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MEVIT3300/4300 Media Economics

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Periodic evaluation – spring 2007

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Periodic evaluation - spring 2007:

The course and evaluation

From course description:

“Media economics is concerned with the changing economic forces that direct and constrain the choices of decision makers across the media. This course, which is accessible to media students without a background in economics, introduces some of the main economic concepts and issues affecting the media and address some of the more interesting economic characteristics and industrial questions surrounding media cooperations and markets. It examines the distinctive economic features of media, the relationship between these features and the strategies deployed by media cooperations and a range of key forces and issues affecting the economics of the main sub-sectors of mass media. Areas that will be covered include economics of advertising, print media, broadcasting, film and new digital media.”

Media Economics is a 10 credits course for both BA and MA students. The lectures are given for BA and MA students together (attachment 1), whereas the seminars are separate for BA and MA students (attachment 2a and b). BA students had a 4 hours school exam and MA students had a take-home exam (attachment 3a and b).

About half the students following the lectures came from media studies programmes whereas about half came from other study programmes.

Two forms of student evaluation were implemented; A reference group meeting was held with representatives from seminar groups; and during the last lecture the students filled in

a questionnaire evaluating the course at the last lecture (attachment 4). Generally, students stated that the course met their expectations highly or to some extent.

Lectures:

Teaching was organised with nine lectures and six seminar meetings. The number of lectures was higher than normal at IMK in order to facilitate both an intensive week - and lectures over a longer period of time. The first five lectures were given by Gillian Doyle and constituted the intensive week. After that Tanja Storsul gave two lectures, and two lectures were given by visitors from the media industry. Thus, lecturing was rather concentrated, yet some continuity was provided.

25-30 students attended most lectures. The students evaluate the lectures as meeting their expectations highly or to some extent. The intensive week seems to have worked well and was a good way to get started. Some of the students found the English lectures a bit challenging during the intensive week, but the strong encouragement to read Gillian Doyle's book before her lectures probably helped.

The visitors from the industry were very well received by the students and very many emphasise how useful this was. The visitors (Stephan Granhaug from Aftenposten multimedia and Dag Asbjørnsen from Norwegian Film Fund) provided interesting perspectives and illustrations on how the theoretical perspectives in the course are applied in the Media industry.

Generally the students appreciated powerpoints and presentations published online.

Seminars:

Because the number of lectures was higher than normal, the number of seminars was a bit reduced. A total of six seminar meetings were offered to the students by seminar leader Sarah Chiumbu. The first seminar took place before the intensive lecturing week in order to discuss key concepts and prepare the students for the intensive week. This seems to have worked well. The following seminars were organised with case studies and discussion points provided by the seminar leader.

The students' evaluations show that the students found the seminars well structured and engaging. There does, however seem to be a difference between the BA and the MA-students. This was especially clear in the reference group. The BA students evaluate the seminars more positively and appreciate the discussions as fruitful. The MA seminars have been suffering more from low attendance. This points to a general challenge of organising MA seminars. The number of MA students is not as high as the number of BA students in courses provided for both levels. Thus, if not all MA students show up, the low number of seminar participants become a big challenge.

Literature and course contents:

The BA and the MA students had the same reading list – yet the learning objectives were different expecting more of the MA students than the BA students. In the reference group meeting, it was discussed that the BA students found the course and the readings difficult

but not impossible, whereas the representative from the master students found it a bit too basic. When all students were asked in the final questionnaire, however, no-one indicated that the course was too easy. Two BA students found it too hard, whereas the rest found the course to be challenging enough. This indicates that the level of difficulty is a complex issue. It may be worth considering, but at the same time, it indicates that it is probably possible to continue having the same readings for BA and MA students, yet different expectations.

Many of the students did, however, point out that they found the literature a bit old. This is something that should be considered, although in economic theory five year old contributions may still be up to date.

Quantitative data

3300:

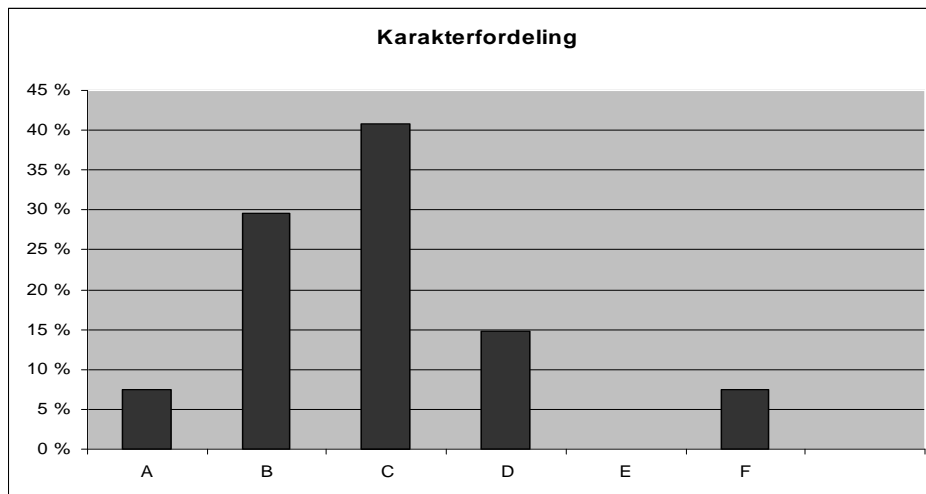
Registered for exam: 36, mostly single-course or international students.

