

## Evaluation of course PROPSY305, Cognitive Psychology,

*Autumn semester 2019*

### Introduction

This report was written by the course *emneansvarlig*, Prof. Mark Price. The course is given in English and is open to international students. There are 3 main lecture modules: **perception, attention and consciousness**, taught by Mark Price, **memory**, taught by an external guest lecturer, and **affect and higher cognition**, taught by a stand-in teacher. Students also complete a research project (*emneoppgave*). The course is assessed on a pass/fail basis for UiB students, but graded for international students.

Course evaluation is based on a meeting with the entire class and two online surveys containing both multiple-choice questions and free-text questions. One survey evaluated the course in general, including assessment methods. The other survey evaluated various alternative teaching formats used by Mark Price in his lecture module on *perception, attention and consciousness*. These teaching formats include use of online lectures, online exercises, and student peer review.

Response rate for each survey was approximately 100% of home student and exchange students (n=42 for the overall course, and n=41 for the module by Mark Price, with 3 exchange students in each sample).

Original data are available at <https://mitt.uib.no/courses/20785/quizzes/7596/statistics> and <https://mitt.uib.no/courses/20785/quizzes/7598/statistics>.

This report begins with an outline of changes made to the course on the basis of past feedback from students, then summarises the evaluations of the overall course and of the lecture module by Mark Price. These are followed by more detailed descriptions of students' ratings and verbal comments.



*Mark Price, 6 March 2020*

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## 1. Recent changes to the course

On the basis of student feedback and teacher evaluation from previous semesters, the following changes were introduced:

- We expanded a peer review exercise in which students write a short online essay and then practice using an essay marking rubric to make comments on 3 essays written by other students.
- On the basis of results from last semester, we were able to set a formal pass mark for an obligatory multiple-choice test (introduced last semester) that examines 2 out the 3 main themes of the course. Three students failed this test.
- A one-day workshop on the theme of consciousness was added to allow discussion and group presentations on this theme that students have complained is challenging. However, only 1 student decided to attend from the start of the workshop, with 2 further students appearing later in the day.

## 2. Summary of evaluation for overall course

Feedback from students in this class was characterised by a marked shift towards more negative distribution of ratings than in other recent semesters. While some students gave positive feedback, a larger minority than usual were critical of almost all aspects of the course, including learning activities, assessment format, and their semester projects and project conference. This was despite minimal changes in course content or structure. The more negative evaluation included aspects of the course that were beyond the direct control of teachers such as student cooperation within project groups (see below), and the value of student discussion outside of class. Some students were also critical of the evaluation process itself because this took place at the end of a long conference day when students expressed that they were tired.

Across all 3 lecture modules, most students ( $\geq 85\%$ ) rated that the course contributed to their learning at least to some extent, with nearly half ( $\geq 40\%$ ) giving the highest rating of very much. Compared to last semester, students were less positive about one lecture module, they rated 1 module similarly, and they were more positive about another module which had been assigned a new teacher. Unfortunately, 7-12% of students rated the modules as contributing very little, and 1 student rated each module as contributing nothing. This small proportion of dissatisfied students was also present last semester for 2 out of 3 modules.

Learning goals were rated as *clear* or *adequate* by the majority of students (88%-95%) on all modules. The majority of students rated lectures and activities to be well prepared, and felt that they were welcome to ask questions.

While 2/3 modules were rated as having about the right level of difficulty by most students, over half of students rated the module on Perception, Attention and Consciousness as too advanced. This is very different from the previous semester when over 90% of students rated it as being about right in difficulty level. In verbatim comments, a few students commented they had liked everything about this part of the course, but the dominance of negative over positive evaluations was very marked and very different from previous semesters. Several students described that they found this part of the course overwhelming to follow within the tight schedule that was available.

The module on Memory, taught by a guest lecturer, was rated as good in content by most students, but many complained that the lecture schedule had been too dense. The module on Higher Cognition, taught by a new stand-in teacher, received better ratings than in previous recent semester but many students had difficulty hearing the lecturer. Use of the microphone should be made routine in standard-sizes classrooms as it is often difficult for a speaker to appreciate that their voice is not carrying to all parts of the room.

Overall administration and organisation of the course were rated as good or excellent by only 43% of students, compared with 97% the previous semester. This was despite teachers' perception that the course was better organised and signposted than in previous semesters. Appreciation and interest in cognitive psychology were also markedly lower than the previous semester. Overall verbatim comments focused on the course being too compressed and intense, with the structure being difficult to follow.

A higher proportion of the class than usual were required to revise the first of the 2 assessed essays that form a major part of obligatory course activities. Although some students wrote excellent essays, the quality of many essays reflected a lower average level of engagement with core learning materials, and was associated with a larger number of students than usual who claimed to have missed many lectures or not used other key learning resources at all.

Essay revision is intended, as advertised as, an opportunity to practice and improve writing skills, as well as to revise course content. Unfortunately, many students in this class appear to have appraised this learning opportunity in a negative manner. In addition, 2 students failed their first essay even after an opportunity to revise it, 1 student did not complete some of the online obligatory learning activities by the stipulated deadline, and 3 students failed a multiple-choice test (although many students performed close to ceiling on this test). It should also be mentioned that only 1 student turned up for a non-obligatory 1-day active learning working that had been scheduled in response to demand from previous semesters, and which had been positively evaluated by students in the previous semester. This is unprecedented in the history of this course.

It is not possible to be sure why the course was unsatisfactory to so many students in this particular class. Time pressure has been a constant problem in this course and it is clear from feedback that some students found the study demands in the first part of the course to be overwhelming in the time available. This is a particular problem in the autumn semester which is shorter than the spring semester. Time pressure is likely to have interacted with the internal dynamics, motivation and average ability of this particular class of students.

The unnatural compression of parts of this course result from sharing the semester with course PROPSY306. The latter requires several weeks to be blocked out for student clinical placements and so takes up more than its fair share of the timetable. As student numbers continue to increase, this problem continues to grow. It will not be solved until the Faculty puts more resources into PROPSY306 to allow more students to take their clinical placements at the same time, or until ways are found to run parts of PROPSY305 online during the periods of the semester that are blocked out for clinical practice.

