

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>

This information is provided for students and staff at the University of Edinburgh: **you may not redistribute or reuse it without permission.** If you would like the information in another format or want to use it in your own publication then please contact the Informatics Teaching Organisation at <http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/teaching/contact>

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

1. Honours Project (Informatics) [INFR10044_20-21_SS1_YR_ONLINE_CACORE19] -

1.7) What did you find most valuable about the course?

- Contact time with supervisors who are expert in the area.
- Devising my own test environments and challenging myself
- Feedback from my supervisor has always been really helpful and to the point. They pointed me into directions I was not aware of and I have learnt a lot from that.
- Getting a little taste of research and doing independent work from first principles on something
- Learning about what research is like has been useful for me since I wasn't sure what to expect going into a very research heavy project.
- Meeting with supervisor
- The freedom to manage time and pace of my project.
- The work you do is pretty in-depth and you'll probably learn a lot of new things. It's also a great way to add a big-sized project to your resume (assuming you're implementing something).
- Useful to gain skills from making a large project.
- Working on a project alone and without help or support from peers.
- Working with my supervisor and other students on my project
- You get to do your own thing for the most part.
- meetings with supervisor

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

- A real and fair adjustment to the submission deadline that reflects and takes into account the situation most of not all students are experiencing in regards to increased coursework assignments and a reduced number of examinations. I have almost nothing to do in May yet every piece of work worth my grade is due in the same 4 week period. Harder circumstances this year deserves less of an adjustment than the previous year apparently...
- Add a lot more of a community, because right now it just feels like we are going at it completely alone.
- Although my supervisor was helpful, they barely had any time to supervise one student (let alone supervising many students). This made all the meetings very rushed and did not allow for any in-depth discussions. Moreover, throughout both semesters, they only replied back to one email (out of five).
- Communicate deadline and expected outcomes of the deadline with more notice.
- Don't give CS students math based projects.
- For self-proposed projects; there should be additional guidelines to help.
- I'd like to see more interaction between students (i.e. sharing our progress with other students who work on similar topics, getting feedback from them) as well as asking questions on Piazza to instructors/organisers. I'm not aware of any Piazza forum.
- Limiting 40 pages for dissertation is a little bit challenging. Maybe different restrictions for texts vs images?
- MArking scheme very unclear, deadline clashed with other CWs, very little guidance from oirganisers.
- The course needs to be planned more around level 10 and level 11 courses. This year, coursework for other courses was much heavier and this resulted in less time for the project. The organizers granted a small extension after students requested one, but other schools have definitely been more considerate to students. The project needs to be balanced around all level 10 and 11 courses so that there is sufficient time to complete it.
- The deadline is unrealistic for the extra workload that courses have given students due to covid. Almost all courses have switched from exams to coursework resulting in a much heavier workload this year than what students last year had to undertake. Futhermore, students last year had a no detriment policy meaning that this course could be discounted if it impacted the students grade negatively.
Therefore, not only did they have less work than this years students to complete, they were also given guarantees that if they did badly, it would not count.
- The organizational aspect of this course is bad, interim presentations (to both markers) and the progress surveys are largely a waste of time since no useful feedback came out of them. I think as long as students have regular contact time with their supervisors, these artificial ways to 'track progress' should not exist.
- There was not very much course-wide communication, which isn't necessary, but at some points it would have been nice to get a more general directive and/or sooner.
- taught workshops on how to research, write well, conduct user studies etc

2. Honours Project (Informatics) -

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

- As always, start early, both for implementation and write-up. The coursework load nowadays will leave you very little time to do your dissertation.
- Ask your potential supervisor if they have time to actually supervise you.
- Choose your project carefully as you are going to spend a large portion of your 4th year on this. Do some work in the first semester. Start writing dissertation early.
- Don't do a self-proposed. If you do, be very clear about the help and support you're looking for from your supervisor
- Don't pick a topic you don't know much about, because teaching yourself something theoretical and challenging is really hard and could take too much time.
- Get most of your research/coding done by Christmas break. You'll be grateful you don't have as much stress from Sem2's other courses' courseworks.
- I highly recommend two things: if you already have an idea of a cool project you'd like to build/research, then definitely Self-Propose. At the very least, pick a topic that really interests you. You'll be working on this project for a whole year and it'll be challenging, so being excited about the topic will really help you push forward and get a better mark. My second tip is to pick a project that builds/ implements something because you'll be able to add it to your Resume as large project.
- Invest early on in getting the right project. Take notes on potential project ideas starting early on in university. Don't overstress, just do your best. If the project goals have to be readjusted, that is ok.
- It is poorly organised and the organisers do not care about the workload of other classes.
- Make a weekly plan for the semester. Expect implementation to take twice as long as you think.
- Prepare to let other classes slide in May and April as you try to prioritise the honours project that was last in your ranking
- Start early and work consistently. Schedule time to spend on the project. It's definitely not something you can do last minute.
- Start writing report very early.
- Take lots of notes during meetings with your supervisor so that you don't forget things you will need months later when you write the report.
- cater the project to the skills you have + want to develop further

3. Honours Project (Informatics) -

^{3.1)} Please add any other comments you have about the presentation of course materials online and their accessibility.

