Machine Learning Practical (MLP)

Response to student feedback in 2020/21 course survey

We have taken note of the feedback from students in this course survey, and have the following comments in response.

- **Lectures**: Most comments about the lectures were positive, stating that they were easy to follow and well structured. Few negative comments were for lectures being prerecorded and not live. While we observed that prerecorded lectures helped many students to follow them in their own pace and allowed them to iterate over unclear points multiple times, we plan to introduce additional live lectures that connect the taught concepts with their practical use next year. They will also be recorded and uploaded to the course page.
- **Labs**: Most comments about the labs were positive. The main negative comments included the labs being disconnected from coursework. The difference between labs and courseworks are due to the fact that the labs only involve designing, implementing and tuning neural networks, while coursework additionally involves designing experiments and report writing. Next year we plan to improve lab material by adding more explanations and also build the part of coursework on lab work to bridge the gap between two.
- **Coursework**: Most students enjoy the coursework. The main negative comments were about them being too time consuming and requiring academic writing skills. The main issue is that, while required implementation was not demanding, some students were trying to run extensive set of experiments, which were not really expected. Though we emphasized this in our communication, we will further clarify this next year. For the academic writing, we plan to put less emphasis on the report writing in the first coursework but still provide feedback on the writing. We also plan to introduce an additional lecture about academic report writing next year.
- **Learn page**: Some negative comments were about Learn was being too cluttered. We will reorganize it next year.
- **Tutorials**: While most students enjoyed interacting with their tutors, some requested more support from tutors, eg longer meetings with them. Next year we plan to improve tutorials by introducing more efficient online tools for communication.
- **Course too hard**: This is a Level 11 course in machine learning. Hence, and as emphasised at the start of the course, it is not an introductory course, and students taking it are expected to have taken previous courses in machine learning and to have reasonable programming experience. The first lectures and labs should give a good idea of the what will be required in the course. Given this, it is not the role of this course to provide programming tutorials, mathematics tutorials (the maths required is calculus, linear algebra, and basic probability and statistics), or an introduction to basic concepts in machine learning.

Hakan Bilen, Pavlos Andreadis, Ram Ramamoorthy, 3 August 2021