It should be stressed that students made it clear that they struggled because of the time available to complete some parts of the course, not because of the total amount of learning material. The difficulties reported by some students have been taken into account in a structural revision of the course that is being implemented in spring 2020. This will include more content being placed online to allow students to interweave a slower-paced home study of parts of PROPSY305 with ongoing clinical placements on the other course.

Course changes for spring 2020 also include a major revision of the online interface of the course to make it easier for students to follow learning activities (whether classroom based or online) and the various distributed deadlines for obligatory learning assignments. The course will also have a new permanent position attached to it from spring 2020. This will provide more stability and allow for long-term planning in part of the course that has been taught by temporary teachers for many semesters.

These changes will hopefully prevent a recurrence of the level of student dissatisfaction that was expressed in autumn 2019.

### 3. Summary of evaluation of assessment methods

More students appraised the main assessment method (of ungraded assessed essays) positively than negatively, especially regarding learning outcome, and most students (93%) considered that essay questions were at least somewhat related to stated learning goals. A large majority of 88% of students rated that their writing of essays 1 and 2 had been helped by familiarising them at the semester start with the marking rubric used by teachers. Nevertheless, enthusiasm for the assessment method was reduced compared to the previous semester. Lack of grading was more likely to be perceived as beneficial than detrimental to student learning; however, students were less likely than last semester to rate themselves as having benefitted from lack of grades, either in terms of effort or learning outcome.

Unlike previous semesters, free text comments contained few positive comments about this teaching and evaluation format. Some students even expressed that they would have preferred a traditional course with an end-of-semester exam. A common complaint was too little time to prepare for the essays. A minority of students resented having to learn a new style of essay writing and thought they should be assessed in ways that they were used to and had practiced over previous semesters.

For the multiple-choice test, student ratings suggest that fewer students experienced benefits from the test than in the previous semester, but that majority still rated the difficulty level as appropriate, and many more students rated the test as having positive rather than negative outcomes on coverage of syllabus and quality of learning.

**Note:** Future course evaluations need to modify one of the questions asked about assessment methods. The question reads, *"Compared with other examination methods (e.g. multiple choice, long exam, home exam), I prefer the short assessed essays as the main way for my learning to be evaluated by the teachers."* The rating scale used with this question should be improved because the rating category "disagree" is ambiguous. It could imply either that students positively disliked the assessment method, or that they just disagree that the method was better.

## 4. Summary of evaluation of semester projects

Survey feedback indicates that most students found their semester projects to be useful, interesting, fairly allocated (this was administered by students) and well supervised. However, on all these points, the proportion of students giving positive appraisal was noticeably lower, and negative appraisals more frequent, than in the previous semester. About a quarter of students reported bad project-group dynamics (compared with zero in the previous semester). Enthusiasm for all aspects of the project conference was much lower than in the previous semester, with only about half of students rating that it had been useful to either present, listen or ask questions. This was despite the teacher's impression that most groups gave very good presentations of their work. Positive ratings for the presentation format dropped from a clear majority to a clear minority. Verbatim comments included strong opinions that students should not be forced to be ready to present any part of their group presentation (as opposed to only preparing one subsection of 3-5mins). Some students reported that the self-administration of project allocation by the class had been unfair and nepotistic. One student reported that working as an RA had felt more like doing a job they should have been paid to do. Objectively, the project supervisors and the conference administration were exactly as in previous semesters.

## 5. Summary of evaluation of Mark Price's module

### *Online lectures:*

Although most students claimed to view all the online lectures, the number who did not had more than doubled from the previous semester to 23%. As the lectures are a key part of the course, this is worrying. These numbers correspond closely to the number of students claiming they could not keep up with the schedule of lectures (26%) which was similar to previous semesters. However, nearly all students viewed the entirety of lectures that they viewed. This class of students claimed more often than before to review lecture parts more than once.

While most students rated the lectures as clear and interesting, far less rated them as very clear and very interesting than last semester, and the proportion rating the lectures as uninteresting rose from one or two students to a sizeable minority. About twice as many students found the lectures too advanced (36%) as compared to the previous semester. Verbatim comments reflected these data, with some students describing the lectures as too advanced, difficult to follow in English. Some commented that it had taken a lot longer to view the lectures because they had to keep stopping to take notes (which is actually one aim of providing lectures, and of providing them online so that students can pause to take notes).

Many more students showed a preference for live lectures than for online lectures by the same lecturer, and, unlike the previous semester, more students showed a preference for the learning outcome of live lectures than a preference for online lectures. While a slight majority of students thought the proportion of online lectures was about right, more students thought the level should be reduced than thought it should be increased, which was the opposite of student ratings in the previous semester.

More students reported technical problems in viewing the lectures than previously although almost all were able to overcome them. Unfortunately, 2 students reported that technical issues discouraged them from viewing the lectures though nobody provided any details as to what the problems had been.

Despite the relative unpopularity of online lecture among many (but not all) students, students reported using the online lectures in the way they are intended to be helpful; e.g. taking notes, rewinding and pausing the video for breaks were common. Only a few students skipped ahead because they already knew the content, and only 2 students skipped ahead because the videos were too long.

### *Videonotat:*

Most students (78%) claimed to view video recordings (Videonotat) of live lectures and find this useful.

*Online quizzes:*

A large majority of students rated the online quizzes as useful for keeping up with the course and for their learning, and as having the right level of difficulty. However, ratings were less positive than in previous semesters, a small minority of 14% found them disruptive, and 26% found them too difficult (3 times the proportion of students in the previous semester). In verbatim comments, a few students expressed that the quizzes had forced them to focus too much on detail, and that they felt the questions had been trying to "catch them out". As in previous semesters, students claimed to mostly answer the questions on their own but about half also claimed to have used groupwork to answer the questions and 1 student claimed to have got the answers from a colleague. Opinion was divided over whether use of quizzes should be expanded. More students agreed the quizzes should be obligatory rather than made voluntary.

