

The Study Board at Sociology



## MINUTES

12.04 MARTS 2024

**Forum** Study Board of Sociology

**Meeting held** 15.04.2024

ØSTER FARIMAGSGADE 2A  
KØBENHAVN K

**Location** Room 16.1.62

**Minutes taker** Andrea Ella Andersen Hald

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### Present

Board members: Lasse Suonperä Liebst, Jonas Toubøl, Mengni Chen (online), Mira Chatterji Rosen Sørensen.

Alternates: Askil Brandt Broegaard Ryan.

### Guests

Merlin Schaeffer, Signe Staun Kelly, Nina Stenvang Holmsgaard.

### Absent

Pia Cecilie Enevoldsen, Anemone Frederikke de M Dalsgaard.

## Agenda – open meeting

### 1) Approval of agenda /Lasse

Agenda approved.

### 2) Course evaluations, autumn 23

Prior to the meeting, the study board members were divided into three pairs consisting of a VIP and a student representative. Each pair read and presented focus points from 1/3 of the evaluation material.

**Part 1:** (*Elementære samfundsvidenskabelige metoder 1, Elementære samfundsmetoder 2, Velfærd, ulighed og mobilitet, Videregående kvalitative metoder, Kultur, livsstil og hverdagsliv*).

The members mentioned that the courses had an overall good score and that the students generally felt pleased with the courses and teachers. It was mentioned that some students mentioned that the progression of some courses felt poorly structured because it was easy in the beginning but becomes harder towards the end of the course. Lasse mentioned that might be how a course should unfold.

The group formation was mentioned as a repeated problem. The members mentioned that they were already aware of this and have discussed it at the study board meeting in March. But it is important that the evaluations confirm that something should be done about it.

Lasse mentioned that the students were very pleased with the student instructors, and therefore the initiative to reintroduce student instructors on the bachelor is confirmed as a good idea.

**Part 2:** (*Sociologien i det danske samfund, Bachelorprojekt, Multiple Regression Analysis and Fundamentals of Causal Inference, Societal problems, Sociology of Global Inequality, Sociological diagnosis of the present, Advanced Knowledge, Organization and politics, Advanced culture, Lifestyle and Everyday Life*).

The biggest problem was the low response rate on several courses. Therefore, it was argued, the comments are not necessarily representative of the student body.

It was mentioned that the students experience some overlap in course literature between Sociologien i det danske samfund and Societal problems. A student representative mentioned that she agrees with this critique and that the Societal problems have changed and has become more of an English version of Sociologien i det danske samfund.

It was mentioned that the students complain about the structure of Sociologien i det danske samfund; how much time the students should give

presentations and how much time is used on lectures and guest lectures. The students felt that there was too little time for the lectures.

Merlin mentioned that there will be a new teacher for next semester. He also mentioned that a meeting was held for the students to give feedback on the course and no students showed up. He mentioned that participation in initiatives like these are important if you want to change things.

It was also mentioned that exchange students complained that the courses for exchange students are not accommodating their needs and are complaining about the English on the course; for instance, that a teacher had Danish powerpoint presentations.

Merlin mentioned that he and Lasse should talk to the teacher about that and that there should not be Danish powerpoint presentations on English courses.

Lasse mentioned that many of these courses have been developed for our own students and that sometimes the assumption is that the master courses build on the BA courses, which is not possible for exchange students.

Jonas mentioned that he states it as a prerequisite for his course that the students should have a basic knowledge of quantitative and qualitative methods to signal that the students should have some relevant competencies. Lasse mentioned that it can still be an issue because the exchange students don't have that many courses to choose from, because we were forced to cut down on electives.

**Part 3:** (*Advanced Welfare, Inequality and Mobility, Sociologisk projektdesign, Mixed methods, Avanceret kvalitativ dataanalyse, Sociologisk innovation, Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis, Projektorienteret forløb, Bachelorprojekt, Speciale*).

Advanced welfare, Inequality and Mobility works well but the students think it is taught like two separate courses. The students are surprised and unsatisfied with this. But the students are pleased with the courses separately and they feel they learn a lot.

It was mentioned that this will be fixed in the (draft for) the MA reform by splitting them up into two courses.

This will be fixed in the draft of the reform by splitting them up.

Sociologisk projektdesign has gotten great evaluations and great comments. The students mention that there is an overlap of texts they read in Avanceret kvalitativ dataanalyse.

The student representatives mentioned that the students that have not taken the BA find it challenging to find out who they can have as supervisors. It was mentioned that it was only stated in the evaluations once.

