

Emnerapport- fylles ut etter endt evaluering #138

Emnekode	GOV353
Emnetittel	Qualitative methods
Semester	høst 2023
Institutt	Institutt for administrasjon og organisasjonsvitenskap
Emneansvarlig	Martina Vukasovic
Sist evaluert (semester/år)	nytt emne

Emnets undervisnings- og vurderingsform

The course ran from 13 November (week 46, first lecture) to 20 December (week 51, final exam deadline). It was structured as follows:

- Weeks 46 and 47 – 6 lectures (3 each week), each lasting 2 hours
- Week 48 – 5 practice sessions with partially flipped classroom approach (see below). Each session lasted 2 hours.
- Week 49 – seminar in which students presented their draft home exams and provided feedback to each other (see below under “assignments during the course” and “final assessment”). Feedback was also given orally and then in written to each draft by the course responsible.
- Week 50 and most of week 51 – students worked on finalizing their exams (see below under “final assessment”). There was a two week gap between the seminar and the final exam deadline.

Students were working in groups throughout the course. This included structured / guided group work during practice sessions, as well as group work organised independently (outside of scheduled sessions).

Because final assessment was a group report on a qualitative research project (see below), and given the intensity of the practice sessions, the students were assigned to five groups at the very beginning of the course. Each of the groups was given one of the global challenges as its topic.

The assignment of individual students into specific groups was copied from the previous course (GOV352 Research design). However, the allocation of specific challenges was changed; for example – group that work on Climate crisis in GOV352, got Health and pandemics as a topic for GOV353.

Groups had 4 or 5 students. Two students who were initially registered for the course but never showed up to any sessions (neither in GOV353 nor in the previous two) were early on taken out of the group allocation. There were also 2 exchange students who did not take the final exam and thus were not allocated a specific group.

The course responsible formulated Group work guidelines to minimize various risks related to working in groups and, especially, group final assessment (e.g. free riding, available upon request). Draft of guidelines was shared at the beginning of the course and the students could provide feedback on it within the first week (though none did).

Students had the following (group) compulsory assignments linked to compulsory participation in the seminar:

- Submitting and presenting a draft of the final exam (at least 4000 words). Students were instructed to include in these drafts specific questions and dilemmas they may have. All groups submitted well beyond 4000 words. The quality of drafts was a bit uneven both across and within groups, though overall of a higher quality compared to other courses that have a similar approach.
- Structured feedback to the draft of one other group. Quality of feedback provided by the students – both at the seminar and in written – was much higher compared to courses that have a similar approach.

In addition there were also four other assignments, partially “flipping the classroom” related to practice sessions and providing scaffolding for the final exam. This was done to facilitate group work, maximise utility of practice sessions and presence of course teachers, as well as support students’ work towards the final exam. The approach was as follows:

- Before the practice session
- o 1 working day (sometimes less) before a particular practice session each group was expected to submit a small

assignment (see below for overview of assignments) to a designated discussion topic on MittUiB. These assignments were published at the beginning of the course.

o before the actual practice session the course responsible provided written feedback to each of the groups, by responding to their post in the designated MittUiB discussion topic.

- During the practice session

o The course responsible provided a short overview of key points linked to a specific practice session. This included common “mistakes” and challenges identified in groups’ small assignments. This presentation was also posted to MittUiB (see below).

o The groups worked further on this specific assignment, with the course teachers being available for feedback.

- After the practice session

o Students had the opportunity to ask follow up questions in the designated topic. This was possible until 2 days before the final exam deadline and responses were given by the course teachers within 1 working day. Students used this opportunity sparingly.

The specific assignments linked to practice sessions were:

- Post a list of documents you think are relevant for the research topic, with a short justification (a few sentences).

- Post (a) list of possible respondents for the research topic assigned to your group (with short justification, 1-3 sentences for each), and (b) a draft interview guide (or guides, in case you have different types of respondents).

- Post a draft of the coding scheme (or schemes) you intend to use for analysing documents and interviews.

- Post summaries of three distinct data sources (200-400 words) relevant for the research topic assigned to your group. The three distinct data sources have to include at least one interview and at least one document.

No specific assignment was given for the NVivo practice session, though students were given instructions how to access Nvivo and were expected to test this before the session. Though there were less technical problems this time around (compared to the first attempt at this within GOV323B in Autumn 2022), Mac users still experienced problems. In addition, the time allocated was insufficient for actual practicing specific tasks (e.g. coding) together. Moreover, the version that is available to students does not allow sharing of coding results, which meant that the students were not able to use NVivo to assess inter-coder reliability. Nevertheless, three groups actually coded their material in NVivo for the final exam.

Final assessment

The final assessment was a group project report on a qualitative study. Each group was given one of the global challenges and was expected to narrow down the topic and formulate specific research question(s). Each study was supposed to have at least one actual document and at least one mock interview. The latter was done due to time limitations. Course teachers or students acted as interview respondents.

Scope of empirical material reflected number of members in each group (see Appendix 2). The group project report was expected to be 8000 (+/- 10%) words long.

In addition to submitting their report on Inspira, each group had to send an additional document to study administration where they all confirmed by signature that they contributed equally to the report.

Oppfølging fra tidligere evalueringer

Not applicable, as this was the first time the course was organised.

Evalueringemetode(er)

Student survey and own reflections

Sammendrag av studentene sin evaluering

Students were asked to complete a brief anonymous questionnaire before at the seminar (week 49). The questionnaire focused on: (1) satisfaction with the overall organization and structure of the course, (2) reflection on group work, and (3) reflection on use of course literature.

