

## Periodic course evaluation ECON3620/4620 spring 2019

**Background:** ECON4620 has been taught every spring since 2014. Until 2017 it was given as a master's course, while as of spring 2018 the course has been given both as a master's and bachelor's course ("heisemne").

**Changes:** The course went through major changes for 2019. Tarjei Havnes designed the course content and curriculum, but due to illness, the course responsible and lecturer changed to Kristoffer Berg two weeks before the start of the semester. The syllabus was broadened significantly, with somewhat less focus on optimal labour income taxation and more focus on expenditure policies and a variety of tax issues.

**Teaching:** The course consisted of 11 standard lectures, one lecture divided in two between Statistics Norway researcher Thor Olav Thoresen and an invited lecture by the Head of Tax Norway Hans Christian Holte, and one visit to the Tax Policy Department in the Ministry of Finance. The course also consisted of 8 seminars in two seminar groups. During the seminars, the students would usually be asked to solve exercises in groups of 3-4 persons, in addition to more traditional problem solving on the board.

**Evaluation:** The only form of formal evaluation is the written exam. In ECON3620, 4 students passed the exam and 1 did not attend the exam. The average grade among those passing was somewhat below C. In ECON4620, 26 students passed the exam, 2 failed and 9 did not attend the exam. The average grade among those passing was just below C.

**The learning outcomes:** It adequately describes what students are expected to learn (<https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/oekonomi/ECON4620/>).

**Student feedback:** The students seem satisfied with the course, but many comment that the syllabus is too large and the course too broad. Some students seem particularly satisfied with the seminars, others with the lecture slides. The students were satisfied with the visit to the Ministry and the guest lecture by Thoresen, while they did not find the invited lecture very useful. Many students reported that the group work during the seminars was useful, while some students reported that it took too much time. Some students report that it was not always clear which material from the syllabus that is more relevant.

**Comments:** The course and syllabus is now too broad and should be more focused on fewer issues. The level of the course is adequate, and students would probably do better if they focus more on each topic. I believe the group work helped some of the students and that it is worthwhile to initiate discussions. There is a heterogeneous group of students taking the course, so it may be a good idea to spend more time going through basic welfare and information economics in the beginning of the course. Some students lack sufficient background in basic microeconomics and econometrics. The course could also be improved by including a compulsory assignment, such as writing a critical review on one of the further readings.

Kristoffer Berg, 28.8.2019