9 students (25 %) did not sit the exam.

Fail: 2 (6 %)

Last year: 41 registered (12 % downturn), 29 per cent did not turn up (down 4 percentage points), zero fail (up from 0 to 6 %).

Grade distribution:



4300:

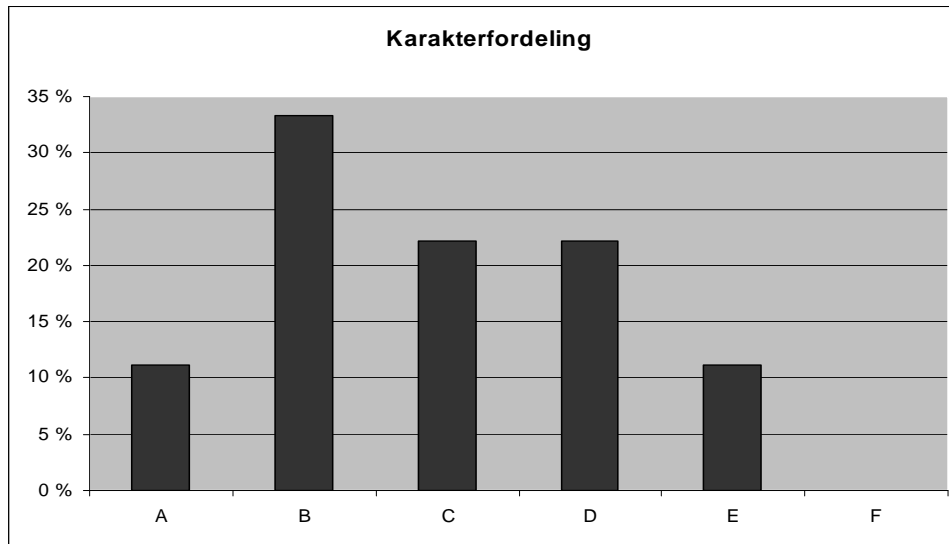
Registered: 10, mostly media science students

Did not turn up: 1 (= 10 %)

Fail: 0

Last year: 13 registered. Fail zero. 23 per cent did not turn up (down 13 pp).

Distribution:



Indications of high quality

The course seems to have found a fruitful form with an ok mix between lectures, visitors from industry and seminars. The students are generally satisfied with the course (no-one answers “not much” to the question on whether the course has met their expectations). The students point at up-to-date examples in lectures, well structured seminars and challenging readings as positive aspects of the course.

Indications on low quality

The big challenge seems to be to get the MA seminars to work as well as we would like them to. Part of this has to do with attendance. When the number of MA students in the course is quite low in the beginning, a 30% dropout of seminars leaves only 4-5 students in the group. Then each student must be very engaged in order to get fruitful discussions. This seems to be a challenge in many courses.

Development of study quality

The report from the course in 2006 showed that there were challenges with the mix between an intensive week and only two additional lectures. The structure of the course was changed this year adding two lectures with visitors from the industry. This seems to have worked very well.

The last report also suggested that the students were given a fixed reading list instead of composing it themselves. This was done and enabled the students to focus more on their readings than on finding their readings.

Last year’s report proposed to differentiate exam forms between the BA and MA levels. This was done and made it easier to differentiate both expectations on learning outcome as well as seminars.

The reference group evaluation this year pointed at some uncertainties about reading list, exams etc. This was followed up immediately in class and online.

Suggestions for improvements.

One area where improvements should be sought is for the MA seminars. Discussions and adjustments of the form of the seminars could be taken up at one of the first seminars each term. More focus on writing assignments could also be a way of making the MA seminar more relevant as a preparation for the home exam.

Another issue that should be considered is updating some contributions on the reading list.

More differentiation between the BA and MA levels could also be considered. This is, however, complex as more differentiation makes it more difficult to make the lecture plan integrated and to show how the course has some broad basic arguments for all students.