

Machine Learning Practical (MLP)

Response to student feedback in 2017/18 course survey

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

- **GPU cluster:** A cluster of over 150 GPUs was made available to students on this course. For unavoidable reasons, this was not delivered and installed until early in semester 2, thus it had to be regarded as an alpha test system during the 2017/18 course. Although most students made a lot of use of the cluster, it was definitely the case that there were various issues during the semester. Things should be a lot smoother in 2018/19
- **Assignment weightings and timings:** We have taken on board comments made here and elsewhere about this: for 2018/19 the mark is split 50:50 between semesters 1 and 2. In addition the interim report (assignment 3) will be given feedback but not a numerical mark, and the mark for semester 2 projects will be based on the final report (assignment 4).
- **Semester one lectures:** We received comments that these were both too fast and too slow; both too easy and too hard. I believe that the level and pace is about right. I would re-iterate that MLP is not an introductory machine learning course.
- **Deadline extensions:** These are all handled by the ITO/year organiser. The course lecturer does not give extensions.
- **Semester two lectures:** We have taken note that people would prefer more structured content in semester 2, rather than only guest lectures, thus there will be a set of lectures on more advanced topics.
- **Semester two is boring:** Semester two is based around group projects, which are chosen by individual groups. There is a great deal of flexibility, and the course website shows a number of final reports done by groups in 2017/18. If you find this sort thing boring, then I would not recommend taking MLP.
- **Number of students:** There are indeed a lot of students enrolled on this course (350 in 2017/18), which is an indication of the great interest students currently have in the area. The entire team working on the course do all they can to make sure the course scales as well as possible to the number of students enrolled.
- **Tutorials:** Semester two tutorials enable weekly updates from project groups (typically 5 groups in a tutorial session). The reason for group tutorials is that it is often possible to learn from questions asked by different groups, and through discussions that arise. To try to improve tutorials this year, we'll try to cluster tutorial sessions by project topic, as some tutorials had a very broad range of topics in 2017/18.

Steve Renals, September 2018