Bioinformatics 1 (INFR11160)

Response to student feedback in 2021/22 course survey for BIO1

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

- Whilst it is a shame that only 3/160 students completed the CEQ we carried out in course surveying of students to get ongoing feedback about element of the course to make changes as it progressed. One example of this was the introduction of a weekly Biology discussion group to allow students who were not from Biology oriented backgrounds to ask questions, this is complemented by a stand-alone optional Biology catch-up course that we also host on the Bio1 course site that many students found useful.
- The course must steer a middle ground between the computational and biological elements and is an introductory course to familiarise students with some core concepts, applications, and position them well to pursue the subject further in the future. This year, as usual, the course split was 88 (55%) non-Bio and 72 (45%) Bio oriented students, that balance is challenging to find, but consistent feedback from students when asked this exact question has shown that we do a solid job of achieving this. The best evidence for that this year is probably the mean final marks for the course broken down by background; non-Bio background (68.7%), Bio background (67.4%) so almost no difference and certainly no disadvantage to people from non-biological backgrounds who take the course (indeed they did marginally better).
- Coursework is designed as a mini-research project, and they are generally very popular with Bio1 students. They are structured to allow students to get a solid passing grade by completing point-by-point objectives, but with an optional extension element that gives students the opportunity to earn further marks for novel/interesting/expanded analysis and interpretation. This means that you could indeed spend a long time on a coursework if you wanted to go for perfection, but excellent grades can be achieved with relatively modest, but well-planned additional effort beyond the explicit objectives. This was explained in detail throughout the course, in weekly Q&As, tutorials and on the course discussion forum, which as ever proved very popular with >600 posts.
- For the 22/23 academic session and with a return to in-person teaching the delivery of the course will change. There will be weekly lectures and bi-weekly 2h computing labs. At both there will be the opportunity to ask questions, but we will also retain the established elements of the course LEARN website with on-demand video content, discussion for and executable coding notebooks though the University's Noteable system. We will be reviewing and updating the course in preparation for the start of the new academic year as usual, but the learning outcomes remain the same. We look forward to welcoming many of you onto the course again this Autumn.

Ian Simpson, 17/05/22