

2022 Annual evaluation of M-ECON, Master of Economics, School of Economics and Business

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| Database of the study program report: |
| The most important data sources used in the evaluation of the program |
| The data sources used in this report were obtained from:   * Felles studentsystem, FS [Centralized student database] * Studiebarometeret, 2021 * NMBU’s application database, 2021 * Annual report, 2021. |

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| Study quality status |
| Intake (Recruitment, information, admission and reception) |
| **Admissions**  Table 1 presents statistics on admissions. Reported are the number of applicants to NMBU who listed the M-ECON program as their first priority. While the total number of first-priority applicants has increased since 2019, the percentage of qualified first-priority applicants has decreased as a share of the total and in absolute numbers. This suggests that it continues to be a challenge to recruit enough of the better students. Despite the challenge of recruiting students during the pandemic period, the program has been able to maintain the number of study places at 23. However, the number of qualified applicants per place has fallen to below three, reflecting a lower degree of competition for entry into the program.    Table 1. Admissions: number of applications, first priority applicants per study places   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Academic year | Study places | No. of first priority applicants | No. of qualified first priority applicants | No. of qualified applicants per study place | | 2022 | 23 | 312 | 61 | 2,65 | | 2021 | 23 | 242 | 71 | 3,09 | | 2020 | 23 | 257 | 94 | 4,09 | | 2019 | 20 | 219 | 93 | 4,65 |   **Source: Felles Studentsystem (FS)** |
| **Frame quality** (The physical organizational and psychosocial learning environment and the academic environment around the education) |
| NOKUT (Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) conducts a national survey (Study Barometer Report) that scores students’ satisfaction across a variety of indicators. Table 2 presents the student satisfaction scores related to the physical infrastructure and learning environment, and the academic and social learning environment. The scores are based on rankings that range from ‘1’ (meaning strongly disagree) to ‘5’ (meaning strongly agree). The results of the 2021 survey show that the M-ECON program received a slightly lower score on the students’ satisfaction with the physical learning environment and infrastructure relative to previous (pre-covid) years. In 2021, there was still hybrid instruction, mixing on-campus instruction with livestreamed lectures, making direct comparisons with pre-covid years difficult. By contrast, there was marked improvement in the 2021 score on the level of satisfaction in the academic and social learning environment relative to 2020, when there seems to have been much dissatisfaction with having to comply with covid-related physical and social distancing requirements. A strength of the program is the relatively small classes where students can work in groups on cases, exercises, or semester projects where there is close supervision and feedback from instructors. However, the 2021 score shows an improvement over pre-covid years as well, suggesting that the efforts to improve student-faculty interaction in classes and informal social interaction among faculty and first- and second-year M-ECON students could be having a positive effect.    Table 2. Student satisfaction with physical, academic and social learning environment   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | |  | Physical learning environment and infrastructure | Academic and social learning environment | | 2021 | 4,0 | 3,9 | | 2020 | N/A | 2,3 | | 2019 | 4,3 | 3,7 | | 2018 | 4,1 | 3,7 |   **Source: Studiebarometeret** |
| Program design and management  (Academic content of the study, internationalization, organization and management) |
| Study content  During 2020-21, the name of the program was changed to Applied Economics and Sustainability to express more adequately what the program content stresses and to underline the School’s mission. ECN303 (Impact Assessment) was added to the core requirements to bolster the quantitative analysis within the program, increasing the required coursework to 50 ECTS. The strengthening of the quantitative analysis continued for the 2021-23 program when BUS350 (Introduction to Data Analysis) raised the core requirements to 55 ECTS. These new requirements are to ensure that quantitative skills and the ability to use data are further developed in each semester that students take courses. This should improve the thesis research and the interpretation of the results of students’ analysis.  In table 3 the overall score on student satisfaction with the program improved to 4,0 from a score of 3,8 received in each year since 2018. This can reflect improvements in various aspects of the program in addition to a general sense of satisfaction of returning to campus after the lifting of covid-19 restrictions and digital instruction. In contrast to previous years, the score on overall satisfaction reflects the general satisfaction across the 11 individual categories of indicators (e.g., teaching, feedback, expectations, study environment, organization, ability to inspire, own engagement, expectations, digital tools, connection to work life, and physical learning environment and infrastructure). In previous years, the overall score did not adequately reflect the average of scores on individual indicators, making it difficult to interpret the meaning of the overall satisfaction. For example, the overall score was lower than scores across most indicators, meaning that one poor score on an indicator seem to be weighing more heavily than better scores across most indicators.  