

Emne rapport PSYK 250 Bacheloroppgave

Emneansvarlige

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Background

The aim of this module is to teach students how to carry out scientific work. That is, how to develop and/or choose appropriate methods to answer research questions, and how to present the results in both written and oral form. The mark of the module is based on the evaluation of the Bachelor thesis.

In total, 42 students registered for PSYK250. Three students dropped out due to illness, work load, or because they could not find a supervisor for their own Bachelor project idea (see evaluation of the module leader below). The remaining 39 students were distributed across 14 Bachelor topics, nine of which were supervised by staff from the Department for Biological and Medical Psychology and five by the Department of Psychosocial Science. All 39 students delivered their Bachelor thesis.

Teaching forms and mandatory requirements

Basic information regarding the purpose and practicalities of the module were provided in a mandatory meeting at the beginning of the semester. At the same meeting, students were also presented with a list of possible topics for the Bachelor thesis and a two-week selection process started, at the end of which every student was guaranteed to have a supervisor and a topic. Specifically, the students were given one week to form Bachelor groups of up to three and then hand in a preference ranking of all topics. Based on these rankings, topics were assigned with larger groups being prioritized over smaller groups (to prevent too many individuals competing for the same projects). After the assignments were made public, students were given the opportunity to change or swap topics. Students who had found their own supervisor did not take part in the selection process. This procedure had also been explained in a voluntary information meeting in November 2015. At the same meeting, students were also informed about the opportunity and the possible challenges of finding a supervisor for their own Bachelor project.

In voluntary courses the students learnt how to search for scientific literature and how to handle it using Endnote. In a separate, mandatory 3-hour lecture students learnt how to write and format scientific texts following the Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (APA).

Most of the teaching, however, was carried out by the respective Bachelor thesis supervisors in the form of supervision in groups of up to three students. Students had a right to a minimum of 10h, 13h, or 15h of supervision for groups of one, two, or three students, respectively. This was stipulated in a supervision contract that both the students and the supervisor had to sign. In addition to the Bachelor thesis itself, students were obliged to orally present their thesis.

Literature

- The "Publication Manual of the APA" (6th edition) to provide guidelines for scientific writing and formatting the Bachelor thesis.

- The literature for the thesis itself was topic dependent and the students were required to find relevant studies by themselves, based on their training in the literature search course.

Rammevilkår

Teaching took place in local seminar and lecture rooms. Meetings with the supervisors could have been in person or via phone/mail/video.

Marks

The 14 Bachelor theses received generally high marks. The tentative distribution (before students asked for re-evaluation) was:

- "A": 5 times
- "B": 7 times
- "C": 2 times

Student feedback and evaluation

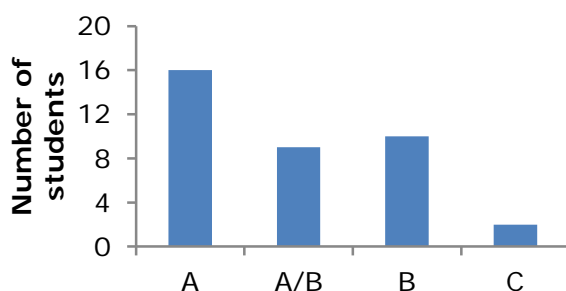
Paper-pencil feedback forms were distributed and returned on the day of the oral presentations. 37 out of 39 students (i.e., 95%) returned the feedback form. Last year, the return rate of a similar online feedback form was 23%. The feedback this year can thus be considered representative.

Ambition and work commitment

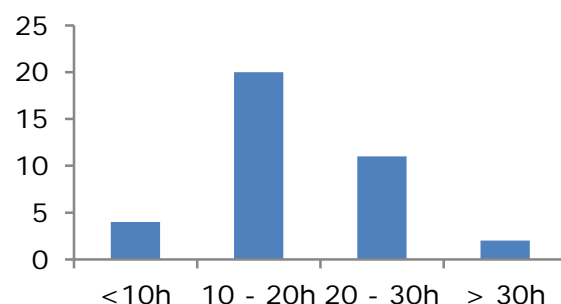
The vast majority of students (95%) were aiming for a "B" or better, showing generally high ambition (see figure below). Most students reported that they work between 10-20h or 20-30h per week. The roughly estimated weekly work load for PSYK250 (15 credit points) is ca. 20h. Thus, the students' work effort is in line with the expectations. Accordingly, the majority of students were content with their work commitment.

Two students expressed the opinion that the Bachelor thesis should be awarded 30 credit points.

Hva er ditt ambisjonsnivå til eksamen?



Hvor mange timer brukte Du hver uke?



