

The Oslo Summer School celebrated its 25th year in 2017. How can it get even better, attract more UiO PhD candidates and reduce its financial losses?

Oslo Summer School: Evaluation

REPORT

November, 2017

Executive Summary

This is an evaluation report of the Oslo Summer School in Comparative Social Science Studies (OSS) developed by the international evaluation panel consisting of researchers from the Czech Republic, Germany and Sweden. OSS offers courses on the PhD level across many social science disciplines. The OSS attracts students, mostly PhD candidates, from all over the world. In 2017, the OSS celebrated its 25th anniversary.

The goal of this report is to support the further development of the OSS by addressing the following questions:

1. How to attract more PhD candidates from the University of Oslo?
2. How to reduce the faculty investment to the organization of the OSS?

General recommendations to make OSS courses better:

Our analysis of survey data shows that UiO PhD candidates are not very different from other participants in their expectations and preferences. Slight differences between these two groups do not justify different recommendations. Therefore, we first list general recommendation to make OSS courses even better and produce even more satisfied participants who will spread the word about OSS and attract more participants, including UiO PhD candidates:

- Students do not just expect to learn things. They also expect to acquire a lot of relevant literature recommendations and draw motivation for work on their PhD thesis. Therefore:
 - more emphasis should be placed on great quality reading lists. They should include well-selected relevant literature, be distributed long enough in advance, so that students have enough time to prepare, and very importantly, they should be prioritized (showing which literature is most important to read for each session).
 - The OSS could include some motivational programmes or features. Their development could be discussed with HR specialists. Participation in the OSS should also serve as a boost in motivation for the PhD candidates.
- In addition, students consider it very important to learn a new skills or methods, and to get hands-on experience or learn practical examples. Therefore, lecturers should be encouraged to prepare practical courses. Theoretical courses can also be practical in the sense that they show examples of how certain theory can be used and how it can inform resolving specific academic questions.
- Methodological courses persistently show high popularity. They are more likely to generate high numbers of applications, and hence prevent steep drops in participation between years (i.e. prevent financial instability). The OSS could consider expanding its offer on methodological courses. Apart from a course on case study research and a course on mixed methods, which are already taught, we have identified further courses in potentially high demand: courses on software for qualitative data analysis (such as NVivo or Atlas.ti), and courses on impact assessment. (Note that we have surveyed ex-participants. Non-participants might prefer different courses. A survey among all PhD candidates at the Faculty on this matter should be considered.)
- Keep the course size limited. Too many participants reduce the opportunities for questions and other interactions.
- Consider preparing class facilitation guideline. Lecturers at the OSS are mostly senior lecturers with profound experience in teaching, but their experience may be from different contexts (different group sizes, different types of students). Sometimes, students would welcome more structured sessions with a better management of interactive tasks and students' presentations. A facilitation guideline for lecturers could help to meet these needs.

Institutional steps: Linking the summer school to PhD education:

Apart from continuous improvement of the OSS course offering, UiO PhD candidates could also be attracted by forging a stronger link between OSS and PhD education at the Faculty of Social Sciences. We have identified the following possible steps towards this goal:

- Consider making the person responsible for PhD education in the different departments ex officio also the person who represents the department in the cooperation with the summer school. This would improve the flow of information from the different tracks of the PhD program to the planning of the Summer School.
- The evaluation of the PhD program last year identified a lack of access to more generic (transferable) skills such as academic writing in English, getting published, time management, communication with the media etc. If such courses are offered under the OSS umbrella as short courses just before the main OSS program, internal PhD candidates could not only gain more access to learn such skills, but they might also feel incentivized to consider the main OSS courses as well.
- To promote inter-disciplinary understanding and communication at the faculty level, OSS could develop specific inter-disciplinary courses (e.g. economic, political and sociological approaches to climate change). Such a course could serve as a bridge between the different tracks of the PhD education at the Faculty and contribute to inter-disciplinary goals of the faculty.

