

Minutes (and follow up) of the 31 Aug 2022 Program Council Meeting

Date: 31 August 2022

Location: T435

Attendees: Roberto J. Garcia; Kateryna Krutskykh; Lars William Thisted; Sofie van Dooren; Eirik Romstad; Erlend Dancke Sandorf; Torun Fretheim; and Amy Stinchcombe

Note takers: Roberto J. Garcia and Kateryna Krutskykh

Agenda for the meeting:

1. Introduction of the 2022-23 committee
2. Review/approve minutes from Spring 2022 meeting
3. Present and discuss annual report
4. Results of the course/teacher evaluations 2021-22
5. External evaluation of M-ECON program
6. Social event for M-ECON students and faculty

Items to be approved

Resolution: Minutes from the meeting of Feb 2022 were approved

Action items:

Welcoming of the new members	Round table of introductions and welcoming of the new members
Item 1	New business 1. Present annual report, overview and discuss sections of report
Item information	The draft of the annual report was circulated, and the various sections were discussed in light of the national Study Barometer results from 2021 and the NMBU course and instructor evaluation results from 2021-22. 1.1 Report on admissions, 2022-23 1.2 Discuss the study content, barometer results, 2021 1.3 Discuss the teaching, feedback and advising and the NMBU course and instruction evaluations by students 1.4 Relevance to work life 1.5 Learning outcomes 1.6 Action plan, 2022-23
Proposed resolution	The annual report was sent to the SU. There were a few editorial issues that were caught and were reflected in the final draft. The annual report was circulated among the council.

Item 2	2. Results of the course/teacher evaluations, 2021-22
Item information	<p>The results from the evaluations of courses in M-ECON were presented. These were separated into the required courses and specialty courses and electives under the specializations.</p> <p>The evaluations for required and specialty courses reflect a high degree of satisfaction among the M-ECON students. There were two courses that had scores less than 3,0. There is some cause for concern in the case of ECN380. In the other course, substitute teachers took over the course and mid-course changes were made to improve matters.</p>
Proposed resolution	The program leader has taken up the issue with the Head of Academic Affairs. It is up to her to discuss with the Dean the actions needed to improve the course.

Item 3	3. External evaluation of M-ECON program
Item information	The SU decided that the M-ECON program undergo an external evaluation. An external committee has to be identified consisting of economics faculty members who are not affiliated with the School and external student(s) of economics who are not currently affiliated with the School. Once the annual report is approved, a terms of reference for the external committee will be drafted and an external committee recruited for this purpose.
Proposed resolution	The program leader will inform the program council on the process, procedures and progress. A committee of Knut Einar, Erlend, Amy, Kateryna and Roberto was formed in May to prepare the necessary documents and be involved with the procedures.

Item 4	4. New items
Discussion items	<p>4.1 Class size in ECN304 and ENC330</p> <p>ECN304 (Behavioral and Experimental Economics) has 6 students enrolled and ECN330 (Economic Integration and Trade Liberalization) has 8 students. The Head of Academic Affairs noted that courses with fewer than 10 students are in jeopardy of being cancelled in the next academic year.</p> <p>4.2 Specialization in Agribusiness and Food Economics</p> <p>If ECN330 ceases to be offered, then one of the core courses of the specialization in Agribusiness and Food Economics is lost. Moreover, there are no students from the business side of the program who have expressed an interest in this specialization. There is serious concern that this specialization will not be viable beyond 2023-24 (allowing those in the specialization to complete it).</p> <p>4.3 Student Evaluation of M-ECON thesis supervisors</p> <p>4.4 Issues with use of Stata in ECN303 and ECN305</p>
Proposed resolution	ECN304 is an important quantitative analysis course that would be a serious loss. One possibility would be to reduce the course to 5 ECTS to make it easier for students to fit into their schedule. This proposal was suggested by Silja noting that such a reduction would make it easier for M-ØA students to take it. If Stein would want to have a second half of the semester continuation of the course for another 5 ECTS that could/should be a possibility. The program leader reached out to Stein who in principle agreed that the course can be divided into two. There should be flexibility for Stein

	<p>to continue with the content as it is presently and for him to decide how to divide the course into two parts.</p> <p>It was noted later that in autumn 2022 ECN304 collided with BUS340 (Supply Chain Management), a popular business course, on Fridays. This could be another relevant factor explaining the low course enrollment.</p> <p>The head of academic programs noted that if Agribusiness and Food Economics cannot be made viable, then both ECN330 and the specialization will have to cease as an offer. Perhaps M-ØA and M-ECON program leaders can informally meet with M-ØA students to see why there is no appeal.</p> <p>An evaluation form was developed to get feedback on the supervision and advising that students received during their research and writing. There were no students who completed the evaluation. Perhaps the form was uploaded onto the system to late or that students were not made sufficiently aware of the evaluation. Kateryna will look into including in on Wiseflow and making it a step that students must take during the uploading of their thesis. Students will be assured that evaluations will not be shared with advisors and will only use the results for assessing quality of supervision and advising.</p> <p>It was once again noted that R and Python were dropped from ECN303 and ECN305. It is increasingly commonplace for students to voice their discontent with not having the more updated software packages in their quantitative analysis courses. Students on exchange at other universities have noted that Stata is no longer used there and neither is it used in work life. The program leader noted that this would be reflected in the minutes. This is not the first time that this has been brought to the council's attention. During the 2022 career evening arranged by the School, two of the four former M-ECON graduates who presented strongly recommended that students learn Python and noted that Stata was not a program they used.</p>
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Item 5	5. Social event for M-ECON students and faculty
Item information	During 2021-22 the program council of M-ECON program organized two social events for students and faculty, a pizza gathering in Sep 2021 and a BBQ in May 2022. The students and faculty found the events to be positive steps to improve social life in the School. The Dean also expressed his satisfaction with the efforts in this direction.
Proposed resolution	The program leader together with the student representatives will work toward arranging a social event (perhaps pizza) to bring M-ECON students and faculty together. The date is to be set for the first half of September. This event was held and proved to be a successful informal gathering of students and faculty.