



Course evaluation template

After the course has ended, the course coordinator fills in this template. The head of department/programme decides whether the template should be supplemented with further information/questions.

Course code 5HD001	Course title Applied research methods for disasters	Credits 10.0
Semester HT 2021	Period 29 November – 14 January	

Course coordinator Dell Saulnier	Examiner Johan von Schreeb
Other participating teachers	Other participating teachers

Number of registered students 9	Number who have not completed the course 0	Number passed after regular session 6
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Conclusions from the previous course evaluation

This is the second time the course was run. The course was developed in 2020 from feedback from students and teachers across all years of the Erasmus Mundus program about the need for a more extensive methods component to the program.

The 2020 review concluded that overall, the course ran well. The students were engaged with the material and appreciative of the content and attendance was high. The areas for improvement from the review included:

- More extensive and interactive sessions on biostatistics
- Creating a more extensive and interactive module on biostatistics and making it an in-person module.
- Make a single, day-long session on writing and language to cut down on overlap about science communication from other sessions.
- To create a group seminar to discuss how to critique papers.
- To expand the session on systematic and scoping reviews to clarify their appropriateness, structure, and analysis options.
- Ensure that the research ethics lecture includes enough information on the principles and on practical issues like informed consent and ethical review boards, including adding ethics to the research protocol and creating a short assignment.
- To improve the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis exercises, such as potentially doing a survey or analyzing a full qualitative interview
- Having mandatory sessions throughout the course on the research protocol assignment



Description of conducted changes since previous course occasion

Multiple changes were made to the course for 2021. First, the course was assigned to a later slot in the semester and 2.5 out of the 7 weeks of the course took place over the winter break. In practice, this meant that the course lost about half the contact hours for teaching. This was a major disadvantage for the course because of the density of the material and the time needed to cover the learning objectives in the syllabus. As a result, some of the lesser content from 2020 was dropped, some lectures were shortened, and all lectures had to be scheduled to fit into the initial 3.5 weeks of the course. The effect of this is described in later sections.

Second, I used the feedback from the first year of the course in 2020 to make changes to the content of the course. I added three mandatory sessions on the research protocol assignment, as an opportunity for students to discuss their ideas and think through the topics that were being discussed in the lectures. This year, the biostatistics sessions were held in-person and included practice time in SPSS with different datasets. All content on communicating research was condensed into one lecture and two seminars on critically assessing the quality of published articles. I chose to write a new lecture on the basics of research ethics instead of inviting a guest lecturer. Ethics was introduced at the start of the course rather than the end, and I also added an assignment on writing an ethical consent form. The data tools and management session was changed so that students would fill out each other's forms and enter them into a database, as in-person data collection was still not feasible. I also added a reflective practice exercise and a qualitative data analysis exercise to the course. Finally, I spent some additional time on systematic and scoping reviews and on qualitative sampling.

Method(s) for student influence

Prior to the start of the course, all students were given access to the Canvas page which contained the schedule, reading lists, and an overview of the course content. On the first day of the course, I introduced the learning objectives and how they would be fulfilled, the assignments, how the course would work with hybrid lectures, and the schedule and structure of the content. The students had time during this session to talk about their expectations for the course.

At the end of each module, the course leader and students informally went through the sessions from the week to discuss what they enjoyed. A 30-minute session was planned for the last day of class to discuss the course as a whole and what improvements or suggestions they had for the coming year, plus feedback on the content, objectives, support and assignments. However, the session was cancelled the day before due to academic integrity issues with the protocol assignment. In this instance, I felt that it would be better and easier for students to submit feedback anonymously and confidentially than to do so in a group setting.

6 of the 9 students took part in the online kursvärdering (66%).

Summary of the students' response to the course valuation

Overall, the student evaluations were positive about the content of the course and . The majority (4 out of 6) felt that they had developed valuable skills and expertise to a large or very large extent. Five out of six thought the course promoted scientific thinking to a large or



very large extent, and five out of six also thought the course had a common theme. The students were also positive about the course management as well, with a majority stating that, to a very large extent, the teachers have been open to ideas and opinions about the course structure and content (84%), that students had the same opportunities to learn during the course (66%), and that there was a good atmosphere during the course (66%).

However, 3 out of the 6 respondents felt that to some extent, they had enough time to reflect on what they learned and 2 out of 6 felt that the demands of the course were reasonable in relation to the learning outcomes to a small extent. This can indicate that the course time was too short to fit the content that is supposed to be taught to achieve the learning outcomes, which seems somewhat overwhelming to some students. For instance, some students states "*there is too much to learn in too short amount of time*" and that the course despite being a 10 ECT:s credit course only manage to give a glimpse of all the topics. Still, 66% of the student thought they achieved the intended outcomes to a large extent.