Table 3. Student satisfaction, all-in-all   |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | All-in-all | | 2021 | 4,0 | | 2020 | 3,8 | | 2019 | 3,8 | | 2018 | 3,8 |   **Source: Studiebarometeret**  Internationalization  The School’s ambitions include to recruit more student exchanges and/or recruitment of more foreign students to the programs. Each composition of students to the M-ECON program is almost always structured as 50% foreigners and 50% Norwegians. The program is an English language class, so all required courses, core specialization courses and electives are taught in English. A larger selection of economics courses at the bachelor level and business courses are now being instructed in English. This should make it easier for foreign exchange students to study at NMBU and increase the likelihood that students will take M-ECON courses.  For M-ECON students, the program leader has worked with the student advisor to show utmost flexibility in allowing students the opportunity to participate in semester exchanges (during the autumn of the second year) by finding solutions for those students to satisfy the required courses that are offered at NMBU (e.g., ECN305 Research Methods, and ECN303 Impact Assessment) only during that semester of their program.    NMBU’s International Action Plan for 2020-23 prioritized four areas:   * Strategic international research- and innovation collaboration * Strategic international education cooperation and increase internationalization of education * Participation in European education-, research- and innovation collaboration * International mobility   In this direction during 2020-21, M-ECON primarily contributed to submitted DIKU proposals for international cooperation agreements with southern and east African institutions involving research and teaching, and mobilization of students, including MSc students (but primarily at the PhD level). These proposals build on ongoing cooperation projects already funded by NORAD. One NORPART project was approved with collaboration with universities in Malawi, Kenya and Uganda. As part of that project there will be two full scholarship MSc students (one for M-ECON and one for Noragric). The project envisages input from Noragric in teaching a course and receiving participating southern and east African researchers.  Organization and management of the program  The organization and management of the program, unchanged from 2019, is the responsibility of the program council, comprised of the program leader, the program leader of the B-ECON program, additional members of the economics faculty, student representatives from each class, and a representative of the administrative staff. The mandate of the program council is unchanged and to fulfill the council’s mandate, the program leader has the council meet regularly, at least four times a year. The leader can call the council to meeting more often as needed.  In addition to the regular meetings of the program council to address specific aspects or problems related to the program or to discuss proposed changes to the program prior to their implementation, the School has institutional measures to seek direct feedback from the students on the courses and program through periodic meetings held during the spring semester. Students and teaching faculty are brought together to discuss course and teaching evaluations and how well the courses reflect the course content described in the course catalogue. It is also a chance to better understand what works or does not work in the courses, lectures, exercises, etc.  The level of satisfaction with the organization and management of the program should reflect how well the leader and the council can respond to problems that arise and address issues raised by the students. In 2021, the score on this indicator was 3,8 the same as it was in 2019 prior to covid.  Student participation and influence over program design  There are three avenues by which students can affect change or raise issues to the attention of the faculty. First, a student can approach the student advisor or program leader to alert them of a problem. This usually involves a particular problem in a course or with an instructor during the semester. Second, there are measures in place, through the program council, that permit and encourage student representatives formally participating in the early stages of discussions involving any proposed program changes or to raise issues with the program. The student representatives on the council communicate the proposed changes with their classmates or present to the council the concerns raised by their classmates. Finally, there are the periodic meetings. Invitations are extended to all students in the program to discuss in open forum (with instructors who are present) issues of interest or concern (course content, teaching methods, specializations, student life, insight into the scores from student evaluations, etc.). This is an opportunity for students to raise issues, offer advice and suggestions, and provide more insight into what is working well and what might require more attention on aspects related to the program.  A question on the 2021 survey that relates to participation (i.e., opportunity for the student to give input on the content and structure of the program) yielded a score of 3,7 (the same score as in 2019). In previous years, there has been difficulty in finding students willing to serve as representatives to the program council and few actively participated in the open forum discussions. In 2021-22 there was considerable interest among the first-year class to serve as student representative on the program council, but there were still too few students who were present at the periodic meeting despite efforts to encourage participation. One obvious challenge, of course, is that cultural norms might be a big barrier to face-to-face meetings involving instructors and students. However, this could also be uncomfortable for the domestic students. |
| Learning  (Educational competence, forms of learning and assessment, students’ own efforts and other conditions that contribute to learning) |
