



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
informatics

Curriculum Review

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Why now?

- Last major UG curriculum changes: 2003-4
 - 2015 TPR recommended more frequent review
 - Some incremental changes since then (mainly UG3) but no overall review
- Massive growth in student numbers (UG, MSc)
 - Some delivery systems becoming unsustainable
- Growth in staff, new areas of strength
 - Bottom-up course proposals, no overall view
- Mismatch between expectations/preparation of (some) MSc students and our offerings

Dealing with mismatch in MSc

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- Survey of student expectations: just finished
 - Some difficult/long-term issues
 - Some easy wins
 - Caveat: 39% response rate (131 students)

Survey: high-level points

- Respondents appreciate our research focus
 - 98% said learning about "cutting-edge ideas and recent research" is important/very important goal.
 - Many praised these aspects of our courses/lecturers
 - Caveat: non-respondents may be different...

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- Most common (curriculum) difficulties:
 - too much work/too little time
 - problems with expected level of mathematics
 - exam clusters/want feedback in December

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- Landing page with guidance about maths prep
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 - most MSc students will have 2-3 marks by Jan., including IJP and foundational courses for most popular areas.

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- Consider short-term improvements to project allocation/supervision model.

MSc projects

- Do **not** require research! They **do** require
 - A chance to show “proficiency in research and/or analytical skills relevant to advanced work” (Uni)
 - “a significant project of research, investigation or development” (SCQF)
 - A chance to “deal with complex issues”, “demonstrate self-direction and originality”, “critical self-evaluation” (BCS)
- Do **not** require every student do a unique project; variations on a theme are fine.
- So, please think flexibly.
 - NB: IRP is now **IPP** (Informatics Project Proposal)

MSc projects: variations on a theme

- Won't work for everyone, but may for some.
Examples:
 - Build a machine translation system for language pair X-Y
 - Design a game to teach a specified security concept
 - Build an app for a specified task, add three of your own features
 - Pick a University web site and redesign it
 - Given a dataset/task, explore one method to solve it and compare to other students' choices.
- Could allow you to make fewer distinct proposals and/or hold some group meetings.

Longer term: UG and MSc

- Will convene curriculum review committee
 - Paul Anderson, Bjoern Franke, Nigel Goddard, Boris Grot, Don Sannella, Rik Sarkar
 - Volunteer from IPAB?
- Lots on the plate:
 - Review of pre-honours courses and UG degree structure (incl project supervision model)
 - Review of MSc structure (incl projects)
- Stay tuned for updates...