moment), it felt like I could put a lot of work into it and was invaluable, however the feedback really let it down and I am not sure whether my mark was justified or not.
- Lab exercise helped my progress to a certain degree.
- Learning at a good speed with plenty of time to put things into practice.
- OOP thinking.
- Pair programming was really useful.
- Peer programming was good, and the lectures were very helpful with the amount of examples.
- Perdita's lectures. They were clear, informative, and rarely waffled (unlike Prof. Wadler's lectures from last semester).
- Projects were key in developing my knowledge.
- The assignment content was very nice.
- The assignments were a great help to the learning experience.
- The clarity of the course, the consideration given for beginners like me.
- The content was really useful and the practical element of the coursework were great fun but also helped my understanding immensely.
- The coursework content is very well-taught and well-scheduled.
- The course helped me think more analytically and made me work hard towards achieving the set goals. The assignments were interesting and the teaching material was engaging. The course made me prioritize and compartmentalize my work, which is a valuable skill for me. The deadlines were flexible too, which helped immensely.
- The coursework assignments were well made, and very engaging and enjoyable. They were a good level of challenging for me (as I had programmed before).
- The lectures and slides covered a lot of content and were well made.
- The live Q&A sessions were very valuable, in answering questions, offering support, and creating course engagement.
- The lab exercises with solutions were valuable to get to grips with new concepts.
- The lab sessions were organized. Fiona went beyond her responsibility to respond to student concerns.
- The labs.
- The lectures were of a really high quality and everything was explained very informatively and clearly.
- The lectures were very clear and engaging.
- The level and the variety of the material covered
- The paired programming was fun and helpful.
- The prerecorded videos and the lab work
- The skills and knowledge it gave me.
- The staff and material
- The three assignments are interesting and help me understand how to apply my knowledge to solve some real problems.
- Understanding the fundamentals of OOP and how to program in java effectively.
- Very good for developing knowledge of concepts in OO programming as well as getting me familiar with a very popular language Java. I thought the assignments were very well designed and helped further my knowledge of the material as well as consolidate material already studied.
- Very solid foundation for OOP, covered all the important stuff.
- Well designed curriculum. Decent explanations in recorded lectures.
- basic features of java and how important the robustness of a program is
- lab exercises, tutorials.
- pair programming
What improvements, if any, would you make to the course?

- Assignment feedback hasn't been fantastic. I somehow got a 100 on Assignment 1, I'm not complaining but it seems implausible that perfect code exists at all, much less being my own code which I know is wonky at best. Somehow this also meant that I got no feedback at all (It said "You already achieved the highest markband" or something like that), not even a comment on why I deserved this crazy grade. The whole thing was just a bit odd and not super-helpful. I don't have any concrete ideas on how exactly to improve the situation, but it would seem that more personalised feedback is desirable.

- Better course structure and the assignment be checked and released on time

- Change the order of the assignments

- David should be more active on piazza when it came to questions about the assignments - many of the tutors were unable to answer any questions so they were left unanswered. I think piazza should have had more of a focus than the QnA since a lot of the questions were useless(not even questions) or repeated, however this was the only time when we could get answers about the assignments.

- Do not change the lectures!

- Feedback was essentially useless. If you interpret something from a lecture wrong, then there is no way you'll ever be corrected. The organisation with the assignments was horrible, and the first assignment could not realistically be completed until week 5 for someone without Java experience.

  Overall, the course content was good and the teaching was delivered well, but the course management is the worst I have experienced at uni.

- Give more feedback to assignments, even if it means less assignments.

- Have clearer assigned reading tasks - at one point it was Chapter 4 for 2-3 weeks.

- I found pair programming not very helpful

- I think definitions of some terminology of Java should be compiled together and there should be corresponding CODING exercises.

- I would have the tutors marking the Assignments of the students so that feedback through the tutorials is helpful and discussions can be made about the overall performance of students as well as for each student seperately.

- I'd say apart from the criticism of feedback not always arriving on time (which was difficult to predict to our situation being rather unprecedented), in doing our assignments, especially in assignment 2, when constructing a report a model answer might be helpful to people, myself included, on how to structure and what a good answer looks like, because as there is no model and no negative marking, one tends to overload the answer with too much content just to be on the safe side, so it perhaps would help streamline our answers and make them more concise.