| In recent academic years, before the covid pandemic struck bringing constraints on campus-based instruction, the School encouraged faculty members to require more hands-on learning activities. In the economics courses, this meant more written assignments and oral presentations through individual effort or by working in groups. Other course activities include problem sets, assignments, cases, reports and semester papers or projects. These activities require advice and feedback from instructors and might also require students commenting or critiquing the work of their colleagues. In some courses the activities count toward the final grade in the course, while in others it is a means of ensuring that the students are prepared to write the final exam which counts for 100% of the final grade.  In Table 4 the scores from the national survey on student satisfaction on teaching, feedback and advising, and the use of digital tools are reported. These scores are measures of satisfaction at the program level. The scores from 2021 are a return to those obtained in 2019. The dip in the scores in 2020 seem to reflect the adverse effect that covid-19 restrictions placed upon physical, campus-based instruction. It would also suggest that most instructors were not comfortable with adjusting their courses, lectures and assignments to the digital format or hybrid methods.  Table 4. Student satisfaction with teaching, feedback and advising, and use of digital tools   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | Teaching | Feedback and advising | Use of digital tools | | 2021 | 4,0 | 3,8 | 4,0 | | 2020 | 3,4 | 3,0 | 3,0 | | 2019 | 4,1 | 3,8 | 4,1 | | 2018 | 3,6 | 3,7 | N/A |   **Source: Studiebarometeret**  By way of comparison, the scores obtained from student course/instructor evaluations administered by NMBU suggest that student satisfaction with teaching, feedback and advising at the course/instructor level is even higher than at the program level. During 2021-22, there were 19 course offerings under M-ECON (including required courses, core courses under specializations, and recommended electives). The scores showed an improvement over 2020-21.  For the eight required courses that apply to all M-ECON students the average scores ranged from between 4,3 to 4,68 across all indicators (expectations, structure and organization, teaching, other learning activity, feedback and advising, learning experience and overall). Teaching and feedback and advising averaged a score of 4,36 and 4,45, respectively. The overall level of satisfaction across all eight courses averaged 4,24 (lower than the individual indicators), but these are scores that reflect a high level of general satisfaction, nevertheless. There is one course that received scores under 3,0 on two indicators and on the overall satisfaction. This is a signal that some attention might be required. In that course, the students signaled that there was a problem in the class and adjustments were made to improve matters mid-way through the semester.  For specialty courses and electives within the specializations, the average scores ranged from between 4,51 and 4,85 across all indicators, high levels of satisfaction. The indicators for teaching and feedback and advising both averaged a score of 4,69, much higher than the score from the national survey on the program. The average score across all specialty and elective courses on each indicator ranged between 4,62 and 5,12 with an average score on the overall satisfaction of 4,73. There is only one course with low scores across indicators and an overall score less than 3,0. It must be noted that the number of respondents was low. Nevertheless, the scores are an indication that some measures might need to be taken to improve matters.  Finally, for all courses taught under the M-ECON program during 2021-22, the average score on the overall level of satisfaction is 4,51. This is an improvement over the satisfaction in the previous academic year (4,3). Six of the 19 courses received a score of the overall level of satisfaction of 5,0 or higher. These are a very positive results.  [we still need the evaluation results of thesis supervision]!!  Students’ own efforts and other factors contributing to learning  The student survey questions respondents on their own engagement and their own learning outcomes when it comes to their knowledge of the theory, scientific methods and research, and their experience with research and development work, ability to reflect and think critically, and their written and oral communication skills. In the 2021 survey the average score was 4,1 compared with 3.6 in 2019. The was no score presented or information reported on this indicator in 2021, limiting any insights in how the measures taken before covid had any effect. In addition to the challenge that digital courses posed for instructors in terms of the learning of new technology and its effective use for their courses, students also had to make adaptations in how they studied. In previous NOKUT questionnaires, students admitted to not putting in enough effort into their learning, this despite noting that the study program and the educational content was inspiring to them.  The score of 4,1 obtained in 2021 might by a reflection of the increased emphasis on in-class exercises and other hands-on activities that have been incorporated in many of the M-ECON courses. So, in addition to improvement in the satisfaction levels associated with course and instructor-related indicators the shift towards more active learning might be reflected in this score. Moreover, the program’s ability to inspire also received a score of 4,1 supports this observation. |
| Relevance  (The relevance of education for society, working life and long-term value creation. Including also the work with internships, for example) |