Signe and Nina mentioned that there is a list, but it is not published before the registration deadline.

For the course Mixed methods, the students emphasized a large workload with both collecting data and the literature amount. It was mentioned that it might help if it was more explicit that you can use existing knowledge.

Jonas commented that he understood the evaluation comments more like that the students find it more difficult to reuse data.

It was also mentioned that the students don't prioritize reading the course literature. It is connected to an overall comment on the master that the workload related to the multiple portfolio exams forced them to not prioritize reading the literature.

Jonas mentioned that he had an oral discussion of the course with the students. He had asked about the workload, and the students had answered that they think that the concrete course workload is fine, but the semester was too heavily loaded. Jonas also mentioned that he was surprised that the portfolios are still a problem because the teachers met and coordinated it to try to divide the workload.

Overall, the numbers and comments are quite positive. It seems that changes from last year are mirrored in the positive responses.

Mengni mentioned that it would be good, for the coming semester, to meet again to arrange the structure of the courses to make sure the students have enough time for the portfolio assignments.

Avanceret kvalitativ dataanalyse had a lot of critical comments. Students have the experience that it consists primarily of guest lecturers that do not mirror what they are told the content of the course should be. Many students therefore feel frustrated with the guest lecturers. It was also mentioned that they gave different information about formal requirements.

Merlin mentioned that Jakob had to take over the course only two weeks before it began, which can explain some of the issues. Next time Bente has it and it should be good.

Lasse agreed that the course had some serious issues this semester.

Jonas mentioned that it is good that Bente is taking over, because they like her very much.

Lasse mentioned that it could still have a higher internal coherence and be better coordinated and that the course is a good example of the need for the new initiative to align.

In the evaluations for the course Sociologisk innovation there were a lot of issues as well. The same as was discussed last year, lack of internal cohesion and lack of alignment between the portfolio and the exam. The students feel frustrated that the portfolio is not part of the exam.

The students also still question the premise of the course. They would like to learn it, but they feel that there is no room for questioning the premise and the fundamental principles of the course.

It was also mentioned that there is an assignment being set with a 48-hour deadline that is not clearly specified in the course plan.

It was emphasized that there are around 25 pages of evaluation for the course. But a lot of the comments are constructive, and the response rate is 67%.

Jonas mentioned that it is a 15 mandatory ECTS that currently is not working and that it was a similar response last year and said that he thinks there is a need for action now. The student representatives agreed.

Lasse mentioned that the resistance from last year is not that prominent. Lasse also mentioned that the students found it relevant but uncoupled or alien to them. Lasse suggested having a more specific dialogue with the students about it and finding a way of increasing the connection to the core sociological knowledge.

It was also mentioned that it seemed like a local exam form had been invented. Merlin said that he will talk to Ghita.

The student representative mentioned an evaluation comment from the students saying that information concerning exams was only being mentioned in the lectures and not published on Absalon, so that students who missed a lecture did not have the same prerequisites/same information for taking the exam.

For the course Advanced quantitative data analysis, it was mentioned that the students were happy with the content of the concrete course, but the semester as a whole is still an issue.

It was discussed that the low response rates on several courses are an issue. Merlin will talk to the teachers, but he also mentioned that he believes it is problematic that it is the teacher's responsibility to get the responses.

**The board agreed that the study board should discuss the issue and whether it is possible to set a limit on the number of guest lecturers in a course on a future meeting.**

**The Study Board accepted the A, B and C categorizations from the evaluation system.**

### **3) Curriculum change proposal: Use and share of pensum and petitum exams /Merlin**

Merlin presented his proposal and explained how the revised proposal answered questions and unclarities raised by the Study Board when the initial proposal was discussed at the February 2024 meeting. Merlin mentioned that it is now clearer that the pensum and petitum refer to the number of references; not pages. The example makes it clearer how much of which references. Merlin also mentioned that the revised proposal states how it works for integrated exams.

#### **The new proposal:**

*The students must engage with and cite at least 25% of the pensum. At maximum, the references from the pensum, may make 2/3 of the overall references cited in an exam. At minimum, 1/3 of the remaining number of references must be petitum. That is, every two references from the pensum require at least one petitum reference. This rule is assessed by the number of cited references in an exam. This rule applies to all written exams.*

***Pensum:*** teacher-defined list of required readings.

***NB:*** For integrated exams, the pensum consists of the combined list of pensum from both courses.

***Petitum:*** independently found sources that are not part of pensum.

Jonas said he did not understand the function of the 25% and Merlin answered that it means that you need to cite 25% of the pensum readings.

