Moving Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) INFR11017 to 20 credits

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Proposal

Change the existing 10 credit version of HCI to 20 credits.

HCI historically has had too much content in it for a 10 credit course and this year we have cut it down significantly to actually fit into 10 credits. We have had good feedback from the students this year that it now feels like a proper 10 credit course. But the cuts were extensive and involved heavy reductions of key material such as how to design and run a basic user evaluation study with end users. Tutorials were also completely cut from the course this year which is not optimal since many methodologies are much better taught through practice and example. Pre-pandemic, tutorials were also the highest rated component of the course by students.

The plan is to reintroduce cut content back into the course rather than create new content which should limit the resource impacts of the conversion. In particular the tutorials and content around study design will be put back in. New content will be added as needed, but the goal is to minimize such additions.

Student opinion

We surveyed current HCI students through email announcements and in-lecture request to take the survey.

Of the 150 students taking HCI this year, 57 responded to the survey. Of those, 36 (63%) would have taken the course if it was 20 credits. Excluding non-Informatics and visiting students still results in 36/51 (~76%) willing to take the 20 credit version.

In the write-in comments students had several points:

"I think this course should be 20 credits because it is a very broad area and would need more content hours to learn more about HCI, a lot of dissertations involve working with users and gathering requirements so it would be beneficial to dive deeper into this in HCI, and the coursework is very interesting but definitely takes a bit of time and if the course were 20 credits we would be able to get into the roles of experts more and possibly create a more robust [coursework]. It would also be amazing to have tutorials because although we can practice with our coursework group, being able to be led by a tutor/lecturer would help us learn how to conduct sessions (such as interviews etc) appropriately."

- Having more credit hours to focus on course content would be appreciated.
- Concern that there are not enough 10 credit options now and losing one could make it harder for students who need to take other 10 credit courses.
- Mixed opinions around "being forced to" or "being able to" take another 10 credit course along side.
- The current 10 credit structure feels like a 10 credit course (please don't mess this balance up).
- Tutorials are missed this year and students would appreciate seeing them back.

Question	UG	MSc	Security MSc	Total	Informatics only
Taken HCI and dropped another 10 credit course	17	8	3	28	28
Taken HCI and tried to convince my PT to let me take an extra 10 credits	1	0	1	2	2
Taken HCI and been sad because I would have to drop another course I really wanted to take	3	2	1	6	6
Taken HCI course only	0	2	0	2	2
Not taken HCI and be sad because I really wanted to take it	5	4	1	10	6
Not taken HCI	7	2	0	9	7

Impacts on other courses

Usable Security Privacy (USEC)

The USEC course is primarily taught by Kami Vaniea who is also CO for HCI. Due to pandemic resourcing decisions, USEC did not run in 20/21 or 21/22. Moving HCI to 20 credits may have resource implications for USEC unless new HCI staff are hired. The USEC course is also listed on the DPT for The Cyber Security, Privacy, and Trust MSc and is a core course on that degree providing a wider set of options for students interested in social aspects as well as those who are less math or programming inclined.

Since the introduction of USEC there have been two new courses introduced in security and privacy: "Case Studies in AI Ethics", and "Security Engineering". While neither course covers the same material as USEC, they do help fill out the social implications and less math/programming parts of the Security MSc degree program options.

The Human Factor (THF)

THF is the other large human factors course offered by Informatics. Broadly, HCI teaches students practical skills with minimal focus on theory while THF

focuses on covering the theory side of the topic. The CO's for the two courses typically coordinate to ensure minimal overlap between the courses. THF CO Maria Walters has been consulted about the potential move to 20 credits and agrees that the move will not cause issues in terms of course content overlap.

THF is historically a large course. It currently has 137 students enrolled and is projected to have at least 200 students this year. Given that both courses are currently 10 credits there is a chance that moving HCI to 20 credits would result in less students taking THF. This year, 53 students are taking both HCI and THF. 13 of these took the survey and 11 would have taken HCI if it had been 20 credits. We didn't ask what other course they would have dropped.

Case Studies in Design Informatics (CDI1)

CDI1 is one of the core courses for the Design Informatics degree program and it also covers human factors topics. Current and past CO's for CDI1 were consulted and agree that the course has minimal topic overlap with HCI. The coordinator for the Design Informatics Degree Programs was also consulted and confirmed that the move of HCI to 20 credits would not negatively impact current degree programs. This year there are no students taking both CDI1 and HCI for credit and in past years the number of students taking both courses has been small.