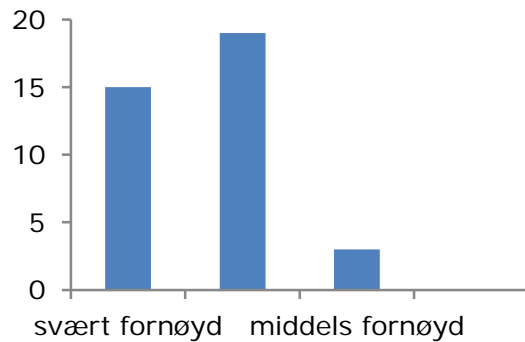
Orientation meeting and administrative/practical support

92% (34/37) were "happy" or "very happy" with the orientation meeting at the beginning of the semester and 86% (31/36) were "happy" or "very happy" with the administrative/practical support they received (see below).

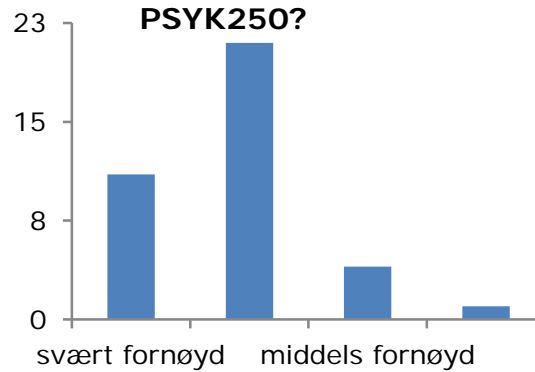
Individual suggestions were to provide earlier information on the oral presentations and to provide non-contradictory information regarding the length of the thesis (e.g., whether the appendix/abstract/acknowledgement section are counted towards the word limit and whether the

word limit is subject to a +/- 10% rule) and the length of the oral presentation (10 versus 15 min). Moreover, a sample of a previous Bachelor thesis was requested.

Hvor fornøyd er du med orienteringsmøtet ved semesterstart?



Hvor fornøyd er du med den administrative/praktiske oppfølgingen på emnet PSYK250?

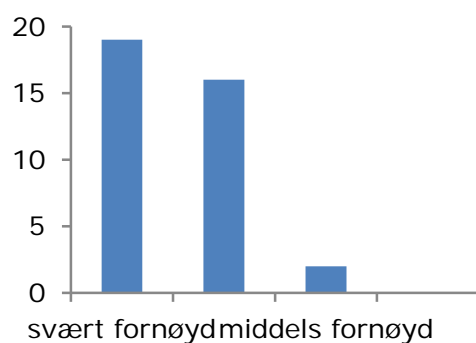


APA course

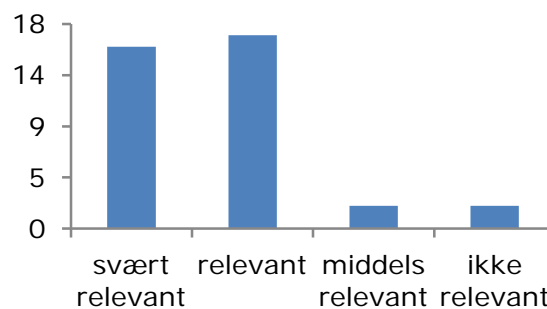
95% (35/37) were either “happy” or “very happy” with the APA course and 89 % thought it was “relevant” or “very relevant”. Last year for comparison, the vast majority of students (82%) were only “medium happy” (“middels fornøyd”) or “happy”.

Two students rated the APA course as “not relevant” and commented that the APA course should put more emphasis on theoretical and less on empirical Bachelor theses.

Hvor fornøyd er du med APA-kurset?



Hvor relevant syntes du APA-kurset har vært?



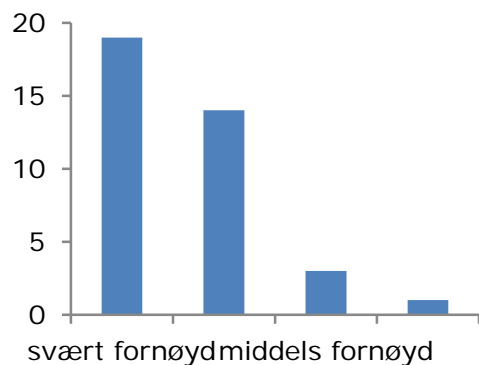
Bachelor topic and selection process

89% (33/37) were “happy” or “very happy” with their Bachelor thesis topic and 86% (31/36) were “happy” or “very happy” with the selection process.

