



Course Proposal Form

Please see Page 2 for instructions on which parts of this form to complete, whom to consult with to avoid unnecessary effort, and where to send the completed form.

Proposer(s):

Date:

Cover page: Basic permanent course information

Unless otherwise noted, items in this section are entered into EUCLID and **cannot** be changed without creating an entirely new course.

Course Name	Methods for Causal Inference
Course Acronym <i>(used by the School only, e.g., for the Sortable Course List)</i>	MCI
Course Level If the course is only available to MSc students, then it must be classed as Postgraduate. All other courses, regardless of level, are Undergraduate.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate
Normal Year Taken	<input type="checkbox"/> UG1 <input type="checkbox"/> UG2 <input type="checkbox"/> UG3 <input type="checkbox"/> UG4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UG5 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MSc
Also available in years <i>[This can be changed later if need be.]</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> UG1 <input type="checkbox"/> UG2 <input type="checkbox"/> UG3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UG4 <input type="checkbox"/> UG5 <input type="checkbox"/> MSc
SCQF Credit Level Level 8 should normally be used for pre-honours courses. Level 10 should normally be used for optional UG3 courses (so UG4 students may also take them) and for courses aimed mainly at UG4 students. Level 11 should be used for courses aimed mainly at MSc students, whether or not UG4 students can also take them.	<input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 11
SCQF Credit Points	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 40 <input type="checkbox"/> 60 <input type="checkbox"/> 80 <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Delivery Location	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Campus <input type="checkbox"/> On-line Distance Learning
Course Type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standard (default) <input type="checkbox"/> Dissertation <input type="checkbox"/> Online Distance Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: Placement, Student Led Individually Created Course, Year Abroad)
Marking Scheme By default, courses use a numerical marking scheme. If you wish to use a grade-only marking scheme, your course proposal below should justify this.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standard (numerical) <input type="checkbox"/> Letter grade only

Guidance for remaining sections:

For an initial course proposal, please complete the **cover page and Section 1 (Case for Support)**, which asks you to describe the need for this course and to provide an overview of the course design, including the learning outcomes. **Please discuss your plans as early as possible with the head of Curriculum Review to avoid unnecessary effort.**

Send the form with these sections completed to the BoS Academic Secretary and head of Curriculum Review (listed on the BoS page) to obtain their comments before filling out the remainder of the form.

If a full proposal is invited, please complete the remaining sections and send to iss-bos@inf.ed.ac.uk.

2. Student-facing course description and additional feedback and assessment information.

This section provides most of the information students see in the DRPS entry for this course, as well as related details for BoS consideration.

3. Further information for BoS consideration: sample materials.

4. Additional Course Details required for DRPS. *[Administrative information such as delivery timing and prerequisites.]*

5. Placement in degree programme tables. *[Required for all level 9-11 courses; used to determine where the course will be added to existing degree programme tables.]*

6. Comments from colleagues. *[All course proposal should be sent to relevant colleagues in the area as well as to the appropriate year organizer and BoS Academic Secretary for comment in good time before the BoS meeting. Use this section to indicate what feedback has been solicited and received.]*

Colour coding and item-by-item guidance:

Guidance is provided in italics for each item. Please also refer to the guidance for new course proposals at <http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/student-services/committees/board-of-studies/course-proposal-guidelines>. Examples of previous course proposal submissions are available on the [past meetings page](http://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/admin/committees/bos/meetings-directory) <http://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/admin/committees/bos/meetings-directory> but note that the proposal form was updated in Jan 2019.

Sections in gold are for student view and are required before a course can be entered into DRPS. You must complete these sections even if your course has already been approved based on other documentation.

Sections in orange are for School use but are still required for all courses (even those that have already been approved based on other documentation).

Section in gray are for consideration by the Board of Studies. They are normally required for all new course proposals but may be omitted in some circumstances (e.g., for invited course proposals) if you obtain permission in advance.

1. Case for support

This section is for consideration by the Board of Studies. The final two boxes (Learning Outcomes, Graduate Attributes) will also go into the student-facing course description.

Overall contribution to teaching portfolio and relation to existing curriculum

Please explain (a) what motivates the course proposal (e.g. a previous course having become outdated/inappropriate, an emergent or maturing research area or new research activity in the School, offerings of our competitors) and (b) how it relates to existing courses and degree programmes (including any prerequisite courses). Every new course should make an important contribution to the delivery of our [Degree Programmes](#).