| It was noted in previous student evaluations of the program that there remains a disconnect between the knowledge and skills that the program imparts and its relevance to society. In the 2019 national survey, M-ECON students who responded on a question related to the connection to work life provided an average score of 3,3. It seems as if students are not entirely clear how the information and knowledge they obtain in their courses or study program relates to the job they will be engaged in after graduation.  Students are receptive to the clause in the School’s mission statement “to address complex real-world problems with sustainability as a guiding principle”. The measures taken in some of the core courses of the specializations (such as to involve prominent guest lectures) have been well-received. However, in the 2021 national survey the only low score received was in relation to the connection to work life, scoring 3,5. While this represents an improvement over 2019, there remains an effort to strengthen the link of the program to work life and to translate how their knowledge and skill set translates into desired qualities for employers. Having students work on projects that are of interest to stakeholders outside academia is one way for the students to make that association. Students continue to express an interest in internships or possibilities to have more direct contact with government agencies, non-government organizations or firms, either in the form of course-related activities or a project that can be related to their thesis.    Institutional mechanisms are aiming at supporting this. A career day has been arranged in which graduates return to campus to explain how the knowledge received at NMBU has helped them in their work and to share their experiences in interviewing for jobs and the job search. An external advisory board is another means by which representatives from work life and alumni can provide insight into what skills and knowledge is demanded by the job market and give input and feedback into the relevance of the content of our courses and the learning activities within. Through these institutional mechanisms an effort will be made to strengthen the marketability of our sustainability brand by seeking alumni and representatives of work life who are actively engaged in issues related to the concept.  The program leaders of M-ECON and M-ØA initiated a pilot internship program for students beginning in 2022-23. For M-ECON students, there are two possibilities: a summer internship for 5 ECTS at the end of year 1, or a 10-ECTS internship during the autumn semester of year 2. There are two paths envisaged for internships for credit. First, candidates, through their own initiative, can seek a partner firm or institution (external partner) that they identify with which to work on a problem of mutual interest. The student or pair of students, together with the School would sign a contract with the external partner. An external advisor and a faculty supervisor would be assigned and there would be agreement on the requirements (i.e., a written report or project and an oral defense of the work) for the completion of the task and the credits to be earned (5-10 ECTS). The second path, is through a competitive internship for M-ECON and M-ØA students, working individually or in pairs, with external partners with whom the School has already established a contractual relationship. Once these external partners have been identified and the formal contractual processes established (i.e., the description of the work activities, course credit, supervisory arrangements, application process, etc.), the student recruitment and selection process will be announced. The first internships have already been established and will be active during autumn 2022. The details of the content to obtain course credit for an internship are specified under the course codes ECN333 and ECN334.  Finally, the creation of a mentoring program (i.e., executive in residence) is envisaged whereby someone from work life would spend one to two days a week on campus for a month’s period to: present seminar(s) to the faculty and students; provide guest lecturing in courses relevant to their experience; cooperate through advising and supervising cases, exercises and/or semester projects; and to make themselves available for consultations with students on thesis topics or to have discussions of general interest. These mentors could be alumni, representatives from the companies or institutions with which the programs have established relationships through the pilot internship program, or other experienced professionals and business leaders who are willing to motivate young scholars through their work experience. |
| Learning outcomes  (Students’ academic achievements, achieved learning outcomes including interdisciplinarity, sustainability and international perspective and progression) |
| Academic performance  The most widely used indicator to assess the academic performance of the candidates is the grade awarded for a course or their overall grade-point average (GPA). Instructors use a variety of methods to assess student learning, depending on the type of course. The course assessment method typically used is a written final exam, but there are also problem sets, exercises, case studies, or semester projects that are evaluated as part of the grade or as pass/fail. In some cases, the activities serve as an assessment of whether the candidate qualifies to sit for the final written exam.  Another important indicator to assess is how well the learning measures in the coursework prepare the candidate for the research and writing of their master’s thesis and defending the work through a presentation during its final oral defense. In general, the coursework GPA should serve as a guide for a candidate’s ability to perform the tasks related to the researching, writing, presentation and oral defense of a thesis.  Table 5 provides some evidence of how well the performance on the master’s thesis correlates with coursework GPA. The results show that since 2015 the GPA on coursework has become a better predictor of the grade received on the thesis. The results suggest there has been grade inflation on the theses, but that the problem has become less severe.  