- Integrate labs to lectures -- they were not closely related enough. This link between them should be more than just content-based. Use the same examples from the lectures in the labs to establish a contextual link between the two.

- It can be better if the feedbacks of the assignments are given back much quicker.

- Make the assignment instructions more clear and unambiguous. Provide meaningful human feedback for assignments. In the Q&A session, spend less time reiterating the worksheet and spend more time addressing student concerns.

- Make tutorials only an hour as opposed to 80-90 mins

- More detailed feedbacks.

- More live actions with the tutors

- More opportunities to get feedback on my progress

- No improvements, only complaints is due to covid not being able to meet a lot of people

- Once one thing derailed from a planned schedule, everything snowballed. Ideally this wouldn't happen.

- Perhaps substitute the labs for some other form of teaching. Personally, I did not find the lab exercises challenges and very interesting and therefore decided to stop doing them after the first couple weeks.

- Please use git or some other online repo system for the codes

- Shorten tutorials from 1.5 hours to 1 hour.

- Start assignment 1 a week later in the course, it was daunting to look at with no prior experience the week it came out, but the next week's lectures were massively helpful. More code along type things might be helpful for beginners.

- That the assignments were all released on schedule and consistent

- The assignments (at least, Assignment 1) was very challenging for people who had not programmed before. A possible improvement could be swapping A1 and A2, because A2 would have provided a lot more foundational knowledge as to how a project with multiple classes works, to then understand A1 better.
The assignments could have better feedback, but I understand this was a new system they were trying out.

The course had many organizational problems. I am completely new to Java, hence assignment 1 was extremely tough for me as the obscure language and framing of the instruction sheet were not helpful at all. The assignment took me more than 9 hours (the recommended period of time) to complete. I approximately spent 4-5 hours every day to complete the assignment. The mark allocation was also largely unfair to students who know nothing about Java, and that gave us a significant disadvantage. If the course could have allowed additional class time or videos where beginners could get their doubts clarified, it would have been more helpful.

The delays with assignments is obviously something which will be improved in future years. For assignment one I would have preferred more feedback on how I attained the mark I got rather than how to get a higher grade.

The description of the assignments, the feedback, the marking scheme.

The difficulty of assignment should be lower.

The feedback was a problem. I feel like when one of the main goals of this course was to not only learn programming, but also good practices, it would be nice to get better feedback on the code we have written.

The first assignment should have been swapped with a second, the third should have been released on time and because it was not it should have been reduced to only 20% and the others increased, have lost my Easter holiday not pleased :{

The first assignment's feedback was very poor. This was much better in the second assignment.

marking system

maybe go through content a bit faster towards the beginning and then slow down

whatever assignment 1 was marked by, also better organisation.
2. Informatics 1 - Object Oriented Programming

2.1) What advice would you give to a student taking this course in future?

- Always stay in track with completing the weekly tasks (lectures, notes, labs) so that you never are "out of shape".

- Be mentally prepared

- Do java before the course if you want top marks

- Do not feel too stressful when you meet challenges. Everything will be fine at the end.

- Do the assigned reading - it really boosts your learning.

- Documentation and report about your code if more important than you think

- Doing preview and corresponding exercises is good.

- Don't panic too much about not having experience and not having a great 1st year - there's plenty of people who also haven't any, and for 2nd year things will be much more balanced out.

- Do all the labs - practicing programming is the most important thing

- Don't worry about programming abilities, this course walks you through from the very basics of OOP to complex topics like inheritance, MVC structures, etc.

- Engage with the material actively and read Perditas book

- Focus on doing really well in the continuous assessment so there is less pressure on you to do well in the big assignments. Also don't spend too long on the assignments going beyond what was required because you will not be rewarded for it.

- Giving valuable feedback is always taken into consideration.

- Go to the paired programming, and interact with people on the course if you can.

- I would not suggest taking this course if it isn't required by your degree and you don't have a burning passion for programming, don't do it. It's too time consuming.

- Don't aim too high if you don't have Java experience. You are being set up for a poor mark.