Causal inference is an important emergent area in AI and data science as research is moving away from merely associational statements towards cause-effect statements. Being able to develop and/or apply causal inference techniques has broad applications in social and biomedical sciences, e.g., in answering questions such as “How effective is a given treatment for curing/preventing a disease?” or “Which genetic variants can causally increase the risk of disease and hence be targeted by drugs?” or “What economic policy could have prevented the 2008 financial crisis?”

These questions cannot be addressed using traditional statistical approaches. Teaching modern causal frameworks together with recent important developments in Machine Learning is therefore a necessity. In the UK, and at Edinburgh in particular, we can certainly benefit from training our students in this area. In fact, other universities based in the UK (e.g. Bristol), the USA (e.g. UC Berkeley, UCLA, ...), Canada (Montréal and McGill) and Europe (e.g. Amsterdam, Copenhagen, ...) have been teaching such courses for a number of years.

Other courses in this degree programme, in particular “Machine Learning and Pattern Recognition” (MLPR) and “Bioinformatics I and II”, fit nicely together with this course.

Target audience and expected demand

Describe the type of student the course would appeal to in terms of background, level of ability, and interests, and the expected class size for the course based on anticipated demand. A good justification would include some evidence, e.g. by referring to projects in an area, class sizes in similar courses, employer demand for the skills taught in the course, etc

This course will appeal to students with interests in Data Science, Machine Learning, applications of AI in Biomedicine and bioinformatics.

Similar to MLPR, this course requires practical mathematical application of algebra, vectors and matrices, calculus, probability, and problem solving. I would propose this course for the second semester, for students who have taken MLPR or have had equivalent training.

Estimated class size: ~50 students, Level: 11.

This course is informally running for 7 lectures for Biomedical AI CDT students and other aligned postgraduate students. The attendance is currently ~30 people. The course has not been advertised for undergraduate students.

Anticipated Resource Requirements

Estimate how much lecturing, tutoring, exam preparation and marking effort will be needed in steady state, and any additional resources needed to set the course up initially. Provide estimates relative to class size where applicable and discuss how support staff will be recruited and supervised, if the class is likely to be very large. Please mention any scaling limits due to equipment or space. If equipment is required, say how it will be procured and maintained.]

Lecture time: 1 hour per week for 10 weeks

~70% of Lecture slides are already available together with corresponding lecture recordings

Estimated class size: ~50 students

I will be providing office hours for this course, 2 hours per week.

Exam: Two take-home exams, 24 hours to complete. Exam 1, week 6 (50% of total mark). Exam 2, week 10 (50% of total mark).

No other equipment is required

Quotas, special arrangements or unusual characteristics

Please specify if this course requires any special arrangements such as quotas or other registration arrangements; is a collaboration with another school or institution, or has other atypical characteristics that may affect finances or student registration. Further justification/information may be requested for such courses.

NA

Narrative description of the course aims and structure

Please describe the main goals of the course and how the course design will allow students to achieve those goals. This section should be consistent with the student-facing information provided below, but should provide additional information to help colleagues at BoS understand the vision and structure of the course. This description may refer to the learning outcomes and graduate attributes (next two boxes) and should explain how activities such as tutorials, labs, or in-lecture activities will support them, and how the proposed assessments will assess them.

For courses that are important pre-requisites for other courses, this section may also provide content/syllabus information which is too detailed for the student-facing description, such as a lecture-by-lecture syllabus.

Aims and Structure of the course:

- Estimating causal effects
- Randomised trials vs observational data
- **Part I: Causal Effect Estimation**
- Rubin's framework: Potential outcomes with observed and unobserved confounders
- Pearl's framework: Structural causal models with observed and unobserved confounders
- Computer simulations and numerical exercises in Python
- **Part II: Causal Discovery**
- Constraint-based algorithms and Score-based algorithms
- Functional Causal Models
- Computer simulations and numerical exercises in Python

Teaching of the theory, followed by illustrative examples from biomedicine and social sciences, together with appropriate computer simulations and numerical exercise for the students to work through, will support the training process.

The two course assessments, including analytical and numerical exercises will concretely assess the students' understanding and assimilation of the course material. I will provide individual-level feedback on the course work.

This course will encourage interactive discussions amongst students at Sol with different backgrounds/interest (in terms of data application), e.g. bioinformatics, machine learning and statistics. This is important because causality is an area that requires strong collaborations across different disciplines, including subject experts and quantitative researchers.