Reducing financial losses

The OSS has three sources of income: (a) a grant from the Faculty of Social Sciences, (2) grants from departments that buy additional courses, and (3) course fees paid by students. This income has not been sufficient, and the OSS has generated losses. The Faculty of Social Sciences is looking for ways to reduce its financial involvement in the summer school without endangering the existence of the institution. Here are some suggestions following these ideas:

- Increase participation fees. Current fees are comparatively low. However, this should be done with caution. Our references are methodological summer schools (e.g. ECPR and Essex), while the OSS is to a large degree focused on more topic-based and specialized courses. In addition, participants have to factor in the higher living costs in Oslo, so there is some justification for the course fees to be lower in Oslo than at the competing summer schools.
- Link the OSS more closely to PhD education in the Faculty of Social Science, and related to this, shift some of the OSS costs to the departments.
- Consider charging for lunches separately from the course fee.
- Consider making costs more predictable by increasing the general fee for lecturers and abolishing the less predictable additional payment for the grading of papers.

Additional recommendations:

- For further advertising purposes aimed at international students (if there is ever such a need), the OSS administration could consider investing into networking with other institutions and international groups, which would advertise the OSS among their students on behalf of OSS. Participants perceive recommendations from their own university or international networks as most effective ways of advertising.
- The OSS holds a unique competitive advantage: its topic-based specialized courses as opposed to more frequently offered methodological courses. The OSS should consider expanding its offer on methodological courses for multiple reasons discussed in this report, but it should not lose its competitive advantage in the process.

This report is structured into three parts:

- Part 1 focuses on the participants and primarily provides recommendations how to attract more PhD candidates from the University of Oslo as well as how to improve the OSS in general.
- Part 2 focuses on funding sources and the possibilities to reduce faculty contribution to the Summer School budget.
- Part 3 focuses on the overall academic standing of the OSS.

The main part of this report has 19 pages including the Executive summary and Cover page. In addition, there are 10 pages of appendices that provide more detailed information.

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Part 1: Participants

In this part, we work with three different data sources:

1. Materials provided by the Faculty of Social Sciences at UiO including course syllabi, participant lists, overview sheets and student evaluation summaries.
2. A newly collected follow-up survey conducted with an online questionnaire distributed via the faculty to summer school participants from 2010-2017 (n = 308, n = 305 after excluding those who say they did not visit OSS between 2010 and 2017). The sample is not representative and self-selection may play some role in the responses.
3. Desk research of data available online, especially regarding information about competing summer schools.

At this point we would like to thank the office of the OSS and especially Tron Torneby as well as the administration of the Faculty of Social Sciences for their support in providing us with the necessary information for this evaluation. Without their help we would not have been able to finish this report.

Among the 308 participants who took part in the follow-up survey, more responses were collected from more recent years. (This is not due to a comparable increase in the number of students. In fact, the number of participants has not changed much over the years, see Appendix 1 for more details.) This means that analyses on aggregated data are more influenced by evaluations from students from more recent years, especially 2017. See Appendix 2 for the follow-up survey sample composition. It is also important to remember that we have only surveyed participants of the OSS. Non-participants, for example non-participating PhD candidates at UiO, might have different views and it could be useful to address them in future research to learn more about reasons for their non-participation.

In this part of the report, focusing on participants, we first show how students learn about the summer school and what are effective ways to advertise the OSS. We show that UiO PhD candidates are probably most often informed directly by their professors and colleagues. As UiO PhD candidates are close to “the source”, they can learn a lot about the OSS and their decisions about participation largely depend on the OSS’s quality. Therefore, we further focus on possible ways of improving the OSS’s quality. First, we look at what kind of courses students want. Second, we look at what students expect from a good summer school and what features should be strengthened to make the OSS courses even better.