*Online practice essay with peer review:*

A majority of students found it useful to write a practice essay online, but only about half found it useful to peer review their colleagues and less than half rated that receiving peer review had been useful. These ratings were considerably less enthusiastic than the previous semester. In verbatim comments, some students expressed strong opinions that this exercise had been a waste of their time and that they had not had time to prepare properly for it. This feedback contrasts with the appraisal from an external teacher who was hired to quality check students' peer reviews, and who concluded that students had for the most part done a conscientious and constructive job with this exercise.

*Classroom workshops:*

Of 3 non-obligatory classroom workshops, 1 was attended by only 1 student, one by 46% of students and one by 60% of students. A workshop on perception was rated as useful by most participants, but around a quarter found it not useful, many mentioned have not done sufficient reading preparation, and ratings were in general lower than previous semester despite teacher perception that the workshop had worked much better than before. A workshop on attention was positively rated by all attendees. A new workshop on consciousness, for which students were asked to prepare a presentation, was the event only attended by 1 student (with 3 arriving later in the day). Those who came had a useful tutorial with the teacher but an attendance-rate this low is unprecedented on any event in the history of this course. Enthusiasm for expanding workshops on this course was also much reduced compared to the previous semester. Encouraging students to prepare for, and attend non-obligatory workshops is still an uphill struggle on this course. The course description has been changed to make one of these workshops obligatory in future semesters.

*Students' use of learning resources:*

Students were less positive than previous semesters about the usefulness of almost all aspects of course materials and activities. Generally far fewer students gave maximum ratings, fewer students gave positive ratings, more students gave explicitly negative ratings, and more students responded that they had not used certain aspects of the course at all. This includes peer discussion outside classroom, which is beyond the resources provided by teachers. Compared to the previous semester there was a doubling of the number of students who rated reading guides as "*not very useful*", and who rated the examples of past essay questions/answers as "*not very useful*". Both these resources are considered important by the teachers. Number of students not using reading guides at all (these guides are intended to help students navigate between lectures and text books) rose from 3% to 17%, and number of students not using the essay examples rose to 21%.

## 6. Detailed results of evaluation for overall course

**Contribution of the course to students' knowledge:** The extent to which different lecture modules contributed to students' knowledge was rated on a 4-point scale (*very much, to some extent, very little, not at all*). The proportion of students responding either *very much* or *to some extent* varied from 88% to 85%, depending on lecture module (compared to 100% to 59% last semester). In more detail, responses for the module on **perception, attention and consciousness** were 45% *very much*, 43 % *to some extent*, 10% *very little* and 1 student rating *not at all* (much less positive than last semester which was 91% *very much* and 9 % *to some extent*). Responses for the module on **memory** were 40% *very much*, 45 % *to some extent*, 12% *very little* and 1 student rating *not at all* (similar to last semester's ratings of 35% *very much*, 53% *to some extent* and 9% *very little*). Responses for the module on **affect and higher cognition** were 48% *very much*, 40 % *to some extent*, 7% *very little* and 1 student rating *not at all* (more positive than last semester's rating which were 21% *very much*, 38% *to some extent*, 38% *very little* and 3% *not at all*).

**Assessment of the difficulty level of each lecture module:** The difficulty level of each lecturer module was rated as either *too advanced, about right, or too basic* in relation to students' previous learning. For 2 of 3 modules, most students rated the level as *about right*. For 1 module more than half rated it as *too advanced*. Compared to last semester, a module which was previously perceived as too basic is now (with new teacher) at about the right level, while a module that was previously rated as being at the right level by most students is now (with the same teacher) rated as being too advanced by very many.

spring 2019		Perception, attention & consciousness	Memory	Affect & higher cognition
<i>too advanced</i>		9%	9%	0%
<i>about right</i>		91%	88%	53%
<i>too basic</i>		0%	0%	47%

autumn 2019		Perception, attention & consciousness	Memory	Affect & higher cognition
<i>too advanced</i>		62%	2%	5%
<i>about right</i>		38%	95%	93%
<i>too basic</i>		0%	2%	2%

**Assessment of clarity of learning goals:** Clarity of learning goals for each lecture module was rated as either *clear, adequate, or unclear*. Learning goals were rated *clear* or *adequate* by the majority of students (88%-95%) on all modules. Compared to last semester, 2 modules were rated lower in clarity and 1 was rated higher.

spring 2019	Perception, attention & consciousness	Memory	Affect & higher cognition
<i>clear</i>	91%	68%	47%
<i>adequate</i>	9%	26%	29%
<i>unclear</i>	0%	3%	24%

autumn 2019	Perception, attention & consciousness	Memory	Affect & higher cognition
<i>clear</i>	55%	55%	40%
<i>adequate</i>	33%	40%	52%
<i>unclear</i>	12%	5%	7%

**Free-text comments on the different lecture modules, and comments from the course evaluation meeting:** Students were asked what they liked most and least about each lecture module.

- For the lecture module on perception, attention and consciousness, most verbatim were negative. Some students expressed strong views that this module had been too advanced for them and/or had too much material presented over too short a period. Some complained that online lectures were difficult to understand, both due to the complexity, the vocabulary, and the English language. Some were unhappy about having to conform to a tight schedule of learning materials and online activities, and felt they had been "micromanaged". Several students commented that the topic of consciousness has been especially difficult to follow, and demotivating. Overall, there was a clear message coming from several students that they found this part of the course overwhelming. Although a few students commented they had liked everything about this part of the course, the dominance of negative over positive evaluations was very marked and very different from previous semesters.
- For the lecture module on memory, students were in general complimentary about the clarity and pedagogic structure of these guest lectures, but many complained that there was simply too much material presented over 3 days. Some expressed the opinion that trying to cover this topic in very few days, using a guest lecturer, was trying to get teaching done "on the cheap". Appreciation of the value of hiring in an expert on this topic was largely missing, when compared to comments from previous semesters.
- For the lecture module on affect and higher cognition, students expressed diverse opinions. Some expressed they had found the lecture contents very interesting, while others complained of too much emphasis on the theme of magic perception, which is a particular interest of the lecturer. A very common complaint was that it has been difficult (or even impossible) to hear the lecturer, and that suggestions to use a microphone had not been taken up.