The course coordinator's reflections on the implementation and results of the course

All the students in the course are part of the Erasmus Mundus program at KI and had been studying together for a year by the time the course started and were familiar with each other. They had a variety of previous experiences with research or methods courses, ranging from zero experience to having published an article previously. The range of experiences was taken into consideration while developing the course and the material was primarily targeted to those who were less experienced.

Compared to last year's student group, some of the students this year who had experience had a harder time staying challenged, while some of the less experienced students were active and enthusiastic participants throughout the course. Some students were actively engaged in the classes but did not partake in the assignments or exercises, while some did not attend multiple sessions. In general though, the levels of experience and different backgrounds benefitted the students, particularly during the research protocol sessions.

Because of COVID and issues with visa approvals, multiple students had to study from home or were not able to travel to Stockholm. The course had to be readjusted to be able to include the online students during the in-person lectures and sessions. All students who were in Stockholm were strongly encouraged to attend classes in person if they were symptom-free, were reminded that the course was developed for an in-person setting and were asked to let me know if they would attend online. However, students often chose to attend from home without notice, leading to a few sessions where only 1 student attended in person.

Because the course was designed to be held in-person and because so few students attended in-person, it was hard to implement and lead the sessions that were supposed to be practical, such as the individual interview exercise. While I was able to work around this as a teacher for practical issues (i.e. by having all the online students work together in one group), the hybrid style and low in-person attendance was detrimental to the course. For instance, the online students had a much harder time staying focused and absorbing content from their



lectures and fully engaging in the practical sessions, and in-person students often missed the full experience when there were too few students to do the exercises properly.

The work methods in the course were all aimed at achieving the learning objectives. The course used pre-recorded lectures, in-person and online lectures, seminars, practical group exercises, short written assignments, a longer individual protocol writing assignment, and the final written exam. The students found the practical exercises useful. The final grade was determined through a research protocol (60% of grade) and the written final exam (40% of grade). The protocol consisted of a background and rationale section, research aim and objectives, ethical considerations, and methods for a proposed small-scale project related to disasters or humanitarian settings and public health. It was designed to get the students to clarify their topic and rationale, explain and justify their methods, and critically think about the strengths and limitations of their methods. They were also asked to present their proposal and critique another student's work. However, the presentation session was cancelled due to an investigation into some of the assignments. For the final exam, they were given two papers on health in disaster settings and asked to critically interpret the methods of the papers through open-ended questions, such as whether they considered the paper to be generalizable or not. This forced them to reflect on the topics from class, such as what creates internal validity, and apply their learning to papers they may read in their future work in humanitarian settings. The protocol and exam were designed in relation to the learning objectives, to getting them to describe, assess, interpret and explain methods related to disasters.

Description of how the course works with quality, research-basis and collaboration with other professions

The course was primarily taught by one researcher with a PhD, with some guest lectures by external researchers or people with related experience. Most of the lectures included real-life examples from peer-reviewed articles and the seminars discussed similar peer-reviewed research. In addition, the research protocols were an opportunity for the students to develop their thinking around their future thesis projects, meaning many of them were in regular contact with their thesis supervisors or internship sites to discuss their future work.

Course coordinator's conclusions and suggestions for improvement

Overall, the course ran well but there are clear areas of improvement:

- If possible, **do not schedule the course to coincide with the winter break**. The short time frame was not conducive to the course content. There was little time for reflection, even with the time over winter break to write their assignments and study, and the content needed to be condensed. The pace and density might partly explain the low attendance rate and is clear in the student evaluations.
- Add content at the start of the course on plagiarism and discuss in more detail the specifics of what it is, how it is assessed, and why KI takes it seriously. Refer the students to KIB's resources on plagiarism.
- Consider including the presentation of the research protocol as part of the total grade for the protocol. Currently, only the written protocol is assessed in the grading.