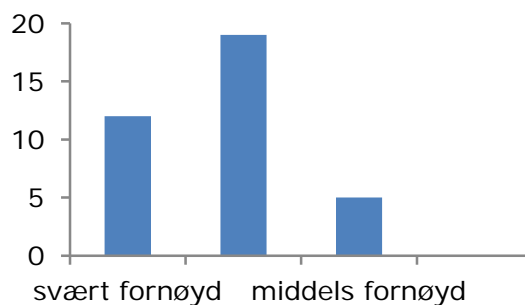
When asked whether they had suggestions how the selection process could be improved, 65% (24/37) either did not answer or answered “no”. Four to five students experienced it as “chaotic” when students after the orientation meeting tried to form groups by themselves. Suggestions how to improve the selection process comprised:

- Putting the topics on Canvas/Mitt UiB the day before the orientation meeting
- Starting the selection process earlier, for instance in the autumn semester
- Groups of three should not be prioritized over groups of 2
- The selection process should be organized such that students can choose the topic first and the group afterwards.

Hvor fornøyd er du med temaet for bacheloroppgaven din?



Hvor fornøyd er du med fordelingen av bacheloroppgavene?



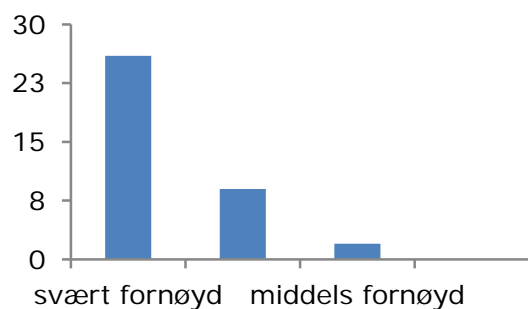
Work in groups and oral presentations

95% (35/37) were “happy” or “very happy” with the how they worked together with other group members and 95% (35/37) were “happy” or “very happy” with the presentation day.

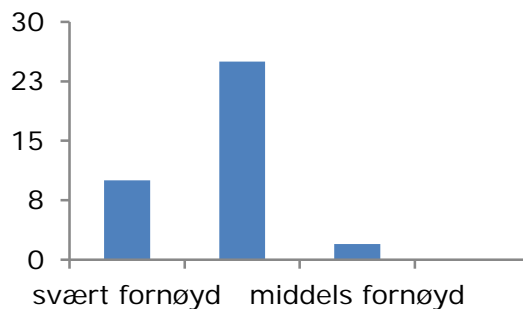
With further respect to the oral presentations suggestions were:

- Three students preferred having 15 instead of 10 minutes for the oral presentation.
- Two students complained that they had an exam the day after.
- One student asked for more encouragement to ask questions.
- One student suggested to send in the PowerPoint presentations the day before.

Hvor fornøyd er du med samarbeidet med medstudenter?



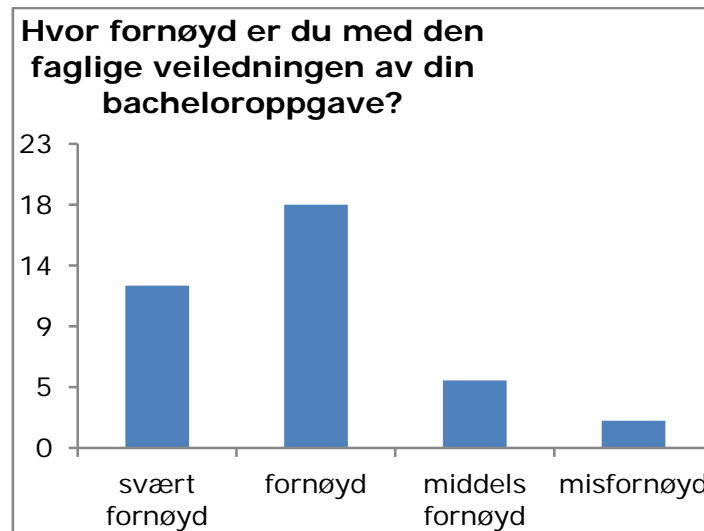
Hvor fornøyd er du med presentasjonsdagen?



Supervision

In total, 81% (30/37) were “happy” or “very happy” with their supervision. More specifically, 32% were “very happy”, 49% were “happy”, 14% were “medium happy”, and 5% were “unhappy”.

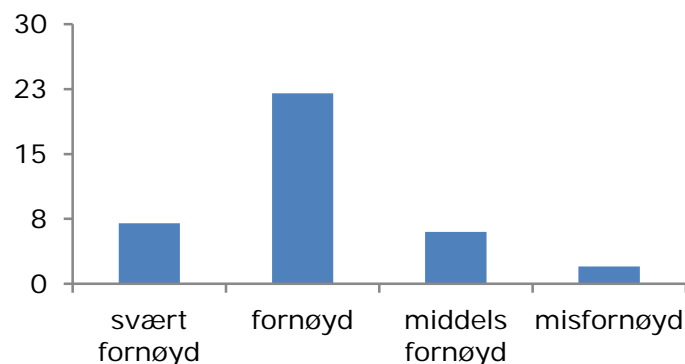
Last year, 36% had been “very happy”, 27% had been “happy”, and 36% had been “medium happy”.