**Assessment of preparedness of teaching activities:** Students were asked: “Overall, did you find lectures or other classroom activities to be well prepared?” using the choices *yes*, *neutral* or *no*. The majority of 83% answered *yes*, with 17% answering *neutral*, and none answering *no*.

**Did students feel welcome to ask questions?** Students were asked: “Overall, did you feel welcome to ask the teachers questions?” using the choices *yes*, *neutral* or *no*. The majority of 67% answered *yes*, and 24% answered *neutral* and 1 answered *no*. This is less positive than the previous semester where 97% of students responded *yes*.

**Administration of course:** Students were asked: “How would you describe the overall administration and organisation of the course?” using the choices *excellent*, *good*, *acceptable* or *poor*. Only 43% answered *excellent* or *good* (with only 10% *excellent*). 31% answered *acceptable* and 26% answered *poor*. Despite teachers' perception that the course was better organised and signposted than in previous semesters these ratings are considerably lower than in the previous semester where the majority (97%) answered *excellent* or *good* (with 53% *excellent*).

**Influence of course on appreciation of cognitive psychology:** Students were asked: “How has this course influenced your appreciation of cognitive psychology?” with 4 response options. The majority of students chose the options “*I think it is more interesting and relevant than I expected before the course*” (38%) or “*My views have not changed and I find the topic interesting and relevant*” (36%), while about a quarter had negative views about the topic and selected the option “*My views have not changed and I find the topic uninteresting and irrelevant*” (14%) or “*I think it is less interesting and relevant than I thought before the course*” (12%). This evaluation is much less positive than in the previous semester.

	spring 2019	autumn 2019
<i>I think it is more interesting and relevant than I expected before the course</i>	76%	38%
<i>My views have not changed and I find the topic interesting and relevant</i>	24%	36%
<i>My views have not changed and I find the topic uninteresting and irrelevant</i>	0%	14%
<i>I think it is less interesting and relevant than I thought before the course</i>	0%	12%

**Interest of course contents in relation to expectations:** Students were asked: “Has the course content and teaching been more or less interesting than you expected?” with 4 response options. Although the majority rated the course as either “*more interesting*” (36%) or “*as interesting*” (26%) as expected, many chose the options “*more boring than I expected*” (33%) and some chose “*as boring as I expected*” (5%). This evaluation is much less positive than in the previous semester.

	spring 2019	autumn 2019
<i>more interesting</i>	68%	36%
<i>as interesting</i>	32%	26%
<i>more boring than I expected</i>	0%	33%
<i>as boring as I expected</i>	0%	5%

**Further general comments about the course:** Among free comments, positive comments about the course overall were noticeably few. A general comment was that the course was too compressed. Some students did not see teaching value in some of the formative and continuous assessment activities. Some expressed that they had been demotivated by the course intensity and structure. Some complained that the course structure had been too difficult to follow. Some stated that following a course in English had been difficult for them and compounded the difficulties of the workload.

## 7. Detailed results of evaluation of assessment methods

### 7.1 Background

On the lectured part of the course (9 study points), students are primarily assessed via 2 obligatory written essays. These are written in class, online, with full access to literature. Writing time is 2 hours 30 mins plus 15 mins upload time. Maximum word count is 1100 words. Essay questions are broad and conceptual, encouraging students to integrate and apply their knowledge. Essays are written shortly after the end of the lecture module being assessed – revision time is usually only a very few days. Essays are pass/failed by the lecturer. Students are given written feedback on each essay, and a suggested essay-plan template is then made available to students. Students whose essays were poor enough to fail at first round are then asked to revise their essay(s) over a period of a few weeks and resubmit.

On essay 1, 57% of home students passed without needing to revise their essay and 2 students wrote excellent essays. The remaining 43% needed to revise their essay, with some extremely poor essays. After revision, all but 2 students passed and one of those fails passed after being granted a new essay attempt on medical grounds. One student who was retaking essay 1 after 2 previous attempts now passed with a good essay. Although average performance on essay 1 was poor compared to the previous semester when only a third of students had to revise it, students performed better on essay 2, with only 22% needing a revision and all eventually passing.

Additionally, students have to pass a closed book, pen and paper multiple-choice test in a classroom setting. This was the second semester we have run this test and the first time we have enforced a strict pass mark. Many questions were repeated verbatim from short online quizzes that students had to do online after viewing online lectures. Some questions were also new to the students. The pass mark was set so that students needed to get approximately 60% of new questions correct, but approximately 100% of repeated question correct. Three students failed.

### 7.2 Evaluation data

**Comparison of assessment method with more traditional methods:** Students were asked to agree/disagree with the statement: “Compared with other examination methods (e.g. multiple choice, long exam, home exam), I **prefer** the short assessed essays as the main way for my learning to be evaluated by the teachers.” Slightly more students agreed (38%) than disagreed (26%) with this statement, while 36% were neutral. A second question asked students to agree/disagree with the statement: “I feel I **learned more** from having ungraded assessed essays with feedback and the opportunity to revise the essay, than by writing standard graded (A-F) essays.” Many more students agreed (57%) than disagreed (7%) with this statement, while 26% were neutral.

Overall, although more students appraised the assessment method positively than negatively, especially regarding learning outcome, enthusiasm for the method was reduced compared to the previous semester.

It should be noted that this rating scale should be improved because the rating category "disagree" is ambiguous. It could imply either that students positively disliked the method, or that they just disagree the method was better.

Liked more?	spring 2019	autumn 2019
<i>agree</i>	59%	38%
<i>neutral</i>	38%	36%
<i>disagree</i>	2%	26%

Learned more?	spring 2019	autumn 2019
<i>agree</i>	76%	57%
<i>neutral</i>	24%	26%
<i>disagree</i>	0%	17%

***Was teachers' feedback on essays personally felt to have been useful by individual students?:***

The usefulness of the written feedback that each student personally received on their essays was rated separately for essays 1 and 2. For essay 1, 50% of students agreed it had been useful, while 31% neither agreed nor disagreed and 19% disagreed. For essay 2, 57% agreed, 29% were neutral and 14% disagreed. For essay 1, these ratings are more negative than in the previous semester (when the same teacher did the assessments). Previously, for essay 1, 82% of students agreed it had been useful, while 18% neither agreed nor disagreed and none disagreed. For essay 2, 53% agreed, 29% were neutral and 15% disagreed.