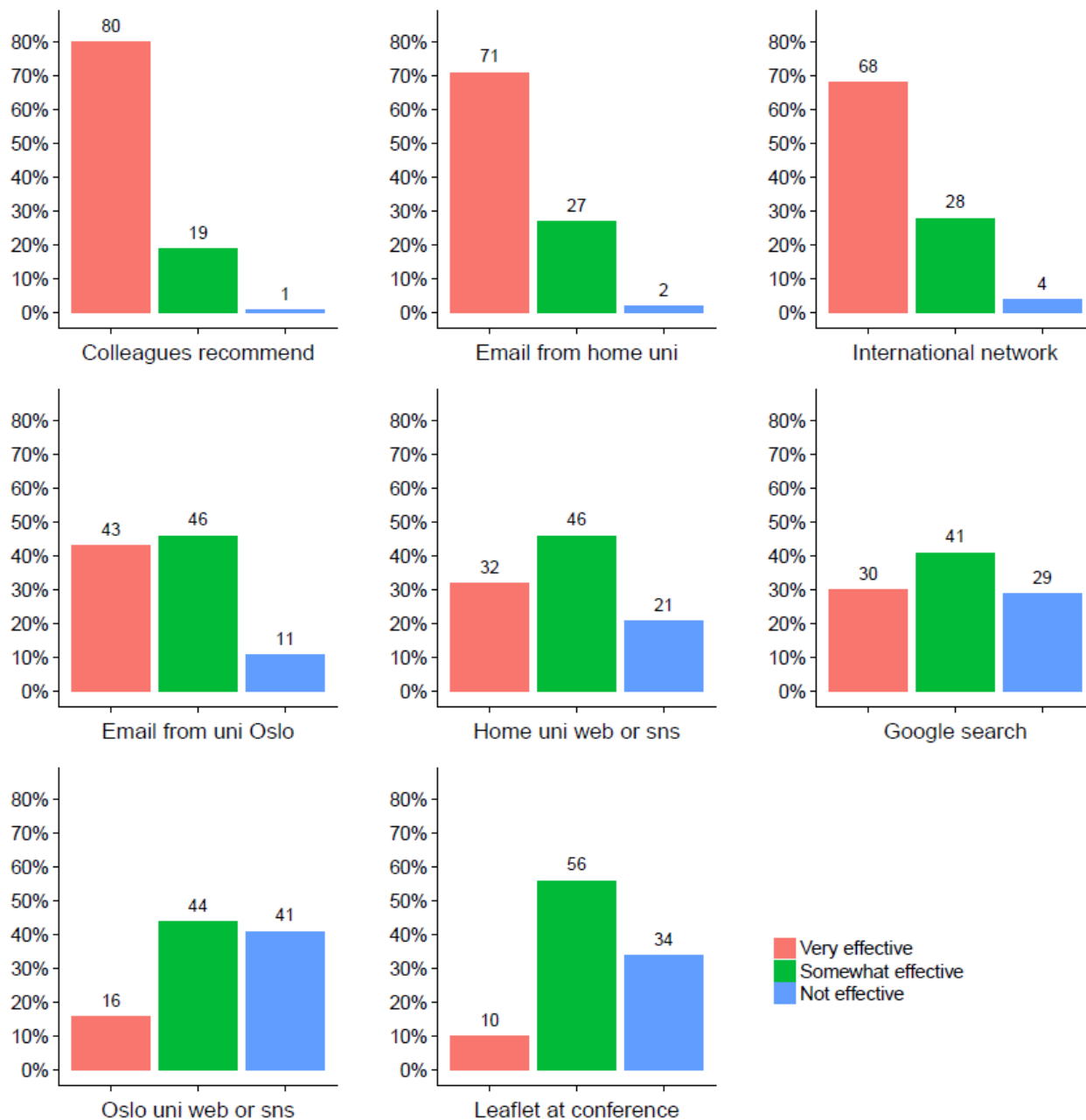
Advertising the OSS

To inform more efficient advertising of the OSS, we have first conducted a review of students’ answers to the question “how they learned about OSS”. It turns out that there are three relevant sources which far outweigh the others: learning about the OSS “through my university, professor or supervisor”, “through internet (such as Google/blogs)”, and “from colleagues or fellow students”. We assume that participants from UiO are the ones who usually learn about the OSS from their professors or colleagues, while the participants from outside of UiO usually learn about it from the internet. Direct information from professors or via colleagues seems the most natural and truly functioning way to attract participants from UiO and should be further encouraged.

In addition, we have also addressed this question in the follow-up questionnaire to measure students’ perception of advertising efficiency of different advertising channels (Figure 1). Direct recommendations from trusted actors (colleagues, own department or faculty) are perceived as most effective. If participants, and UiO PhD candidates in particular, usually learn about the OSS from their

colleagues and from the faculty and if they also consider these sources most effective, it is likely that the attendance of PhD candidates at UiO reflects their preferences and OSS's quality. The best way to attract more PhD candidates from UiO is therefore focusing on a continuous improvement of quality, which we will address in the next two sections.

Figure 1 "What do you think are effective ways to advertise the OSS to people like you?" (the formulations under charts are simplified, see Appendix 3 for full formulations) (n = 308)



Note: "sns" stands for social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter etc.

