Machine Learning and Pattern Recognition (MLPR)

Response to student feedback in 2017/18 course survey

In addition to the main course survey, I also read ~220 responses to a mid-semester survey, and had many individual conversations with students in the class during the year. I found all of these interactions helpful. Thank you.

- I'm happy that the vast majority of the class enjoyed the course. There was some constructive criticism, which I take seriously. I won't be able to address some of the individual things requested, that involve trade-offs, opinions on educational theory I disagree with, or that are beyond my resources. However, I have considered every comment, and will continue to work hard to improve the course.

- The course assessment remains mainly exam-based, appropriate for the learning outcomes of this course. The course average was high, and many students did very well. But the variance in marks is higher than average in Informatics, and there are still more failures than I want (although fewer than historically). Many of the questions are technical/mathematical and conceptual, which some students find disproportionately hard. There are other, more practical machine learning courses on offer.

- The course website has more information, including examples of questions in a background self-test.

- MLPR is a popular course, and the lecture theatre is likely to overflow in the first few lectures while students are still choosing courses. I'm actually astonished that there weren't any complaints about that in the survey — I can only hope that this year's class will be as understanding. I've done what I can: 1) As on the website, live-streaming and recordings are available. 2) I will be at four additional (entirely optional) drop-in sessions in weeks 1–2, so everyone can ask questions in person if they want to.

Iain Murray, September 2018