***Which aspects of the assessed essays were useful for learning?:*** Students selected which of 9 aspects of the essays they found to have been useful to their overall learning experience. Percentages of students selecting each point, were as follows (given in order of frequency of students selecting that item):

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80%	You had a chance to revise your essays if you failed the first time
78%	You were given feedback on your essays
78%	You had open access to all books, notes and online resources
76%	The essays were on separate days rather than grouped in one exam
76%	The essays were written online rather than by hand,
51%	The essays had to be short (but concise and dense in content)
49%	The essays were ungraded
41%	The essays were set very soon after the end of the teaching modules being tested
27%	The essays questions were quite conceptual

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88%	You were given feedback on your essays
79%	The essays were written online rather than by hand,
76%	You had a chance to revise your essays if you failed the first time
76%	The essays were on separate days rather than grouped in one exam
73%	The essays had to be short (but concise and dense in content)
61%	You had open access to all books, notes and online resources
52%	The essays were ungraded
52%	The essays questions were quite conceptual
48%	The essays were set very soon after the end of the teaching modules being tested

It is worth noting that between about 1/2 and 4/5 of students were rating most aspects of the essays as beneficial, including the fact that essays were set very soon after the end of lectures. Results were similar to the previous semester with the exception that only a minority of 27% of students rated the conceptual nature of the essays as useful to learning. This may be linked to the poorer performance of this class on the essays, and their generally lower ratings of many aspects of the course.

**Concern that ungraded assessment might be detrimental to applying for exchange semesters:** Students were asked: “Are you concerned that ungraded course assessment might make it more difficult for you to apply successfully for an exchange semester in another country?” A minority of 17% responded *yes*, while 60% responded *no* and 21% were *unsure* (1 no response). These results are quite similar to the previous semester but there is a slightly raised apprehension about lack of grading. Last semester only 1 student (3%) responded *yes*, while 62% responded *no* and 32% were *unsure* (1 no response).

**Impact of ungraded assessment on work effort:** Students were asked: “Do you think you put LESS or MORE effort and hours of study into your learning because the course was ungraded, compared to a graded course?” Similar numbers of students responded that they put in less hours (14%) as more hours (12%) with a majority of 74% rating that it made no difference. In the previous semester 9% of students responded that they put “less effort and hours of study” into the course while 53% responded that the lack of grading made *no difference*, and 35% responded that it encouraged *more effort and hours of study*.

A second question gave more encouraging feedback. Students were asked: “Do you think your knowledge and understanding of course material benefitted or was worse because the course was ungraded, compared to a graded course?”. Again 14% rated their learning as “worse”, 40% replied it made “*no difference*” and 45% replied that it “*benefitted*”. In the previous semester nobody rated their learning as “worse”, 53% replied it made “*no difference*” and 44% replied that it “*benefitted*”.

A third question then asked: “To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Because the main lecture course was ungraded, I tried as far as possible to get through the course using knowledge I already had from previous courses.” On a 5-point scale, 57% disagreed strongly, 24% disagreed somewhat, 14% were neutral, 5% agreed somewhat and none agreed strongly. These results are very similar to the previous semester in which 59% disagreed strongly, 26% disagreed somewhat, 6% were neutral, 6% agreed somewhat and none agreed strongly.

Although students were less likely than last semester to rate themselves as having benefitted from lack of grades, either in terms of effort or learning outcome, feedback still suggests that lack of grading is more likely to be perceived as beneficial than detrimental to student learning.

**Relation of essay titles to learning goals:** Students were asked: “To what extent do you think that the question titles you were set in the assessed essays reflected the learning goals you had been given?” Most students (93%) considered that essay questions were at least somewhat related to stated learning goals. On a 4-point scale, 43% responded “*very much*”, 50% responded “*to some extent*”, 5% responded “*not very much*” and one student responded “*not at all*”. These ratings are slightly lower than in the previous semester where most (79%) responded “*very much*”, 15% responded “*to some extent*”, 1 student responded “*not very much*” and none responded “*not at all*”.

**Free-text comments on essays:** Unlike previous semesters, few students wrote positive comments about this teaching and evaluation format. Some expressed that they would have preferred a traditional course with an end-of-semester exam. A common complaint was too little time to prepare for the essays. A minority of students resented having to learn a new style of essay writing and thought they should be assessed in ways that they were used to and had practiced over previous semesters.

**Assessment of the new multiple choice test:** This test was introduced to encourage students to cover the entire syllabus properly. The majority (67%) rated the difficulty of the test to be “*about right*”, with one saying it was “*too easy*” and 31% rating it as “*too difficult*”. Note that only 3 students actually failed the test. However, this group of students rated the same test as more difficult than previous students for whom the majority (91%) rated the difficulty of the test to be “*about right*”, with none saying it was “*too easy*” and only 9% rating it as “*too difficult*”. This may just reflect the fact that a pass mark was not enforced for the previous students.

Asked: “What was the effect of knowing that you would have a multiple-choice test on the amount of course syllabus that you studied?”, 57% rated that “It encouraged me to cover more of the syllabus”, 40% rated that “It made no difference to how I studied” and one rated that “It encouraged me to cover less of the syllabus”. These ratings are less positive than for the previous semester where ratings were 79%, 21% and 0% respectively.

In addition, when asked: “What was the effect of knowing that you would have a multiple choice test on the overall quality of what you learned on the course?”, 45% rated that “In retrospect, I think it benefitted my overall learning.”, 43% rated that “In retrospect, I think it made no difference to my overall learning.” and 12% rated that “In retrospect, I think it was negative for my overall learning.” This is again less positive than the previous semester where ratings were 65%, 26% and 6% respectively.

Any additional free-text comments from students were mostly negative about this form of assessment, and complained that the test has forced them to focus too much on detail in the course.