What courses do participants want?

To gain more insight about the OSS's participants and their view of the summer school, we have analysed students' evaluation provided to us by the faculty (i.e. evaluation from 2014, 2015, and 2016 aggregated by individual courses), and other course materials (these were available for the years 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2017) such as syllabi, participant lists and overview sheets.

The OSS has offered courses from across the social science academic disciplines. Our analysis has shown, that the number of participants in methods courses has always been high and increased over time. In 2010, the OSS offered three courses which could be considered methodological.¹ Two of them were the first and second in terms of number of participants. In 2012, there was only one methodological course (the popular Case Study Research Methods) and a sharp drop in number of applications from 320 to 227. We cannot say that this implies causation, but when another methodological course was introduced in 2014 (Mixed Methods), it also attracted a lot of participants. In the last year, 2017, the already popular course on Case Study Research Methods by professor Andrew Bennett, shot up in the number of participants to 46 people (twice as many as was the average number of students per course). The other two methodological courses (Mixed Methods, and Collecting and Analysing Big Data) were the next most popular ones.

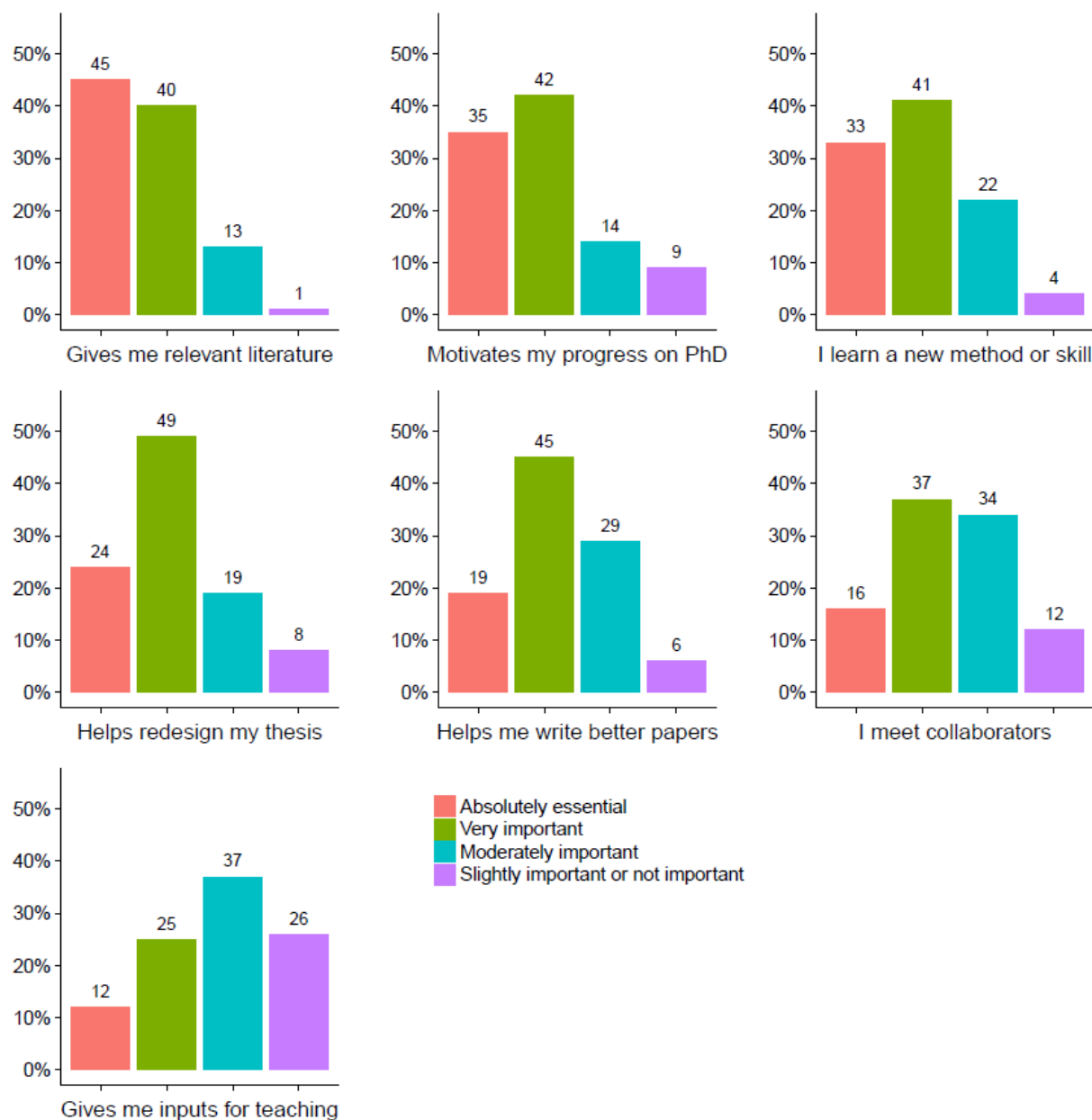
Despite the undeniable attraction of professor Andrew Bennett's course, the available data suggest that method courses in general are in high demand. To provide further backing for this hypothesis, we have asked participants in the follow-up survey about their expectations from a good summer school. Figure 1 shows that learning a new method or skill, indeed, belongs to the most important participants' expectations. Other than that, participants also expect to receive relevant literature and motivation for progressing (and possibly redesigning) their PhD thesis. Significantly less participants expect to get input for their own teaching, but it is still more than a third of them who consider this absolutely or very important as well.