In 2015, only two students had an A GPA on their coursework, but there were nine students who were awarded an A on their thesis. For the five classes presented, there were 10 students who had an A GPA on their coursework, but 26 students received an A on their thesis. In 2019 only the two students who had an A GPA on coursework managed to earn an A on the thesis. Of the 34 students who had a B average on coursework, only 20 of them earned a B on their thesis. This shows that many of the B students in courses were managing a better grade on their thesis. For those students who had lower grades on coursework, their performance on the thesis was more accurately reflected.  Overall, in about half of the cases students earn the same grade on the thesis as their coursework GPA for the five classes presented. For the class entering in 2019 it was 88% of the students that earned the same grade on the thesis as on their coursework. This compares with 33% for students entering in 2018. The results from the class entering in 2019 provides some evidence that the grading system is becoming more consistent and that there is a reduction in the tendency to inflate the grades on the theses.    Table 5. Correlation of GPA on coursework and grade received on thesis   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Coursework GPA | | Grade received on thesis | | | | | | GPA | Number of candidates | A | B | C | D | E | | Candidates entering in 2015 | | | | | | | | A | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | B | 10 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | | C | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | | D | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | E | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | | Candidates entering in 2016 | | | | | | | | A | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | B | 6 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | C | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | | D | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | | Candidates entering in 2017 | | | | | | | | A | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | B | 7 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | C | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | | D | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | | Candidates entering in 2018 | | | | | | | | A | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | B | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | | C | 12 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 1 | | D | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | | Candidates entering in 2019 | | | | | | | | A | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | B | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 |  |  | | C | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | | D | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | | Total | 79 | 26 | 20 | 20 | 11 | 2 |   Note: includes only candidates having completed their degree.  Source: Felles Studentsystem (FS)  One important omission from the students’ evaluation of the program is related to the quality and effectiveness of the supervision, advising and timely feedback received by the student during the writing and research of their master’s thesis. Given that the thesis accounts for one-quarter of the work toward the degree, it would be useful to have some feedback on how well the courses prepared the student for their thesis and some sense for the quality of support (advise and supervision) the candidates receive during the process of undertaking research and writing. [need this info] |

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| Recently implemented measures and their effect: |
| Status and effect of implemented measures (follow-up of action plan from last year’s report and other implemented measures |
| There were only minor changes planned during 2021-22 for implementation at the commencement of the 2022-23 academic year. Two items were given particular attention, the future of ECN305 and the implementation of the pilot internship program. ECN305 (research methods) was restructured for 2022-23 and has a new instructor. It was agreed that it would remain a 5-ECTS course offered in the autumn of the second year, but that there would be more involvement of other faculty members and digital content (tailored to the groupwork activities) to help with the tasks that are to be done in groups. The first half of the semester involves lectures and self-study geared toward the completion of the groupwork assignments. The second half of the semester would be more focused on mentoring/supervision and individual tasks that assist the student to develop their research proposal. The program council agreed to follow-up with the class to see whether the restructured course (and the modules within) and the mentoring systems therein prepare students effectively for the thesis and research work to be done in their final spring semester. The program council in collaboration with the program leader of M-ØA will also monitor the experience of the internships under the pilot program. There is already one case where a student from the M-ECON and from M-ØA have teamed up on an internship, testing the robustness of the supervision and evaluation under the slightly different systems of the two programs.  Finally, the M-ECON program developed an evaluation form to assess the quality of supervision of students during the research and writing process of their thesis. The evaluation forms were developed in time for those students defending their thesis in June 2022. |

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| Action plan with measures and responsibility for follow-up: |
| The faculty / academic community’s input to measures to increase the quality of the program |