The student representatives said that the clarifications were fine and that it is good that the rule in itself gets clearer, but they also mentioned that for some courses there is a large pensum, and they questioned whether the students would get more help finding literature.

Lasse answered that it is not that many references, but he mentioned that he recognizes that the new rule will introduce changes. But he mentioned that he believes it is not as dramatic as it could seem. Lasse mentioned that the rule will change the way they think and talk about references. The students must think more out of the box and the teachers must help the students with this;

for instance, take literature search courses more seriously. Lasse mentioned that one could argue that literature search is introduced a bit randomly.

The student representatives mentioned that we should be aware that it introduces something new and how that is handled.

Lasse agreed.

Jonas said that it might also work better with the next proposal; that they make a nice model.

The student representatives mentioned that they still worried about the difference in courses and their different amounts of pensum.

Merlin answered that there will always be differences like that across courses and that there is no rule that can erase the fact that readings are different in length.

Lasse said that it is an important point. Literature search needs to be more systematic than it is now, and this is a good occasion to do something about it.

**Decision: The Study Board agreed to the proposal.**

#### **4) Curriculum change proposal: New definition of written exam forms /Merlin**

Merlin presented his proposal to replace the two written exam forms Fri skriftlig hjemmeopgave and Skriftlig opgave med spørgsmål with only one written exam form.

Merlin explained that he thinks that the two current exam forms are extremes; do whatever you want, or the teacher formulates very concrete questions that everybody must write on the same topic. Both are, in his view, problematic because one gives the students no freedom and many students spend too much time thinking about their topic and too little on the actual assignment and the other is too constraining. Merlin said that there should be an exam form more leveled between the two. Following is Merlin's proposal:

*The students are required to formulate their own exam questions based on pre-defined guidelines provided by the teacher. Students will receive the exam guidelines for formulating exam questions during the ongoing semester. The teacher is required to provide at least two exemplary exam questions that adhere to the guidelines.*

*(The purpose of this regulation is to aid all students in working on a feasible exam question that aligns with the course description).*

Merlin elaborated that all students must formulate their own exam questions, which give them freedom of choosing, but the formulation should be based on guidelines from the teacher. The guidelines can differ from course to course. The teachers are required to provide the guidelines during the semester and to give two examples. It makes it more transparent, and the teacher can still decide how much guidance they want to give.

Lasse said that the proposal doesn't mention feedback, but he believes that the proposal will provide more feedback from teacher to student. It doesn't need to be approved, but it forces the teacher to offer more feedback dialogue about the assignment. Lasse mentioned that for him this is the hidden gem of the proposal. The students can choose to work very independently and can still, to some extent, do that because it doesn't have to be approved by the teacher.

Jonas mentioned that personally he is fine with the proposal, but raised the point that it limits the scope of opportunities for the teachers.

Merlin mentioned that another big advantage is that we have, as a default, written exam with new questions and that it's a mess to organize every semester. With this proposal the reexam would stay the same.

Signe mentioned that there should be some form of extra workload for students taking the reexam. To make sure that they don't get more time to write the exact same exam as the ordinary.

Jonas agreed and said that teachers will be required, for the reexam, to formulate new guidelines; but it can be small adjustments. The previous Study Board introduced that it should always be a written exam with questions, but we can break away from that praxis, we should just be aware of it.

Merlin said that it could be discussed later what the guidelines for the reexam should be and said that it is a separate discussion. For now, the Board should discuss whether they want the new exam form.

Lasse asked whether the proposal is strict enough?

Signe said yes but mentioned that it could be an issue if some guidelines are detailed, and some are vague.

Merlin said that the point of the proposal is that teachers have room to give or limit freedom with regards to the guidelines.



Lasse asked what will happen if the students do not align with the guidelines.

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Jonas answered that if their question does not allow them to show what you should learn from the learning goals they should fail. The teacher should of course make sure that the guidelines help them with this.

Mengni asked about the difference between exam guidelines and exam requirements.

Lasse and Merlin answered that the guidelines are not exam requirements but a description of what kind of essay the students are expected to write. Merlin also mentioned that it answers to earlier critique that teachers describe their expectations orally at the lectures. The guidelines are written and therefore create transparency.

Mengni asked whether the students can choose the exemplary questions.

Andrea and Signe answered that the proposal states that the students must formulate their own exam questions. Exemplary questions can be used for inspiration.