The learning outcomes are specified in the box below.

This course is not a pre-requisite for any other course.

Summary of Intended Learning Outcomes (MAXIMUM OF 5)

List the learning outcomes of the course. These must be assessable (i.e., observable), so must specify what the student should be able to do concretely, not simply what they should "understand". Use concrete verbs that indicate (a) what type of assessment would be appropriate, and (b) what level of knowledge/thinking is expected (from recall to analysis to novel creation). **Example verbs:** define, explain, implement, compare, justify. Assessments (described later) should be tied to the learning outcomes.

Outcomes should typically focus more on the types of thinking/skills developed than on the detailed course content, and the level of thinking should be appropriate to the level of the course: outcomes for a Level 11 course should include more higher-level thinking skills than for a Level 8 course. Further guidance on writing learning outcomes can be found at <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/tds/assets/documents/res-writinglearningoutcomes.pdf>

On completion of this course, the student will be able to

- 1) Explain the difference between causal and associational estimation and justify why causal inference techniques are necessary to derive meaning from observational data
- 2) Explain the difference between randomised trials vs observational studies related to public health data
- 3) Learn and apply foundational causal estimation techniques using two major frameworks: (i) Rubin's Potential Outcomes and (ii) Pearl's Structural (graphical) causal models to simulated examples and real world data, in the presence of observed and unobserved variables
- 4) Be able to modify/repurpose a current technique in order to apply it to a particular problem of interest
- 5) Acquire a foundation to start developing techniques in causal inference and causal discovery for research in this area.

Graduate Attributes, Personal & Professional Skills

List the personal attributes and generic transferrable skills this course will help develop. Examples include

Cognitive skills: problem-solving, critical/analytical thinking, handling ambiguity

Responsibility, autonomy, effectiveness: independent learning, self-awareness and reflection, creativity, decision-making, leadership, organization and time management, flexibility and change management, ethical/social/professional awareness and responsibility, entrepreneurship

Communication: interpersonal/teamwork skills, verbal and/or written communication, cross-cultural or cross-disciplinary communication

problem-solving, critical/analytical thinking, independent learning, cross-cultural or cross-disciplinary communication

2. Student-facing course description and additional feedback and assessment information

Except where noted, all fields are required and will go into the DRPS entry for the course (for use by students). **Important:** any text in DRPS is effectively a contract with students, so should not include details that are likely to change from year to year.

<p>Summary Description <i>Provide a brief official description of the course, around 100 words. This should be worded in a student-friendly way, it is the part of the descriptor a student is most likely to read. If this course replaces another course, please say so in this summary.</i></p>	
<p>Keywords <i>Give a list of searchable keywords.</i></p>	
<p>Course Description <i>A more detailed student-facing description of the course, which should normally include (a) a more in-depth academic description of the learning aims, nature and context of the course, (b) a rough outline of the content or syllabus, often as bullet points, and (c) a description of how the course will be taught, how students are expected to engage with their learning and how they will be expected to evidence and demonstrate their achievement of the intended learning outcomes.]</i></p>	
<p>Assessment Weightings: <i>These should correspond approximately to the proportion of learning outcomes that each component assesses. More than 30% coursework requires specific justification. The expectation for a 10pt course is 20% coursework with the equivalent of one 15-20hr assessed assignment (but possibly split into smaller pieces). See 'components of assessment' below.</i></p>	<p>Written Exam _____% Practical Exam _____% (for courses with programming exams) Coursework _____%</p>
<p>Further Assessment Information <i>Provide any further information that should go on DRPS for students. E.g., if the assessment includes required group work or if students must pass some individual component of assessment as well as the course overall.</i></p>	
<p>Components of assessment and time spent on assignments (for BoS only) <i>If not already included in the course narrative description, please describe the type of assessments (oral presentation, report, programming, etc) and how each component of assessment will assess the intended learning outcomes. Where coursework involves group work, it is important to remember that every student has to be assessed individually for their</i></p>	