When we next asked the respondents if there is "anything else [they] expect from a good summer school and consider important what was not mentioned above?", we repeatedly received the answer that they also expect high quality teaching, nice social events and getting to know the other people, inspiration and new perspectives which go across disciplines, feedback on their work, networking, new theoretical insights, and up-to-date focus.

¹ Topics in Applied Microeconometrics, Case Study Research Methods, and Event History Analysis and the Life Course.

² This would also be possible with regard to other Faculties that could have an interest in buying courses in the

Figure 2 “We would like to know what you expect from a good summer school. Please, indicate for each item below: How important it is for a summer school that...” (the formulations under charts are simplified, see Appendix 3 for full formulations) (n=308)

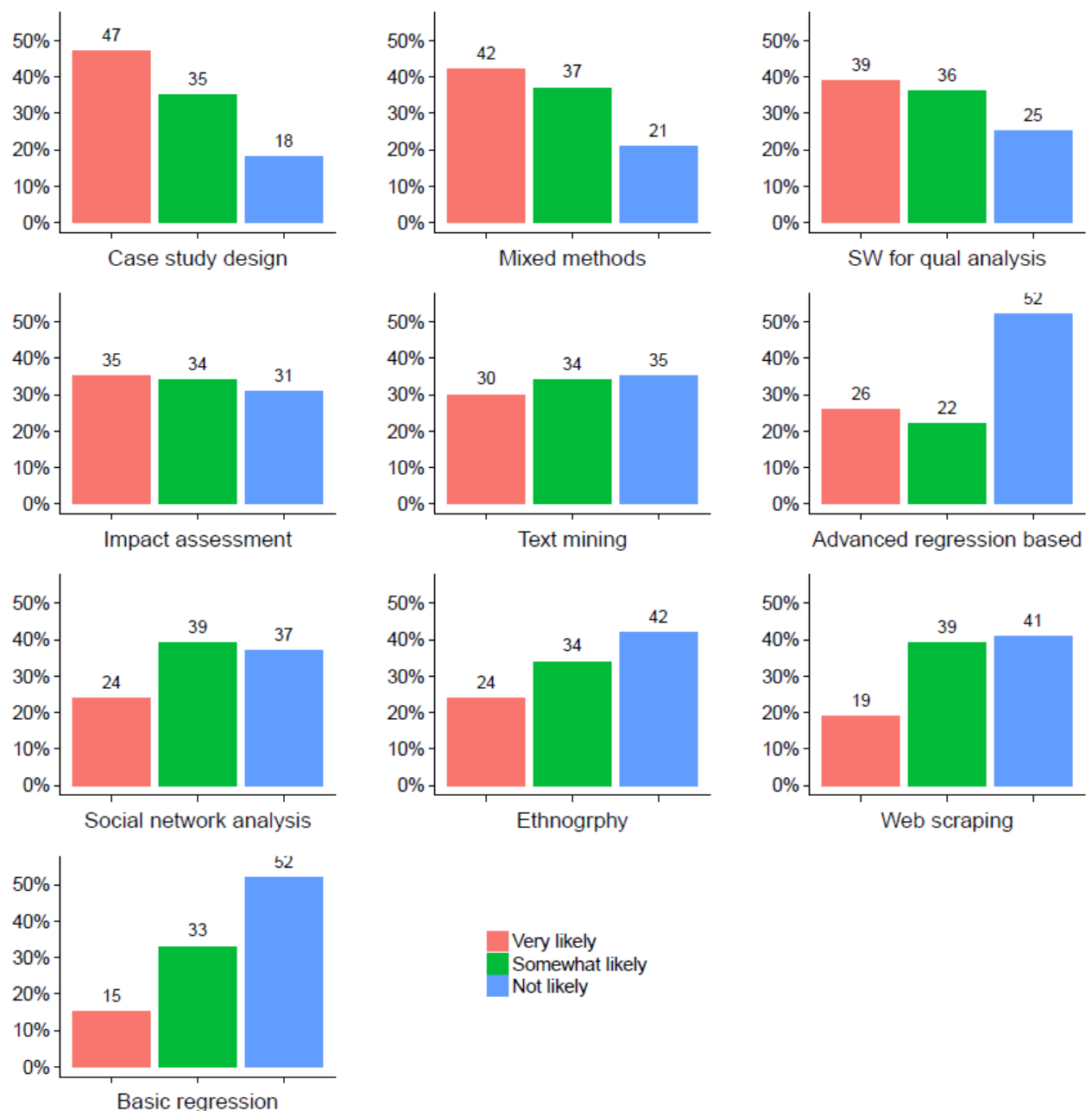


Our additional questions in the follow-up survey addressed students' preferences for selected methodological courses (Figure 3). The selection comes from our desk research of other summer schools which focus on methods and cannot be considered comprehensive. In addition, we only survey OSS past participants. Non-participants could have different preferences. However, the results could still be inspirational in the case that the OSS faculty decides to expand its offer on methodological courses.

The most popular courses among our respondents were Case study design, Mixed methods, and Software for qualitative data analysis. This could reflect the fact that OSS has mostly offered qualitative methodological courses and its past participants are more likely to be qualitative researchers in general. The results are still interesting and imply some recommendations: Open a course on software for qualitative analysis (such as NVivo) to attract past participants to come again. Consider courses on “policy evaluation and impact assessment” or “Automated text analysis (text mining, computer-assisted content analysis)” for the same purpose.

However, theoretical/substance-oriented (or thematic) courses are a unique proposition by the OSS. It may be a good idea to consider the strong and growing interest in method courses among participants and possibly expand the OSS by one or two of these courses (or at least make sure that there remains some form of course offering), but the OSS should not be too quick to transform into a methodological summer school and give up on its competitive advantage and uniqueness. Methods courses may attract more students, but it is an open question for the OSS faculty to debate where their priorities lie.

