

GIS at ISS

Issue 1: the new *studieplan* says that SGO1910 will be offered during the autumn semester and that SGO4030 will be moved to spring semester, however, existing capacity in the department can only accommodate one teaching semester during the 2009/2010 school year.

Proposal 1: Offer both SGO1910 and SGO4030 during the autumn semester. For all intents and purposes this maintains the status quo, however, Faculty approval is required in order to change the *studieplan* and move SGO4030 back to autumn semester; conflicts with other required courses in the autumn may limit the number of students that can register for SGO4030.

Proposal 2: Offer both SGO1910 and SGO4030 during the spring semester. Advanced bachelor students may miss the opportunity to take GIS due to conflicts with their existing *studieløp*, however, UiB offers a course similar to SGO1910 during autumn semester which may meet the needs to those students who are unable to take GIS in the spring.

Proposal 3: Maintain the *studieplan* and offer SGO1910 during autumn semester but do not offer SGO4030 during spring semester. Masters students wishing to learn GIS may take SGO1910 or do SGO4040 with Lynn during spring semester.

Issue 2: What will happen in 2010/2011 when there will be no internal capacity to teach GIS?

Discussion: GIS is a popular course because it offers students practical skills for both research and prospective employment. However, teaching GIS requires specialized skills and our limited internal capacity has made it difficult to establish a long-term strategy for fully incorporating GIS into the curriculum, e.g. in the form of required courses.

- Should SGO4030 remain on the curriculum? SGO1910 has been offered for so many years now that many of our masters students have already had an introduction to GIS, as reflected in the decreasing number of students registering for SGO4030 in recent years (2006: 7, 2007: 5; 2008: 2). For SGO4030 to be really relevant in the context of our complete curriculum it must offer advanced perspectives over SGO1910 in both theory and technique, however, developing SGO4030 into a “new” course is a question of capacity and long-term priorities.
- Can we realistically maintain our niche in the long-term by continuing to offer GIS from a social science perspective? It is difficult to find qualified staff to teach GIS in general, let alone to be able to emphasize the research applications of GIS as opposed to focusing on the technology. There is a risk that the quality of education might decrease should we move to a dependence on external staff to teach the course.
- How can we make the best use of our limited teaching resources? Given the challenges that exist for supporting GIS internally (as well as the related challenges in staffing the other methods courses) opportunities may exist to incorporate GIS topics in the form of individual lectures or seminars into other courses such as SGO1001, SGO1900, SGO4010 and SGO4011.