<p>contribution to any jointly produced piece of work.</p> <p>Also estimate how many hours students will spend on assignments. Please see the School policy on Workload and Assessment, which states that students should not be expected to spend more than 6-7 hrs/wk per 10 credits, including contact hours.</p> <p>Note that it is often desirable to include formative assignments which are not formally assessed but submitted for feedback, often in combination with peer assessment.</p>	
<p>Feedback Information</p> <p>Provide a high-level description of how and what type of feedback will be provided to students, for inclusion in DRPS.</p>	
<p>Additional Feedback Information (for BoS use only)</p> <p>If not already included in the course narrative, provide further details on planned feedback arrangements. This includes how course feedback is solicited from the class and responded to, as well as what feedback students will get (either on work that contributes to their final mark, or not).</p> <p>The University is committed to a baseline of principles regarding feedback that we have to implement at every level, and the School encourages submission of at least one piece of written work for formative feedback.</p> <p>In general, formative feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should say how students can improve. • Need not be on individual work (e.g., consider a lecture or document summarizing common issues.) • Can include oral feedback during labs/tutorials • Can include feedback from peers • Clickers/TopHat/equivalents can provide in-class feedback for both students and lecturer. • Is returned in time for other forms of assessment to which it relates, to allow feedforward. 	

Breakdown of Learning and Teaching Activities

State how many hours students spend on each part of the course. The total should be 10 x course credits, but please also see the [School policy on Workload and Assessment](#) which states that students should not be expected to spend more than 6-7 hrs/wk per 10 credits, including contact hours.

Assume 10 weeks of lectures slots and 10 weeks of tutorials, but these need not all be used. As a guideline, a 10-pt course typically has 18-20 lecture hours, but should have only around 15 lectures of examinable material; the rest should be used for guest lectures, revision sessions, introductions to assignments, etc.

Reading List/Learning Resources

You are encouraged to create resource lists using [LEGANTO](#)

Contact hours

Hours	Type
	Lecture Hours
	Seminar/Tutorial Hours
	Dissertation Project Supervision Hours
	Supervised practical/Workshop/Studio hours
	Feedback/Feedforward hours
	Summative assessment hours
	Revision Session Hours

Non-contact hours

Hours	Type
	Directed Learning & Independent Learning hours

Total hours:

3. Further information for BoS consideration: sample materials

A full proposal for a new course must include examples of exercises and assessment. Please provide these below, along with publicity information if the course is to be advertised outwith the School.

<p>Course information and publicity <i>The course web page (typically the Learn landing page) will be linked from the Sortable Course List, and information such as timetables and assignment deadlines must be made available prior to the start of the academic year. Please specify here if any additional info/publicity is needed for your course: typically only if it is aimed largely at non-Sol students.</i></p>	
<p>Sample tutorial/lab sheet questions <i>Provide a list of tutorial questions and answers and/or samples of lab sheets. These need not be fully fleshed out but should indicate what sort of exercises will be provided to help students learn the material.</i></p>	
<p>Sample assessment materials <i>If the course is primarily assessed by exam, provide a sample exam question with model answers. Any non-standard exam format must be justified. The online list of past exam papers gives an idea of typical and alternative exam formats: http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/teaching/exam_papers/.</i></p> <p><i>If the course is largely or primarily assessed by coursework, provide a sketch of a possible assignment with an estimate of effort against each sub-task and a description of marking criteria.</i></p>	
<p>Any other relevant materials <i>Include anything else that is relevant, possibly in the form of links. If you do not want to specify a set of concrete readings for the official course descriptor, please list examples here.</i></p>	

4. Additional Course Details for DRPS

Except where otherwise noted, these fields are required for entry into EUCLID and will be visible to students in the DRPS entry.

<p>Planned Academic Year of Delivery <i>(The first year you anticipate the course running, e.g. AY 2019-20)</i></p>	
<p>Course Organiser <i>(By default, the course proposer)</i></p>	
<p>Intended Delivery Period</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Semester 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Semester 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Full Year <input type="checkbox"/> Summer <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):</p>
<p>Timetable considerations/conflicts <i>For School use. Please specify any constraints to be considered (e.g. overlap of popular combinations, other specialism courses, external courses etc). Include whether the semester delivery is constrained or could be flexible.</i></p>	
<p>Is this course available to visiting students?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (default) <input type="checkbox"/> No If no, please provide a justification here:</p>
<p>Required pre-requisite courses <i>Use sparingly: these are enforced in PATH and can only be waived by approval from the School's Curriculum Approval Officer. Note that cross-year required pre-requisites may prevent MSc students from registering; consider using recommended pre-requisites or "other requirements" instead.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (please specify full course name(s) and code(s)):</p>
<p>Recommended pre-requisite courses</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (please specify full course name(s) and code(s)):</p>
<p>Required co-requisite courses <i>Specify any courses that must be taken in parallel with the existing course. Note that this leads to a timetabling constraint that should be mentioned elsewhere in the proposal.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (please specify full course name(s) and code(s)):</p>

