

Evaluation-form

Course-code: STV2020

Course title: Social Science Data Analysis and Programming

Language: Norwegian English

Course convener's evaluation of the course:

We are generally happy with the course, but we do see a need for improvement in several areas. The student's appeared happy with their learning outcomes, and we are very happy with the level of their term papers. At the same time, we lost a significant number of students, and the second half of the lecture series was poorly attended.

The overall learning goals of this class are ambitious. Generally, the class aims to teach R and variety of data management skills. We are pleased with the proficiency that the students show through their term papers.

The students pursued different learning strategies. Some worked consistently throughout the term, whereas others openly prioritized other classes and turned to STV2020 in the end. The three obligatory hand-ins did motivate several to at least pick a topic fairly early, and we believe the hand-ins were useful in this regard. Some students worked on their own whereas others worked in groups. We strongly recommended the latter, but it is not clear that there is a difference in learning outcome. The idea of allowing group exams might be premature.

This year we redirected time towards RMarkdown, with good results. More than half of the students use RMarkdown to produce their final papers, and no one reported non-solvable problems, unlike last year.

12 of the 30 students admitted to the class did not show up, or only attended the first lecture. We have not interacted with any of these students, so we can only speculate as to why they did not show up.

As a result of the poor attendance, we ran three parallel seminars with about 4 students in each. It would be much better to run larger seminars and rather do more of them.

Summary of feedback from student contact-point:

Tia Tiller served as the student contact point, and we had a meeting with her Monday 27 July. In addition, 6 students responded to our evaluation survey.

The overall impression is that many are largely satisfied with the class and the learning outcome. Lectures and seminars get mostly good feedback, which we interpret as a signal that the overall structure of the class is good.

The exam gets very positive feedback, in that it supports the learning process and serves as a motivation. Some report that they found working with the term paper inspiring and even satisfying.

Key points for improvement from the students are to clarify a number of things better. The requirements of the term paper and the evaluation criteria are not clear at the onset of the class and remain unclear for too long.

Another key feedback is to make lecture notes available *with* data some time prior to the lecture. Resembling ideas of flipped classroom methods, this will allow students to work through the R element of the lecture in advance and thus be better able to comprehend the data science elements of the lectures. We are grateful for this idea and want to work more with it in this class and others.

Particularly the first lecture was deemed inaccessible, primarily due to the R requirements. An idea proposed from the students is to put the first seminar before the first lecture to better prepare students for what they are about to face.

The Inspera room was confusing for our students. Ideally, Inspera should accept .R-files, but in the absence of a fully functioning solution, we should provide a better guide to the submission process to avoid stress and frustrations.

A suggestion that came from the evaluation form was to take a look at how Informatics teach coding to new students. The student in question believe we have a lot to learn, and it strikes us as a brilliant idea, which might be expanded to include all classes in the 40 group.

Suggestions for improvements:

As Øyvind Stiansen is replacing Håvard Strand, a number of changes and improvements will be implemented through Øyvind's new lectures. He read the exams for the current class and has a list of ideas for improvement. Among them is a stronger emphasis on the communicative element of visualization.

The clarification of the term paper, grading requirements and Inspera portal should be a priority.

Providing data for all lectures well ahead is ambitious and requires sufficient time to prepare. Yet, it might prove to be a significant learning booster, and should be prioritized.

A study trip to the Department of Informatics is a very good idea, but should encompass more than STV2020.