**Decision: The Study Board agreed to the proposal.**

**It was emphasized that the rule goes through all courses.**

#### **5) Curriculum change proposal: Co-examination at oral exams**

Lasse mentioned that Jonas asked to have this on the agenda at the last meeting. Jonas specified that he already thought it was a rule, but that it would be good to make a formal decision so that there are no longer any unclarity about it.

The proposal was:

*The proposal is to have all oral exams conducted with co-examination.*

Mengni asked if the teachers responsible for a course can do the exams or if they must bring another teacher in.

Merlin answered no and Lasse said that the rule is just to make sure that there are always two teachers at the exams.

**Decision: The Study Board agreed to the proposal.**

#### **6) Curriculum change proposal: Reexam form for active participation**

The proposal was:

*Currently all courses with the exam form Aktiv deltagelse/Active participation must have the reexam Fri skriftlig opgave/Free written exam. The proposal is to change the reexam form to Bunden skriftlig opgave/Written assignment with teacher defined questions.*

#### **This proposal is solved with the approval of the decision in agenda point 4.**

Jonas mentioned that the issue he raised, that the students can skip active participation and do a free written exam instead, can be handled by making more detailed guidelines.

#### **7) Curriculum change proposal: Maximum group size**

The proposal was:

*The proposal is to define a maximum group size of 4 students across all courses.*

Lasse said that it has been praxis that many courses run with a maximum of 4 students, but the formulation in the curriculum is vague and differing and we know of courses with groups up to 6 students. Lasse said he thinks it is sensible to have a cap rule and mentions that he believes larger groups create more free riders and makes it harder for everyone to make a real contribution.

Nina mentioned that the Student Services also only form groups of 4 students.

**Decision: The Study Board agreed to the proposal. It was agreed that HoS should be able to dispense from the rule in special cases upon teachers request.**

#### **8) Closed meeting: Exemption case**

The Study Board had to decide on one exemption case. Jens Roesdahl Lange presented the case. The Study Board agreed to give exemption.

#### **9) News from the student services /Nina**

Nina presented the yearly statistics from the Student Services. She explained that it touches on what they offer and how many inquiries they get and what guidance they provide. She said that it shows that they are busy in some periods, but that Sociology doesn't take up a lot of their time. She mentioned that they are keen on coming out and presenting information in different ways. If they see a pattern in the questions they receive they make an

arrangement to tell the students about their possibilities. She mentioned that they get a lot of emails and that they try to answer them within 5 working days.

She mentioned that they are not changing a lot the coming semester due to the administrative reform and that they are almost back to normal staffing; even though they have a lot of new colleagues who need training. So they are still a little stressed.

Nina also gave a very short briefing on the study survey. The students have a hard time with quantitative methods and the number of methodological courses. Many question how they can arrange their study plan differently.

Nina also mentioned that the open house arrangement went great; there were a lot of people, so many that they even had to turn some down, Merlin did an awesome job and they got good feedback.

#### **10) News from the student representatives?**

The student representatives had nothing to share but they mentioned that they will write points for the agenda to Andrea.

#### **11) Any other business?**

Lasse mentioned that there has been a dialogue about the student's use of automatic AI based transcript tools. He has heard that some students use Zetland's which doesn't currently comply with our regulations, and we don't have an agreement with them. Lasse argued that there should be found an alternative and that they will introduce a new software that has worked poorly earlier but should be better now.

Jonas mentioned that at Sociology at Aalborg University they have written their own app and suggested that maybe we could collaborate with them?

Lasse said they will write up a document and pass it around to all the students and start to introduce it in some courses. He mentioned that we need some documents we can refer to and instruct the students how to do it in praxis.

**It was decided that the next Study Board Meeting will be held 13<sup>th</sup> of May at 10.00-12.00.**

#### **12) (IF we have time) Curriculum change proposal: Length of integrated exams.**

Lasse presented the proposal. The proposal was:

*Currently it is stated in the curriculum that for written exams students must write a maximum of 10 pages on 7,5 ECTS courses. For courses with another*

*ECTS weight the number of pages changes proportionally to this. For instance, students must write a maximum of 20 pages on a 15 ECTS course. Currently it is stated that the students must write a maximum of 10 pages for an integrated exam of two 7,5 courses.*

*The proposal is to change the maximum for integrated exams to a maximum of 15 pages.*

Lasse mentioned that in praxis it has been a maximum of 15 pages. Lasse thinks it is sensible to have it at 15 and not 20. He argued that there is an overlap, and it should be reflected here.

**Decision: The Study Board agreed to the proposal.**