- If something is not clear, make it crystal clear quickly. Either Google it or rewatch explanations in lectures. If you do not understand something, you will certainly forget about it, and building knowledge on missing or poorly constructed foundations is risky and does not a good programmer make.

- It's worse than Inf1A

- Java is not that bad as you may think.

- Just to keep on top of the materials and concepts. Also maintain good timekeeping and remember to consolidate your basic knowledge before trying to go above and beyond in assignments because the marker is not looking for the reinvention of the wheel for advanced features.

- Make sure to do the Lab Exercises and attend Pair Programming, they become useful when it comes to the Assignments.

- Make sure you focus on the basics in the assignment they count a lot more than you think.

- No advise needed. Everything was clear and well explained.

- Not much, just make sure you always try to lab exercises as learning the knowledge is one thing but actually putting it into practice is much harder, so doing the lab exercises will help people greatly.

- Obtain some knowledge about Java beforehand

- Put more emphasis on basic features and content we learned in the course.

- Start working on assignments early, and spend a lot of time on the labs, as with answers and clearly structured questions this is a huge help with getting use to writing programs

- Stay on top of lectures, do the labs. Practising is extremely important!

- Study a bit of java during the break.

- Study consistently, and avoid slacking off as this course is challenging and requires constant hard work. Prioritizing your work and not procrastinating, will not only help you keep up with the assignments but also keep your plate relatively free.

- There is a huge gap in ability levels, if you are already comfortable with Object-Orientated programming languages then you'll be quite comfortable throughout the course as long as you keep on top of coursework/lectures. If not, then I think it is quite hard - but I think pair-programming session + practicing/learning Java by yourself are very useful to get better, as well as knowing where to get help if
needed.

- This course demands a bit java background. First weeks might seem easy, but in Assignments some extracurricular knowledge is required to get A.
- Try your best to keep up to date with the current topic, as concepts build on top of each other.
- Understand what is required in the projects - don't focus solely on the coding if the write-up is key as well.
- Use piazza
- Watch and take notes from the lectures and enjoy the assignments.
- You should do some Java before the course, it will give you a ginormous leg-up. Also, the reports matter A LOT so make sure they're well-written and stuff.
- deadlines are hard, marking is harsh
- go to tutorials, do the lab exercises, use Piazza.
3. Informatics 1 - Object Oriented Programming

3.2) Please add any other comments you have about workshops, tutorials or labs on this course

- I preferred to do the lab work in my own time (I didn't like the pair programming), I could also pick and choose the interesting ones and go as fast as I liked.

- I understand the point of pair programming, but most of the time I felt like I am mostly just dictating what to write when the person was on a much lower level and we completed the task in an hour, when I could have done it alone in 15 minutes and move to other stuff I need to do. Tutorials were pretty nice, but could have been more fast-paced - less talking, more working. They could be also a bit harder.

- Labs are useful for me to deepen my understanding on Java.

- Labs were fun but I did not learn much (because I already knew the content). The demonstrator was very friendly.
  The tutorial was less fun as the tutor was monotone and sometimes forceful.

- Labs were great, workshops were okay. Pair programming was very nice.

- Labs were more effective than tutorials. Tutorials felt a little out of topic.

- Lot of people do not show up to tutorials/labs - it happened that I was the only one there.

- More labs will be better.

- My tutor was very good and had well run tutorials however there were sometimes too many files to try and open and work through in the time. Labs were quite useful however in future especially with everything being online currently, having larger groups of maybe 3 or 4 might be beneficial to be more productive in the lab sessions.

- Pair programming was very beneficial.

- Pair-programming labs were much more useful than tutorials in my experience, I had a good lab partner for all the labs and I think in the tutorials people are more likely to not participate because it is a larger group and are more wary of getting the answer correct when talking to the group.

- Since the labs have not been made compulsory, I tended to skip a lot of them which affected my java skill. If the labs were in some way marked or monitored, it would make students attempt them and incorporate practicing them in their daily schedule.

- The labs and tutorials are generally very helpful and well organized.

- The labs were interesting and engaging.
  The tutorials were a bit too long (90 mins on a Friday afternoon is hard to get motivated for...)