17 students (out of 24, including exchange students) completed the questionnaire.

Satisfaction (1-very dissatisfied, 5-very satisfied) with the overall organization and structure of the course was very high:

Content of lectures: 4.82

Content of practice sessions: 4.65

internal group dynamics and lowest satisfaction with how groups were constructed:

Group project report as final assessment: 3.94

Group work guidelines: 4.65

How groups were constructed: 3.24

Guidance through group work (explanation of tasks and feedback): 4.71

Communication within the group: 3.94

Distribution of workload within the group: 3.94

Students were also asked to comment on group work through an open-ended question, and here they mentioned as problematic, in addition to allocation of students to particular groups, also balance between group members with regards to prior knowledge concerning methods and size of groups.

With regards to use of course literature, most of the students reported that they have skimmed through the readings before each session. In an open ended question, students were also asked to reflect on the reasons behind their approach to literature and, among those who did (10 students), the following reasons were mentioned: lack of time, reading not being obligatory (as in GOV351), pre-existing familiarity with methods, distraction due to poor group dynamics and mental health.

Overall, most students reported being (a) most satisfied with feedback given and (b) least satisfied with group exam and introduction to NVivo (due to lack of time and technical issues).

Emneansvarlig sin evaluering

With regards to alignment of this course to the other two courses the GIGov students have in the fall semester (GOV351 and GOV352), there are significant benefits and few, mostly organizational, challenges. The students receive conceptual and thematic grounding in GOV351 which makes it possible to apply these concepts and focus on these themes in methodological sense in GOV353 and in this way the students are really given the opportunity to practice qualitative methods on material they are already familiar with.

Having taught GOV323B where such alignment does not exist, I can clearly see approach used in GIGov programme equips students with stronger skills and more knowledge about how to actually do qualitative methods. In addition, the fact that students have the GOV352 (research design) course before diving into qualitative methods also means that the qualitative methods course can focus on specificities of qualitative methods (e.g. in relation to ethics and research positionality).

However, such alignment requires teaching to be organised in blocks and this means few weeks of rather intense work for both students and teachers. In particular from student point of view, this might be challenging as it comes at the end of the (comparatively speaking) shorter semester. These organisational challenges can be mitigated by revisiting the schedule and pacing within the block allocated to this course.

Block teaching should be kept as it is crucial for alignment.

Related to this, it may be necessary to also revisit the balance between time used on lectures and time used on practice sessions. Number of lectures can be reduced, given that (1) there was some repetition of topics addressed in GOV352 (research design) and (2) some of the topics may be more effectively covered through practice sessions alone (e.g. coding).

The partially flipped approach to practice sessions worked particularly well and should be kept as an approach.

Training students to use qualitative methods software (in case of UiB, NVivo is available) needs to be organised differently as the current approach (a 2 hour workshop) does not allow for sufficient time. Experiences from GOV321 (where students also get experience in using software), as well as qualitative course with software training from other universities (e.g. ISV UiO) will be used to develop a new approach to this aspect of the course.

The main challenge in the course is group project report as final assessment method. While there are many positive aspects to this - e.g. training students to work in groups, ability to do more varied tasks and get experience with more varied data sources, data collection and analysis approaches - all these hinge on good group dynamics. Good group dynamics leads to synergies between group members and this is reflected in many students being generally satisfied with group work as well as overall final exam results (see below). Bad group dynamics prevents these positive aspects

to emerge as clearly.

Free riding was not, somewhat surprisingly, a big challenge, but this was likely because the group exam meant that the stakes and thus responsibility and accountability were higher, than with ordinary group work that is not part of final assessment.

In this edition of the course, students were expected to confirm that they contributed equally to the final exam and the grade given to this final exam is then valid for all students in the group (see below).

With all this in mind, it would be necessary to revisit the group work aspect of the course in terms of allocation of students into groups, the role of group work in the overall course structure, and its linkage to the final assessment. An approach that could combine the benefits of group work while avoiding some of the pitfalls is to combine group work and individual work as final assessment. This can be addressed through a portfolio approach, for example: students are expected to submit a group qualitative methods assignment first (and this assignment is graded pass/fail), and then submit an individual reflection on the use of qualitative methods (and this assignment would be given a grade).

**Last opp karakterfordeling her
(Du finner den i Inspera, alternativt kan
du ta kontakt med administrativ
kontaktperson)**

[GOV353 H2023 grade distribution.pdf](#)

Mål for neste evalueringsperiode- Forbedringstiltak

See changes mentioned in "Emneansvarlig sin evaluering" section above.

**FS580.001 Resultatfordeling**

Eksamen: GOV353 0 O1 2023 HØST
Qualitative Methods - Group project report
Karakterregel: Bokstavkarakterer

10,0sp

	Totalt	Kvinner	Menn
Antall kandidater (oppmeldt):	25	17	8
Antall møtt til eksamen:	24	17	7
Antall bestått (B):	24	17	7
Antall stryk (S):	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Antall avbrutt (A):	0	0	0
Gjennomsnittskarakter:	B	B	B
Antall med legeattest (L):	0	0	0
Antall trekk før eksamen (T):	0	0	0

Karakter	Antall	Kvinner	Menn
E	0	0	0
D	0	0	0
C	4	4	0
B	15	9	6
A	5	4	1