## 8. Detailed results of evaluation of semester projects

### 8.1 Background

Students conduct a research project which can be theoretical (literature-based) or empirical (involving data collection and/or analysis). The project is presented as a maximum 6000 word paper, with students usually working in groups of 3-4. Students also present their work at an obligatory project conference day. The work is credited with 6 study points. Assessment is on a pass/fail basis and is ungraded.

At their project presentation conference, students present their project for 15 minutes in their groups, but are not told which part of the presentation they will give until just before the presentation. Therefore, all students have to prepare the whole of their talk. All student groups in the audience have to actively prepare questions for each presentation they view, with groups selected at random to start each question session.

Despite presence of international students, home students were allowed to present in Norwegian by request to the teacher although only a minority of groups requested this option. Students were also allowed to ask questions in Norwegian if they wished.

In this sample of students, only 3 out of 13 groups of students conducted an empirical project.

Evaluation is based on several multiple choice questions which tapped the overall learning experience of the students, project allocation, supervision experience, group cohesion etc. There were also 2 free-text questions probing for further clarification of problems in either group cohesion or with projects more generally.

### 8.2 Evaluation data

Data from spring 2019 is shown in parentheses for comparison.

**Was the project a useful learning experience?:** Students were asked: "Have you found your semester project (emneoppgave) to be a useful learning experience overall?" 57% (85%) answered "yes", 14% (2%) answered "no", and 29% (9%) were "unsure".

**Range of projects on offer:** Students were asked: "Did the range of available project themes include projects themes that interested you?" 81% (91%) answered "yes", 10% (2%) answered "no", and 10% (2%) were "unsure".

**Allocation of projects:** Students were asked: "Are you satisfied with the way the projects were allocated to each student group?" 57% (76%) answered yes, 29% (21%) answered "neither satisfied not dissatisfied", and 14% (0%) answered "no".

**Interest of project:** Students were asked: “Have you found your own project to be interesting?” 64% (91%) answered “yes”, 14% (2%) were unsure and 21% (2%) answered “no”.

**Supervision quality:** Students rated “Are you satisfied with the quality of supervision you were given for your project?” using a 5-point scale. Responses were: 36% (41%) *very satisfied*, 29% (32%) *satisfied*, 31% (6%) *neutral*, 2% (15%) *dissatisfied*, 2% (3%) *very dissatisfied*.

**Student project group cohesion:** Students were asked: “Did your project group work well together in terms of communication and division of work load?” 69% (65%) answered “yes”, 5% (32%) answered “*unsure*”, and 26% (0%) answered *no*.

**Student project conference:** Only 48% (76%) of students found it useful to prepare and present their projects at the project conference day, while 24% (6%) found it not useful and 29% (15%) were neutral. Only 52% (65%) found it useful to listen to other students’ projects on the project conference day, while 14% (2%) found it not useful and 33% (29%) were neutral. Only 29% (68%) rated that it was useful in retrospect to have had to prepare to give any part of their conference talk, with 19% (12%) unsure and 52% (18%) saying it was not useful. Only 50% (62%) rated that it was useful to be obliged to prepare questions about other students’ presentations, while 29% (26%) were unsure and 21% (9%) thought it was not useful.

## 9. Detailed results of evaluation for Mark Price's module

Data from spring 2019 is often given in parentheses for comparison. For this semester, 1 respondent gave no answer any questions.

### 9.1 Viewing of online lectures

- 74% (91%) of students reported viewing all online lectures, 17% (9%) viewed "most" lectures, 5% (0%) viewed "just a few", and one (0%) viewed none.
- Nearly all students viewed the entirety of the online lectures that they viewed, with 76% (58%) reporting they viewed some parts more than once and 17% (39%) reporting they only viewed the lectures once. Only one student (2%) reported only viewing some parts of the lectures and one student rated the question as non-applicable as they had not viewed any lectures.
- A new question for this semester asked: "Which of the following describe aspects of your behaviour while watching the online videos (select all that applied to you)?"  
Results are tabulated below.

78%	Took notes while watching
76%	Rewound the video to review parts of the content
59%	Paused the video and resumed watching it later
49%	Gave the video my undivided attention
12%	Skipped ahead during some parts that I already knew
7%	Watched it while doing something else unrelated to this course
5%	Skipped ahead during some parts because the video was too long
2%	Not applicable: I have not viewed any of those lectures

- 71% (79%) managed to keep up with the schedule of online lectures with 26% (21%) reporting they did not manage. Students in this class therefore report keeping up with the intense schedule as well as the previous semester who rated this part of the course more highly.
- 79% of students streamed the online lectures from Vimeo, but 15% (15%) still chose to view the Powerpoint format of the lectures, 5% by streaming and 10% by downloading. This suggests that Powerpoint format should be retained. 5% reported downloading the Vimeo lecture which should not be possible.
- 55% (73%) reported no technical problems in viewing online lectures, 38% (27%) reported some problems but were able to overcome them, and 5% (0%) reported having problems which discouraged them from viewing lectures. It seems more students had technical problems than in the previous semester, despite using the same technical format.

- 24% (53%) rated the lectures as “*very clear*” to understand, 57% (42%) as “*clear*”, 14% (5%) as unclear, and 1 (0%) as very unclear. 7% (24%) rated the lectures as “*very interesting*”, 62% (73%) as “*interesting*”, and 24% (2%) as “*uninteresting*”.
- A large minority of 36% (18%) of students rated the online lectures as “*too advanced*”, 60% (82%) rated them as “*about right*” in level, and 1 (0%) rated them as “*too easy*”.
- In response to the question “*In terms of your **understanding and overall learning experience**, do you usually find the online lectures or the live lectures most useful?*”, a slight majority found the online lectures as good as or better than live lectures, but more students showed a preference for live lectures than for online lectures.

Usefulness of lectures	spring 2019	autumn 2019
<i>online more useful</i>	30%	19%
<i>similar</i>	33%	36%
<i>live more useful</i>	36%	38%
<i>cannot compare</i>	0%	2%

- For the question “*In terms of your **enjoyment**, do you usually prefer viewing the online lectures or the live lectures?*”, 45% preferred live lectures as opposed to only 14% who preferred online lectures. The greater enjoyment of live lectures was very similar to the previous semester's data.