Overall evaluation of PSYK250

78% (29/37) were either “happy” or “very happy” with PSYK250. Six and two students were only “medium happy” or “unhappy”, respectively. There are no data available from last year’s feedback assessment.

Hvor fornøyd er du totalt med emnet PSYK250?



Other suggestions to improve PSYK250

A few students expressed the wish to start earlier with the work on the Bachelor thesis. They proposed to move the APA and literature search courses to an earlier date in the semester and to have the selection process finished earlier. Further suggestions comprised

- Greater choice of Bachelor topics
- More opportunities to work alone and not in a group.
- More and more accurate information (see feedback on orientation meeting and administrative/practical support)
- 62% had no suggestions

Summary of the module leader and recommendations for the future

The students’ high ambition and weekly work ratings were reflected in their enthusiasm and motivation in this module. We both enjoyed teaching and organizing this module and based on the high quality of the Bachelor theses (and the corresponding high marks) it seems justified to state that the overall goal (learning how to think and work scientifically) has been achieved.

As the ratings show, most students were “happy” or “very happy” with the flow of information and administrative/practical help. In isolated cases contradictory information had been provided in the beginning regarding, for instance, the length of the Bachelor thesis, the formatting of the Bachelor thesis, and the length of the oral presentations. Although we feel that this did not negatively affect anybody’s mark or performance, we are grateful for pointing out these inconsistencies and will aim to avoid them in the future. Similarly, we consider putting samples of previous Bachelor theses on Mitt UiB (the new electronic learning platform) early in the semester as well as a Bachelor thesis template to avoid confusion about the formatting.

The APA course last year received intermediate ratings. The new concept we had implemented this year was met with general approval by the students. This is to be continued in the next semester. We do not agree with the critique, expressed by two students, that the APA course’s emphasis was too much on empirical Bachelor topics. First, leaving aside that the overwhelming number of Bachelor topics were, in fact, empirical, there are far fewer rules and guidelines in the APA manual on theoretical publications. Secondly, most of the topics covered in the APA course pertained to both theoretical and empirical Bachelor topics. For example, 28 out of 33 slides used in the APA course applied to both, 4/33 only to empirical topics, and 1/33 only to theoretical topics.

After the selection process had been criticized by some students last year, we made some adjustments in 2016. It appears that the majority of students were “happy” or “very happy” with the changes and the selection process itself. Nevertheless, there were also a couple of voices suggesting that the selection process should be less hectic and start earlier. We can see how having the Bachelor topics earlier would give the students more time to work on their research projects and we find some of the specific suggestions (e.g., that the topics should be made accessible to students before the orientation meeting) very helpful. For this reason, we are going to have a meeting together with the administration of PSYK250 before the next semester, where we will discuss if and how we can start earlier and how to make the selection process more pleasant.

The format of the oral presentation was met with large approval. We shall thus continue with it in its present form. Minor changes, for instance in the length of each presentation (10 or 15 min) are subject to the overall number of presentations and might vary from year to year. Suggestions like sending out earlier information regarding the timetable and exact format as well as avoiding clashes between the oral presentations and exams will be taken on board.

This year, as in previous years, the students expressed the wish to have a greater choice of topics. We understand that. However, we believe that especially this year there had been a wide range of topics covering such diverse research fields as posttraumatic stress disorder, music & memory, bullying, statistical learning, suicide, EEG & neural plasticity, steroid use, gender stereotypes, sleep, and reward systems in banks to name a few. It should also be noted that we had a couple of topics that none of the students ended up pursuing. Thus while it might have been preferable for the students to have greater choice, there does not seem to be great demand for it, particularly since the ratings suggest that most students were “happy” or “very happy” with their topic.

Greater choice would also imply a higher number of supervisors. This would also help two further wishes that the students expressed, as in previous years: more opportunity to work alone and more opportunity to carry out their own Bachelor project ideas. Both scenarios are possible within the current design of PSYK250 and we did our best to recruit as many supervisors as possible and generally provide help and guidance for finding members of staff that would supervise the students’ own ideas. Ultimately, however, we depend upon the availability of supervisors and, alas, cannot accommodate all the students’ wishes.

The availability of supervisors also depends on the availability of financial resources for Bachelor projects. This is particularly the case for empirical projects which often require participant payments. We therefore highly appreciate the faculty's initiative to have a fixed allowance for Bachelor projects each year. We hope this will be an incentive for more members of staff to become supervisors and may help to maintain and further increase the high quality of Bachelor thesis. And it may also help providing greater opportunities for doing Bachelor projects alone or to pursue own research ideas. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to all supervisors who devoted their time and effort and wish the Bachelor students all the best for the future.