| The 2020 action plan of the School of Economics and Business specified the initiatives that were relevant at the M-ECON program level and related to teaching.  The program-related initiatives aimed for the program to:   * Realize synergies between programs, among other things, by establishing joint specialization offers that are suitable for several master’s programs; * Streamline the master’s offering, among other things, by considering courses every other year; * Implement measures that are expected to make specializations more attractive to students as a means of increasing student numbers, including the composition of the courses set up against the needs of the labor market; and * Identify opportunities for and possibly implement measures that integrate digitization and technological knowhow in the study programs.   The teaching-related initiatives aimed for the program to:   * Conduct a periodic meeting for all study programs with the main focus on revision of course names, learning objectives, learning and assessment activities; and * Monitor the dropout rate in the study programs and intensify the work of conducting study program-specific information meetings.   Under the program-related initiatives, the most important measure taken in conformity with the action plan was the creation of the joint specialization in Agribusiness and Food Economics. The specialization is managed under the M-ØA program but has been tailored and structured in such a manner that students under M-ECON and M-ØA can both pursue the specialization. This was a pragmatic solution to the likelihood that the M-ECON program would be unable to find a critical mass of its candidates to support the specialization. By contrast the M-ØA program could be better suited to attract enough students to justify the re-offering of two economics courses that buttress the specialization (ECN330 Economic Integration and Trade Liberalization and ECN263 Food Industry Economics).  The core courses in this specialization includes both 300-level courses in economics and business and are common to students from both programs. Nevertheless, business and economics students must still satisfy all course requirements under their respective programs. The joint specialization streamlines the administration of the specialization and brings business and economics faculty in closer contact, while bringing business and economics students to pursue more inter-disciplinary profiles in addition to being exposed to different pedagogical methods. For the economics side of the program, the initiative could broaden the appeal of some of its courses to the business administration students who might have avoided taking economics courses. This should help increase the class size of some of the economics courses. Furthermore, because it is a joint specialization, the core courses must be taught in English to accommodate international students enrolled in the M-ECON program. This means that more business courses are to be taught in English which gives exchange students a greater range of choice among economics and business courses.  Similarly, an Environment, Climate and Energy specialization was created under the M-ØA. This will further attract business students to economics courses, strengthening the ties between students in business and economics. This is mirrored in reverse as the M-ECON specialization in Finance and Commodity Market Analysis has economics students taking course in business together with M-ØA students.  The request for internships has been expressed more frequently in recent years. This is in line with the government’s intent for education to place greater emphasis on work life relevance. The stated priority includes:   * Better cooperation with the business community * More open and more flexible study offers * Lifelong learning * Increased capacity for further education * Innovation and entrepreneurship * More and better practices.   For the School of Economics and Business, the education provided is expected to have a high relevance to work life in its programs. Despite our graduates employed in jobs relevant to their work experience, M-ECON students have signaled that their contact with the business community (or work life) during their studies is inadequate. Work life relevance is not just about job opportunities, but about the interaction between the place of study and work during the study period. In 2021-22, initial steps were taken to identify businesses and institutions with which M-ECON and M-ØA could collaborate to create a competitive internship program (for a select number of candidates) and facilitate processes by which students could, through their own efforts, establish a cooperative relationship with a company or institution on a subject related to a course or as part of their thesis research. These discussions moved in parallel with an idea to develop a mentorship program (i.e., an executive in residence).  Under the teaching-related initiatives, the institutionalizing of periodic meetings (through open forum with students) has been a useful means of following up with students, getting first-hand feedback, suggestions, and insights into their impressions of the courses, teaching methods, relevance of the specializations, and the program overall.  In 2020 the program council encouraged adoption of measures by which students could feel part of a social and professional community right from the start of the program. At the program level, introductory courses at the start of the program were intended for the class to work in small groups with faculty mentors on themes that emphasizes the strength of the curriculum, e.g., sustainability. At the course level, more groupwork has become the rule not the exception. Courses offered early in the program (ECN302 Math for Economists) serve to have the class meet and work together on assignments. At the same time, social outings and events with first- and second-year students and with the economics faculty are to be arranged to reinforce social cohesion and group dynamics. While Covid-19 distancing requirements made this impossible in 2020-21, the initiatives envisaged were implemented in 2021-22. |

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| Any further comments: |
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| About the report: |
| The report is processed by:  ⊠ Program Council  ☐ Fakultetets studie/utdanningsutvalg  ☐ Fakultetsstyret  The report was prepared by:  Program leader: **Roberto Javier Garcia** |