- The labs were not really challenging. The workshops were definitely a good shout, however them being online is not great with groups barely interacting etc. However not much can be done about that other than hope the situation resolves soon.

- The tutors were amazing.

- They were fine, pair programming was alright.

- Tutorials were catastrophically unhelpful, and I rarely felt the need to waste my time going to them. Labs, while a great tool, felt a little too disconnected from the content in lectures. With some more connection between them, they would be excellent.
  Pair-programming labs were extremely difficult online. It is simply too frustrating not being able to communicate with your partner fully, especially if they are struggling. It was a nice concept, but I personally did not find it suitable for online sessions, though it might work in person.

- Tutorials were nice but lengthy. The document usually took long to read, and usually tasks couldn't be completed in time.

- Tutorials were pointless.

- Tutorials were too long and I did not feel they were productive.

- Very little motivation to engage with this content. Getting credit for the work done in these would make them more worthwhile.

- We can combine tut groups with less active participants to bigger ones to improve the quality of discussion.

- pog
4. Informatics 1 - Object Oriented Programming

4.1) Please add any other comments you have about the presentation of course materials online and their accessibility.

- All materials were easy to access. Given the circumstances, online pre-recorded lectures were a good alternative to live lectures.
- All resources were easily accessible and structured in a convenient way.
- Course materials were very accessible.
- Everything was well laid out and easily accessible.
- Great.
- I thought it was very good - it would be nice if all the lectures were on YouTube (and in order)
- I thought the weekly announcements were very useful and the emails before sessions like inf connect were also nice.
- I would have preferred one 50 min recorded lecture each week rather than lots of smaller ones and maybe using half of the live lectures for content, half Q&A
- Lectures were clear and on time. Assignments being late enough such that the deadline has been shifted into our holidays is not great.
- Lectures were fantastic, but often time, when I would need to go back and find material within a lecture, I would spend a while searching for it. They would benefit from some sort of bookmarking system or structural outline documentation to help search through lectures for information.
- Like almost all the courses done this year, the overall quality of presentation is quite low and definitely feels like it's been thrown together by people with no experience in making online content.
- Nothing to add
- Online lectures were quite good, clear and easy-to-follow.
- Perdita's lecture were really good
- Recorded lectures on YouTube were very useful.
- The learn page set up was amazing. Very clear where everything was.
- The lectures were very clear and well presented.
- The material online was accessible. Learn page was also very clearly set up and it was easy to navigate.
- The recorded lectures were so soothing and beautiful. Demonstrations were integrated nicely too.
- These were the best recorded lectures I have had in all my courses.
- Very accessible and clearly laid out
- Very accessible.
- Very good.
- Well done on the recorded videos!
- Youtube videos are better than Media Hopper
- Longer videos that explain the material with examples
- pog
7. Informatics 1 - Object Oriented Programming

7.1) Reflecting on your experience of hybrid teaching and learning on this course, what has worked well for you?

- Any work involving credit forced me to engage much more with the learning.
- Can't say, because it definitely was not hybrid.
- Code grade
- Do the lectures (about mid week) while having the quiz open. Spent time when I can on the assignment. Do lab work in-between assignments
- I had friends from High School and a few others on the course which helps significantly, but finding peers has been a real challenge this year so I imagine people have struggled a lot more than usual.
- I loved the automatic extensions. A real lifesaver.
- I really enjoyed the fact that everything was accessible online and it was clear where everything was - I didn't have to organize a whole search party to find one file.
- I think there should be face-to-face labs to discuss programs we write
- It wasn't hybrid, simply online. The lectures and Q&As (after about week 3) worked surprisingly well. Tutorials and peer programming probably would have been better in person.
- It wasn't hyrbid, it was online and the live labs were good
- Lectures were great
- Lectures whenever, and wherever, has been unbelievably useful.
  Tutorials have been terrible. They do not work online. I find them especially anxiety-inducing.
- Mostly fine.
- Mostly works fine for me.
- My course was conducted entirely online. It was useful to create my own timetable as lectures were recorded. Also watching lectures in x2 speed was useful.
- My favorite part were the labs and the InfPals extra sessions.
- Not a lot, it was a pain to get in the rhythm.
- Not hybrid this semester
  Video lectures
  Labs being a website and well made
- Online lectures, really gives you the freedom to work when you want to. Assignments that can be done at home.
- Prerecorded lectures is a benefit as I can watch them whenever, however quickly, and always go back to them if needed.
- Recorded lectures and flexible time management
- Spacing out my work, while leaving myself time to relax has been a major benefit for me.
- The fact that I was able to watch the lectures in my own pace.
- The lab sessions gave us chances to interact with other students one-on-one which was great. Good lectures, as I said.
- The lack of live lectures via Teams, Zoom or blackboard was a bit disheartening but recorded lectures were good.
  Labs worked well online.
- The lectures being prerecorded well in advance, it meant if I had a relaxed week I could watch an extra one so I would have fewer to watch during hectic weeks
- The lectures being well organised and sectioned
- The online lectures were really good and the piazza forum was very helpful, there would always be a response without having to wait too long either.
- The prerecorded lectures in this course were quite good, and paired programming worked well enough over the internet
- The weekly live sessions have been very helpful to feel a part of the course and provide some personality and humour to bring the cohort together as a community.
- The weekly live sessions were good.
There weren't any in-person classes this semester.