Enjoyment of lectures	spring 2019	autumn 2019
<i>online more enjoyable</i>	12%	14%
<i>similar</i>	42%	36%
<i>live more enjoyable</i>	45%	45%
<i>cannot compare</i>	0%	2%

- Asked whether use of online lectures should be expanded or reduced, 57% (64%) thought the level was “*about right how it is at the moment*”, 36% (15%) thought it should be reduced and 5% (21%) increased.

## 9.2 Using videos of live lectures that students have not attended

- Students’ judgement of a lecture that was only given as video-recording of live lecture made in another semester was as follows: 41% (42%) had no strong opinion, 34% (39%) thought it worse than purpose-made online lectures, 34% (27%) though it worse than live lectures, 7% (9%) thought it better than purpose-made online lectures and 12% (3%) thought it better than live lectures.

## 9.3 Usefulness of video recording live lectures

- Asked “How useful was it for you that some of my live lectures were video recorded?”, 12% (33%) said they had never viewed the recordings, /% (6%) viewed the recordings

but this was not useful, but 78% (60% viewed the recordings and found this useful. Of the latter, more than half claimed to view whole lectures.

#### 9.4 Obligatory online quizzes

- Asked whether the obligatory online quizzes were “helpful in making you **keep up with the schedule of lectures?**”, 83% (91%) of students agreed, with 31% (64%) saying “*very much*” and 52% (27%) saying “*to some extent*”. Three (2) students rated them as “*not very helpful*” and 3 (1) rated them as impairing the ability to keep up with lectures.
- Asked whether the obligatory online quizzes were “helpful for your **learning, understanding and retention** of lecture materials?”, 83% (88%) of students agreed, with 19% (64%) saying “*very much*” and 64% (24%) saying “*to some extent*”. Four (3) students rated them as “*not very helpful*” and 3 (1) rated them as impairing the ability to keep up with lectures.
- The difficulty level of the obligatory online lectures was rated as “*about right*” by 69% (91%) of students and “*too advanced*” by 26% (9%). One student rated the questions as too basic.
- In terms of how students answered online quiz questions, 73% (76%) claimed to answer at least some questions on their own, 46% (52%) claimed to answer at least some questions in groups, 1 (1) student admitted getting the answers from other students, and nobody (0) admitted to getting somebody else to answer for them.
- Opinion was divided over whether the uses of obligatory online quizzes should be expanded. While 33% (45%) were unsure, 19% (24%) said yes and 45% (30%) said no.
- Strikingly, 48% (67%) of students thought that in retrospect the quizzes should have been obligatory rather than voluntary, with 26% (18%) unsure and 24% (15%) saying they should have been voluntary.

#### 9.5 Obligatory online practice of an essay with online peer assessment

- A majority of 62% of students (88%) rated that they found it useful to write a practice essay online [19% (27%) “*very useful*” and 43% (61%) “*somewhat useful*”], with 36% (12%) rating it as “*not very useful*”. Only 55% (72%) rated that they found it useful to peer review other students’ essay fragments [10% (30%) “*very useful*” and 45% (42%) “*somewhat useful*”] with 43% (27%) rating this as “*not very useful*”. Only 38% (69%) rated that it was useful to have got peer feedback from other students [2% (24%) “*very useful*” and 36% (45%) “*somewhat useful*”) with 60% (30%) rating this as “*not very useful*”.

#### 9.6 Familiarising students with the essay marking rubric used by teachers:

- A large majority of 88% of students rated that their writing of essays 1 and 2 had been “helped by your knowledge of the marking rubric I provided at the start of the

semester?" [26% (42%) "*very much*" and 62% (55%) "*to some extent*". Four (1) students rated "*not at all*".

## 9.7 Classroom workshops

- About 46% of students attended the 3-hour classroom workshop on top down processing, based on obligatory preparative reading (n=22, not including any exchange students), which was similar to the previous semester. End-of-semester evaluation was as follows: 14% attended and rated it as very useful, 26% attended and found it quite useful, and 14% attended and rate the session as not useful. 17% did not attend because they had not prepared, 10% did not attend because they thought it would not be useful, and 17% did not attend for "other reasons".
- Feedback was also obtained immediately after this workshop from all students who attended. Only a minority of 14% (3 students) rated the workshop as "*very useful*", with the majority (64%) rating it as "*quite useful*", but a sizeable minority (23%) rating it as not very useful. None chose the lowest rating which was waste of time. The teacher's perception was that the workshop had worked well, perhaps better than ever before, with reduced time spent on showing Powerpoint slides at the start and students appearing engaged in their group discussions and poster preparation. The lower overall ratings, compared to the previous semester, were therefore surprising. The majority (64%) thought the duration was about right, while 2 students thought it should have been shorter and 6 (27%) thought it should have been longer. Only a minority (36%) expressed that the workshop was more useful than an additional 3 hours of lectures, with most of the remainder (55%) unsure and 2 students rating that it had been less useful than lectures. This is again a much more negative appraisal than from students in the previous semester. Most (86%) claimed to have viewed the preparatory online lectures properly, with 3 students claiming to have only skimmed those online lectures. Three students rated that they had not prepared at all for the workshop (of whom 2 rated that it had been quite useful and 1 rated not very useful). A larger minority (23%) rated that they felt well prepared (of whom 3 rated the workshop as quite useful, 1 as not very useful, and 1 as in between these 2 ratings). The majority rated themselves as having "prepared a bit but it could have been better". Free text comments were added by 7 students. Of these, 3 comments described the themes as having been difficult, and 4 comments described that people were mostly not prepared enough, that students should be "forced" to prepare, that there had not been enough time to prepare, or that preparation reading had been too long or too complicated. Longer preparation time is not possible within the current timetable, but 1 whole day was left clear for this preparation. Students also appear to be unprepared to struggle with abstract concepts and debates that have nuanced answers.
- As the teacher's perception was that the workshop ran well, it is difficult to suggest ways to improve the workshop. Perhaps it could be made longer, and the discussion themes could be broken down into smaller units with immediate "teacher solutions" provided? On the other hand, students also need to train to think for themselves.