<p>Prohibited Combinations <i>Specify any courses that may not be taken in combination with the proposed course].</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (please specify full course name(s) and code(s)):</p>
<p>Other Requirements/Additional Information <i>This information is often used by MSc students and students from other Schools to see if they have appropriate background without having done our School's courses. So please avoid course titles, instead list specific knowledge and skills (such as mathematical concepts, programming ability or specific languages, etc).</i></p> <p><i>Also list any other constraints on registration, for example: "Only available to 4th Year Informatics students including those on joint degrees." or "This course is open to all Informatics students including those on joint degrees, and to students in the School of Mathematics. Other external students whose DPT does not list this course should seek permission from the course organiser."</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (please specify):</p>
<p>Visiting Student Pre-requisites</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Same as "other requirements" <input type="checkbox"/> Different than "other requirements" (please specify):</p>

5. Placement in degree programme tables: for level 9-11 courses only

This section is for consideration by the Board of Studies and will be used later by ITO to determine where the course will be added to existing degree programme tables.

<p>Is this course restricted to students on a specific degree? <i>E.g., some courses are only available to students on a specific CDT or MSc.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (please specify and provide justification):</p>
<p>Is this course compulsory for students on any degree(s)?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (please specify and provide justification):</p>
<p>Any issues for part-time students? <i>Normally, part-time students have access to the same courses as full-time students on the equivalent degree. If you anticipate any problems with this, please specify here.</i></p>	

For optional courses:

If this course is available but non-compulsory for students on various degrees (most courses), please fill in this section. The choices here determine where the course appears in degree programme tables (DPTs) and the 2-3 character tags are displayed in the Informatics sortable course list.

<p>Should this course be tagged as 'ML' (machine learning foundations and methods)? <i>Courses with the ML tag are typically very high-demand and most degrees limit the number of ML credits. If your course might appeal to a similar audience but draw off students from these large courses, please select 'no' and choose one of the tags below.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p>
<p>If you chose 'no', please choose at least one of the following tags... <i>Ideally, select exactly one, unless there is a good argument for more than one. These three are used in various combinations for many of our degrees.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> FSS (CS foundations, systems, and software) <input type="checkbox"/> AIA (artificial intelligence applications and paradigms) <input type="checkbox"/> COG (cognitive science: including HCI and NLP courses, but not most other AI courses. Please restrict to courses most relevant to natural cognition.)</p>
<p>...and also tick if any of the following tags or categories apply. <i>Do not tick any of these if you selected 'ML' already.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> NS (natural systems: e.g., computation by or about biological or social systems. Many COG courses are also NS. This tag is mainly relevant for MSc in Informatics.) <input type="checkbox"/> SE (software engineering: including courses that are highly relevant to SE degrees. All SE courses should also be FSS. This tag is mainly relevant for UG SE degrees.)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Databases and data management systems (used for Data Science MSc and MSc(R))___ Unstructured data and applications (used for Data Science MSc and MSc(R))___ Level 11 Security courses (used for Security MSc)
If you are not sure which tags are most appropriate or have other questions about this section, please note any comments/issues here.	

6. Comments from colleagues

All course proposal should be sent to relevant colleagues in the area as well as to the appropriate year organizer and BoS Academic Secretary for comment in good time before the BoS meeting. Please indicate here what feedback has been solicited and received.

<p>Additional Comments <i>Summarise any comments received from relevant individuals prior to proposing the course. If you have not discussed this proposal with others please note this.</i></p>	
<p>Year Organiser Comments <i>Year Organisers are responsible for maintaining the official Year Guides for every year of study, which, among other things, provide guidance on available course choices and specialist areas. The Year Organisers of all years for which the course will be offered should be consulted on the appropriateness and relevance on the course. Issues to consider here include balance of course offerings across semesters, subject areas, and credit levels, timetabling implications, fit into the administrative structures used in delivering that year.]</i></p>	
<p>BoS Academic Secretary Comments <i>Proposals must be checked by the Secretary of the Board of Studies prior to discussion at the actual Board meeting. This is a placeholder for their comments, mainly on the formal quality of the content provided above.</i></p>	