Online Q&A sessions worked really well; I think there were probably more questions asked than if it were in-person because it was easier for people.

This course was completely online. Specifically for this year I believe it was the right decision.

This course was well adapted to hybrid learning, overall it worked very well.

Using Teams rather than Blackboard Collaborate

Watching lectures asynchronously has helped me manage my time more effectively. Submitting assignments electronically also reduced waste.

this course was not hybrid

tutorials, labs
Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience of hybrid teaching and learning on this course that would help us improve our approach?

As mentioned in the above section about combining tut groups dynamically.

At first there was live coding, but that dwindled down

**BEFTER COURSE STRUCTURE**

Breakout rooms and smaller groups work well for communication between a small number of individuals, but they almost always completed stopped or impaired teaching in some way. Bigger groups, led by one individual, where the participants watch and listen is far more useful and make me less anxious.

I have not been on campus once and I spent a whole semester waiting. Hybrid implies it has both aspects and there has not been anything in person with this course.

I really liked how they asked us to feedback every week and listened to our feedback and took it on board, I think this approach should be taken by all the other courses too.

I think corresponding exercises are important: I mean, coding is the best way to test us rather than answering questions

In addition to live Q&A sessions, have a couple of lectures, at least, live.

In the future I'd hope the course would keep everything online the way it was done this semester - lectures and self-learning resources, but switch workshops and other revision activities to in-person.

More assessed practises

More live sections to interact

Nothing to improve, just sad not being in person

Online pair-programming can be a bit awkward and difficult to communicate. The mentimeter idea was very good as all the questions were answered.

Perhaps live lectures every now and then could be a motivating and engaging factor.

**THERE WAS NO HYBRID TEACHING IT WAS ALL ONLINE STOP CALLING IT HYBRID**

There is little opportunity for students to interact digitally.

as mentioned previously, more content taught live rather than recorded.
11. Thank you -

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your response and comments will be fully considered.

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Please provide any additional comments you may have about the course, the teaching on the course or the resources that support it in the box below.

- As much as this course has been a shambles, I've been much more relaxed this semester with the reduced workload so I am happier for it.
- Based on the content, I definitely could have enjoyed this course. In reality, I did not.
- Enjoyed it overall - the teaching was of high quality and the course was well structured. Those involved with running the course were friendly and always willing to help with any queries.
- Love the teaching of this course. Highlight of my week was the QA sessions with Fiona and David. Great organisers :-)
- Several students I know found this course to be basic and lacking in difficulty. It is difficult to be challenged intellectually when I already use the course content daily. The requirement for this course should be substituted with an option to take a more rewarding course.
- Thank you for organising such an amazing course, I had a lot of fun throughout the duration of the course.
- Thank you very much for the course!
- The feedback for assignment 2 was much clearer than for assignment 1. I hope feedback for assignment 3 will also be informative.
- This has been an amazing course and I've thoroughly enjoyed it. The lecturers have been fantastic and the assignments are all very creative and fun to do!
- poggers