- End-of-semester evaluation of the 4-hour mind-mapping workshop on attention was as follows. Ratings for those who claimed to have attended are not given here as more people claimed to attend than actually did. Of those who claimed not to have attended, 4 did not feel prepared, 2 thought it would not be useful, and 4 did not attend for "*other reasons*". Students were also asked to fill out a feedback form on the day after the workshop. Feedback was obtained from all 60% who attended (27, including 1 exchange student), which was similar to the previous semester. Feedback was obtained from all. Of those who attended, 52% rated the workshop as "*very useful*" (top rating out of 4), and the remainder rated it 3 as "*quite useful*" (second top rating). Most rated the duration as appropriate but 19% thought it should have been even longer. 78% rated that the workshop was more useful than an additional 3-4 hours of classroom lectures, but 22% were "*unsure*", though one of these still commented that the workshop has been "*very useful*". A number of students added free text comments. Two positive comments were:

- *It was a great way to "connect the dots" from the lectures. Very helpful, I feel like I understand how everything ties together now.*
- *It was a surprisingly good way to "wrap up" what we have learned from the previous lectures, and it gave me a larger understanding of how everything is connected.*

Additional suggestions from students were

- To provide a teacher version of a mindmap afterwards.
  - To provide the key words used in the mindmap before the workshop so students can prepare more easily.
  - To improve photocopying of the coloured mind-map materials to make them more legible.
  - One student with weaker skill in English commented that working in a group with an exchange student had been difficult.
- Asked "Do you think that a **greater proportion** of classroom time should be devoted to discussion and interactive activities in my lecture module?", 29% (18%) of students replied "*no*", while 24% (42%) replied "*yes*" and 45% (39%) were undecided.

## 9.8 Laptop ban in lectures

The suggestion that students should not use laptops during lectures (or should at least sit at the back of the class if insisting they used laptops, was less popular than usual. While 48% of students had "*no strong opinion*", opinion was split among the rest with 26% (45%) rating that "*I liked it. It helped my learning process*" and 24% rating "*I did not like it. It hindered my learning process.*" or rated that "*I have no strong opinion*". In free-text comments, some students expressed the strong opinion that the laptop ban had impaired their learning, although students were in fact told clearly they could opt out of the ban. At the same time, some students expressed that it had been good to attend lectures without watch a sea of PC screens.

## 9.9 Relative contributions of different learning formats to students' self-rated learning outcome

A series of questions tapped students' evaluation of the learning outcome of the various teaching formats used over the lecture module. For each format, students were asked: "In terms of learning outcome, [*teaching format X*] were", and then rated the format on a 5-point scale as summarised below. Data from the previous semester are given in parentheses.

	<i>very useful</i>	<i>somewhat useful</i>	<i>not very useful</i>	<i>completely unhelpful</i>	<i>did not use at all</i>
<b>live lectures</b>	43% (79%)	45% (21%)	7% (0%)	-	2% (0%)
<b>online lectures</b>	36% (67%)	48% (27%)	10% (3%)	- (3%)	5% (0%)
<b>obligatory online quizzes</b>	17% (42%)	57% (48%)	24% (3%)	- (6%)	-
<b>text book reading</b>	2% (6%)	26% (30%)	24% (15%)	10% (6%)	36% (42%)
<b>journal paper reading</b>	5% (15%)	36% (61%)	24% (15%)	5% (0%)	29% (9%)
<b>non-course reading</b>	5% (6%)	26% (24%)	19% (9%)	2% (0%)	43% (61%)
<b>lecture summaries</b>	48% (82%)	40% (12%)	5% (3%)	2% (0%)	2% (3%)
<b>reading guides</b>	29% (70%)	33% (21%)	14% (6%)	5% (0%)	17% (3%)
<b>classroom activities</b>	19% (39%)	40% (52%)	2% (6%)	2% (0%)	12% (3%)
<b>peer discussion outside classroom</b>	31% (36%)	36% (52%)	14% (0%)	2% (0%)	14% (12%)
<b>examples of past essay questions and answers</b>	17% (55%)	45% (24%)	12% (6%)	2% (0%)	21% (15%)
<b>video recording of live lectures</b>	31% (45%)	45% (27%)	10% (6%)	0% (3%)	12% (18%)

These data are interesting in many respects. First, it can be seen from the table that student ratings were less positive than previous students about the usefulness of almost all aspects of course materials and activities. Generally far fewer students gave maximum ratings, fewer students gave positive ratings, more students gave explicitly negative ratings, and more students responded that they had not used certain aspects of the course at all. This includes peer discussion outside classroom, which is beyond the resources provided by teachers.

Only ratings of the textbook were similar to the previous semester; the pattern was again that only about a third of students gave positive ratings and about a third claimed not to use the text book at all. It is therefore unlikely that lack of use of the textbooks was a causal factor in the relatively poorer performance of this class during the first round of their first

assessed essay. It should be noted that in this course the text books are given as extended background for lectures and that students are able to get by solely on the basis of lectures and reading papers if pushed for time.

However, lack of use of some other resources are likely contributors to the performance of the class. For example, compared to the previous semester there was a doubling of the number of students who rated reading guides as "*not very useful*", and who rated the examples of past essay questions/answers as "*not very useful*". Both these resources are considered important by the teachers. Number of students not using reading guides at all (these guides are intended to help students navigate between lectures and text books) rose from 3% to 17%, and number of students not using the essay examples rose to 21%.

It should also be noted that one student routinely rated almost every resource as "completely unhelpful". Speculatively, the small numbers of students rating that they did not at all use core resources such as lectures might reflect study patterns of students resitting only selected aspects of the course.

### **9.10 Whether students passed essay 1 first time round**

A new question in the survey asked students "To help us research the relation between how students study, and how well you do in your evaluated activities, it would be useful to know whether or not you passed essay 1 first time or were asked to revise it. Telling us will not violate your anonymity because very many students were asked to make revisions." There was an option for students to indicate that they did not want to answer the question, but this was chosen by only 7% of students. This data may in future be used to explore which study patterns and views about the course are most closely associated with student performance.