- All the materials can be found from one page, but more often than not, you will have a hard time finding things that you know is there.
- Course website isn't great, links to previous projects should be more obvious.
- I much prefer the course content and submission not being on Learn. The webpage is well organized and the submission (though I've not done that yet) seems quite clear and easy to use, especially with allowing submission of code after the deadline as long as an md5 hash is provided with the report.
- I think I would prefer if all the materials were on Learn rather than the Informatics website. The interface on Learn makes it easier to find things.
- N/A
- Not on learn like every other course is.
- The inf.ed.ac.uk honours project website wasn't super easy to navigate and find specific information on. DPMT could be improved to make the selection process easier.

6. Honours Project (Informatics) -

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

- Motivation is very problematic when doing everything remotely. Nothing about it was hybrid.
- No hybrid teaching, all entirely online
- Nothing.
- Online was fine.
- The weekly meetings and calls. Although might be inconvenient time for me sometimes, the teachers were very understanding if I cannot turn up and have other ways of updating them my feedback. Things are flexible basically.
- The writing workshop was recorded and it was useful to have that.
- nothing. keeping up with classes and assignments has been very tough.
- weekly online meetings with supervisor

- 6.2) 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?
- I think remote working has lowered by performance in this course. My productivity and general ability to get work done was made more difficult, especially due to online meetings instead of in person meetings.
 - Listen to the student reps (who represent the students) before making decisions that are in our "best interest".
 - Live interactive classrooms work well- we clear our doubts and it is more to the pace.
 - N/A (2 Counts)
 - There was nothing hybrid about it. Also, listen to your students when they say they are struggling. The stress levels and work load inf4 students are currently under is ridiculous and I don't know anyone who hasn't considered dropping out or taking a year off. When we say we are struggling, don't try to tell us that's not the case, or we're abusing the system or any of the other ridiculous things the staff told us. Listen to us and make the necessary adjustments. Not only has everything moved online this year, making learning and staying motivated more difficult, many more students are dealing with additional personal circumstances due to COVID and I don't feel this was listened to by the honours project staff.
 - Well, it doesn't work so hope vaccines work and bring back in-person learning.
 - changing accessibility of library resources has hindered research / access to literature

7. Thank you -

7.1)

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

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.

- I think the communication from the organizers to students has been quite bad. It wasn't clear to me that, once the new covid mitigation policies came into place, steps were taken to ensure that the honours project would also have extra measures like telling markers that they should be more lenient. Not allowing an automatic extension as suggested by the university wide mitigation measures and only giving a 12 day extension when many students showed that they were struggling was, in my opinion, very inconsiderate. The response from the staff was outright rude in some situations ("student mob" is never a phrase that should be used when students respectfully request something). Throughout the year and especially in semester 2 it felt as if the organizers expected students to perform as well as previous year groups even though we are still in the midst of a pandemic. However students had to lower their expectations from the staff as a whole because of the pandemic.

- It was very difficult to find the course resources and events, learn page seemed completely empty.

- My supervisor Aggelos had an approach of doing everything with the least amount of supervision and support possible. if someone has to take an honors proposal with him, pls be careful.

- Resources are hard to find. You have to go through lots of pdfs and presentation to find vital info. Things like latex classes were not very up to date nor open source font friendly.

The marking scheme is very harsh. You need every single little small detail to be done well before you even qualify for the next marking category. Seems unfair, and demotivating.

- This course has been the worst course i have undertaken at University. The students made it abundantly clear that they were struggling with the workload of courses switching to be coursework only based yet NO accomodations were made to support students in the Honour Project.

Barbra is quoted saying "we have no evidence that students are struggling with this years current workload" which, in all honest, is complete and utter nonsense. We have emailed and had several meetings dicussing our struggles with the current workload.

I will NOT be returning to the University of Edinburgh to complete a Masters degree due to the sheer disregard for student satisfaction and poor management of a course that accounts for the largest portion of our degree.