Course report KA732E, Violence Risk Assessment

Course name: Violence Risk Assessment
Semester: Master programme, criminology, third semester Ladok code: KA732E
Course Coordinator: Ellinor Wepsäläinen

Number of registered students: 23
Total of students who have answered the final course evaluation: 17 (73.91%)

Accomplished Mark X
Early Evaluation
Mid Course or Mid Term Evaluation
Final Course Evaluation x
Digital Feedback on the Students’ Answers
Oral Feedback and Discussion x

Summary of the Students’ Viewpoints

Learning outcomes and work process. According to the course evaluation the students think that the learning outcomes have been fulfilled to rather low extent (m=2.6; sd=1.1), which is somewhat lower than the corresponding evaluation in 2016 (m=3.2; sd=1.6). Regarding the work process the lectures are viewed to be helpful to achieve the learning outcomes to a rather low extent, (m=2.4; sd=1.5) (cf. 2016 m=2.1; sd=1.2), and the seminars on the course to a very low extent (m=1.5; sd=0.7) (cf. 2016 m=2.6; sd=1.7). During the course two minor assignments were handed in (max. 2 pages) and a final exam paper (max. 4 pages). Together these 3 assignments were given low scores in the evaluation in terms of how they helped reach the learning outcomes according to the students (M=2.4; sd=1.2) (cf. 2016 m=3.6; sd=1.2). In the open question it was revealed that the students perceived the final exam as messy and difficult to understand, especially since the instructions and information was not consequent. The final exam was also thought of as being advanced and not in accordance with what had been taught on the course.

Course structure and examination. Regarding the work material the students considered the literature on the course to be somewhat helpful in achieving the learning outcomes on the course (m=2.9; sd=1.4) (cf. 2016 m=3.1; sd=1.6). The same was said for the webpage of the course (m=3.4; sd=1.5) (cf. 2016 m=3.2; sd=1.1). Over all, the students did not feel that the course structure enabled them to reach the learning outcomes to a high degree (m=1.9; sd=1.2) (cf. 2016 m=1.9; sd=1.5). Considering the relation between the examination tasks and the learning outcomes the students were in general negative (m=2.0; sd=1.2) (cf. 2016 m=3.3; sd=1.4).

The course as a whole. In general the students perceived the course to be rather research based (m=3.4; sd=1.5) (cf. 2016 m=3.9; sd=1.5) but that the students own knowledge and experiences to a low degree was considered and utilised during the course (m=2.4; sd=1.0) (cf. 2016 m=3.0; sd=1.6). The course was perceived as being rather demanding (m=2.9; sd=1.1) (cf. 2016 m=3.4; sd=1.3) and approx. 55 percent of the students said they studied more than 21 h per week during the course, out of which 12 percent had studied at least 31 h. Some of the students stated that they were also working at a varying degree during the course, but these comments were too few and the hours to varying in order to draw any overall conclusions on the impact of the course. Regarding feedback from the teachers almost all students gave a low score (m=1.5; sd=1.1). In sum, the course as a whole was perceived in a rather negative manner (m=1.8; sd=0.9) (cf. 2016 m=2.4; sd=1.7).

Analysis
Throughout the course evaluation there is a rather negative image of the course that is portrayed. The students have a negative view of the course structure and implementation. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find any constructive feedback in the 12 comments that were given in the evaluation. Overall, there seem to be a lack of consistency in the course, which makes it difficult to achieve the learning outcomes through the current structure of the course. Thereto, the students thought they were given little room in the course to participate actively during the 4 seminars that were given, this seemed to be the result of the seminars often turning into lectures instead- which delimited the students ability to reflect and discuss. Some students thought that the guest lectures were good and interesting, whereas others were more critical and did not see the connection and relevance to the course. It should be noted...
that the guest lectures were a part of another criminology course (Criminal Careers) of the master’s programme and that the students of the VRA course were only invited as an additional service offered by the programme, as it was believed that it would be of interest to them as criminologists. So, it was not a part of their mandatory schedule- so they did not have to attend, this was communicated both orally and written through itslearning.

The final examination task received massive critique, partially for being considered too advanced but mostly for being formulated in an unclear manner and because new/additional numbers and information was presented throughout the week that was given to solve the task. This was experienced as unfair by those students who solved the “original task” and as confusing by the majority of the students. Positive feedback on the final task was that it was fun and interesting to have another type of final exam than they were used to, i.e. practically applying knowledge to a case about intimate partner violence. Even though the course has received a lot of negative critique, there are also students who state that the course is interesting and that the lecturers are knowledgeable and competent within their respective fields. It should also be noted that only 55% of the students said they studied more than 21 h a week on a full time course, which inevitably will reflect on the final grades, and to the extent students are able to achieve the learning outcomes. As a master course it is expected that students will study on their own and actively read and search for new material to delve into.

In the course evaluation, a few students (3-4) raised concerns about how lecturers on the course had used inappropriate wording, while others commented that the lecturers were skilful and experienced. One of the main critiques that permeated the course evaluation was the lack of consistency between what has been expressed on itslearning and what later happened in the classroom. It is possible that many of the flaws in the course that has been pointed out in the course evaluation is the result of the revisions that the course has been subjected to over the past years and that the course has been led by different teachers over the past years.

**Course Changes**

The course evaluation paints a negative picture of the course and its implementation. The course coordinator acknowledges that the course is in need of being revised to a large extent for next years students. The literature needs to be updated, the structure need to change and there is a need to develop a more structured and concise final exam task- even though the practical elements should be kept as they are appreciated as interesting and different. The course coordinator has been in contact with the directors of studies at the institution to discuss the course evaluation, and it has been agreed that a total review of the course structure, contents and teachers will take place. During this profound review all student inputs will be taken into account, ever since the course started. Amongst other things there has never been a main teacher responsible for the course which is one of the things that will be addressed until next year.

Ellinor Wepsäläinen 2017-11-23