- For all guest lecturers, I suggest creating a background document on the learning objectives and purpose of the course that can be shared with them prior to their lecture. This would help to get the most out of their expertise and help them plan their lectures. The document should include:
 - A very short summary of the Erasmus program as a whole and what they learn in Oviedo and at KI.
 - A short overview of the lesson plan for the course, including the structure of the course and modules that they will learn; the general topics that they will cover; the lecture titles and goals for each lecture; any exercises or assignments that are being done; the lecturers for each lecture.
 - For each external lecturer, a suggestion of the main points that they should cover and how it links to the other lectures
- There have been issues this year with attendance throughout the course and with actively taking part in the mandatory sessions. The syllabus does not currently state the consequences of not attending the mandatory sessions. This should be considered for 2022. If the course makes use of research protocols and seminars again in 2022, I suggest that the mandatory protocol sessions and the protocol presentations are added to the syllabus and include that missing these sessions means that the student will need to complete an extra assignment.
- Related to this, it may be worthwhile to discuss what we are trying to achieve with the course as it fits into the program overall. Is it to explain evidence and get them to write a good thesis (theory)? Or is it to explain to the students how research can be used in disasters and to learn how to work with it in a humanitarian organization (practice)? Currently the course straddles both objectives by presenting an idealized way to do research while listing caveats and explanations of how and why this is not possible in disasters. If we are trying to do both, then what is the best use of external lecturers?

If we want to focus on theory, then consider keeping one teacher with a few guests lectures on expertise that the single teacher does not have. One downside to this is that students receive only one perspective on the methods and their use. This approach would prepare students to write a good master's thesis and to think critically about the current approaches to research that they see in humanitarian practice.

If we want to focus on practice, then consider using external lecturers to talk about each aspect of the methodologies. This will require a much deeper rethink of how the course is structured, as bringing in an expert on intervention studies still requires students to know the basic elements of quantitative paradigms and design before they can understand interventions. However, it could be possible to restructure the entire course around common humanitarian and disaster practice in organizations, such as determining the most effective delivery of a program or understanding the impact of a program on beneficiaries. Here you could start with the research question and show the way it could be answered, rather than starting with a method and showing what it can be used for. This approach would prepare students better to try out research in the 'real world' of humanitarian practice.



Views on the course and improvement suggestions from others

The report will be shared with those involved in the course and Erasmus program and external lecturers who may be interested. It will also be shared with the thesis course leader to give them background on the state of the student's knowledge and progress.

Description of how the course valuation has provided feedback internally and to the students

State:

- The course evaluation is posted on the course Canvas site
- The evaluation will also be sent to the GUA, the program director and coordinator, and the UN, and can be discussed with them on request.



Tilläggsfrågor till kursledarreflektioner (på engelska):

Indicator	# of hours	Rationale
STUDENT/LECTURER:		
Number of contact hours in total	Approx. 95	Contact hours of active learning, not self-study
Of which:		
(i) Number of hours lead by lecturer	Approx. 65	Lecturer present during sessions but not necessarily lecturing, could be listening to group discussions
(ii) Number of hours for student interaction/group work/peer review etc.	Approx. 30	Split between lectures followed by in-person group work, seminars, practical activities, presentations and feedback
COURSE LEADER:		
Number of hours that you as a course leader have spent with the students	Approx. 90	I led most of the lectures and all activities
Number of hours that you as course leader have spent on your pedagogical development before, during, after the course	2	Pedagogy mostly refined from teaching so often during course and leading course
Pedagogical skills that you would like to improve		Theory of learning, specific teaching methods, tailoring learning to fit both best and worst performing students

1. Make a table of your Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) as formulated in the syllabus and identify the ILOs that were mainly met through lectures.

All objectives were made to be learned by introducing the topic through a lecture, followed by a combination of seminars, practical exercises, group work, the protocol and the exam so that the students could clarify, practice, and apply the content.

2. Reflect on the type and level of student participation during the course. When were most/least students present in the classroom? How do you interpret that? Were you helped to understand this through the student valuation? If yes, please describe how. If no, please suggest alternative ways of getting this information.

Attendance was unfortunately low this year. There was no real pattern to their attendance, except that most attended the mandatory sessions. Some students attended all lectures and were actively engaged, which I took as a sign of interest and diligence in their coursework. Other students attended but were not engaged or did not show up and did not inform me of their absence. I interpreted this as an overwhelming amount of content to absorb in a short period of time, disinterest in the course content, multiple responsibilities or activities outside the course taking precedence, or an overall poor sense of why the course is important for the Erasmus Mundus program. This could be due to the timing of the course, since it occurs after the response module and before their internships. This is supported by the student evaluations, which mention the amount of content that needed to be covered in a short period



of time, and the difficult line between the content being too basic and too advanced and not fully relevant to theory or to practice.

3. Attach your final schedule to the reflections. Comment on any changes made during the course and the reasons

Some changes made were because of last-minute external lecturer scheduling issues. The protocol presentations were cancelled because of suspected plagiarism of some assignments. It was decided that it would be unfair for fellow students to critique presentations while the suspicions were being investigated, and too sensitive to hold the presentations for such a small group if multiple students were under investigation. Students who were not under suspicion received written feedback from me on their protocols.