Figure 3 “Our data shows that increasing number of students today choose methodological courses. Should you go to a summer school for a methodological course, how likely would you consider the following options?” (the formulations under charts are simplified, see Appendix 3 for full formulations) (n = 308)



How to make courses better

In this section, we summarize the main insights from the open-ended questions from the standard evaluation surveys from 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Prioritize the reading list and distribute it early.

This seems to be the most resounding requirement. Many students across courses gave the suggestion to prioritize the reading list. Some of them also suggest shortening it, but since others like to receive a lot of tips about literature sources, prioritizing seems the better way to go. Sometimes, participants complain about other students not doing their reading before the class. This slows down the class and bothers those who come prepared. If the reading list is prioritized, appeals by teachers for students to do their reading may be more effective and result in better classes for everybody. Some students also suggested that reading lists should offer more variety within the course topic or that teachers should leave out outdated or off-topic items. It is also important that reading lists are distributed early and should not change shortly before the course starts.

Give students hands-on experience, interaction, and practical examples.

Students would often appreciate more interactions, such as discussions in small groups. Especially participants of methodological courses want to gain more practical experience and see applications and examples of what they are learning. They call for more practice and less theory.

Keep the number of participants limited.

For the reasons above, keep the number of participants in each course limited. Groups of over 30 or even 40 participants seem too big.

Sessions should have a clear structure.

Some students would appreciate more structured course and individual sessions. They suggest using keywords, improving time management, and keeping the planned breaks. Teachers could also provide session outlines at the start so that everybody knows what to expect.

Manage students' presentations.

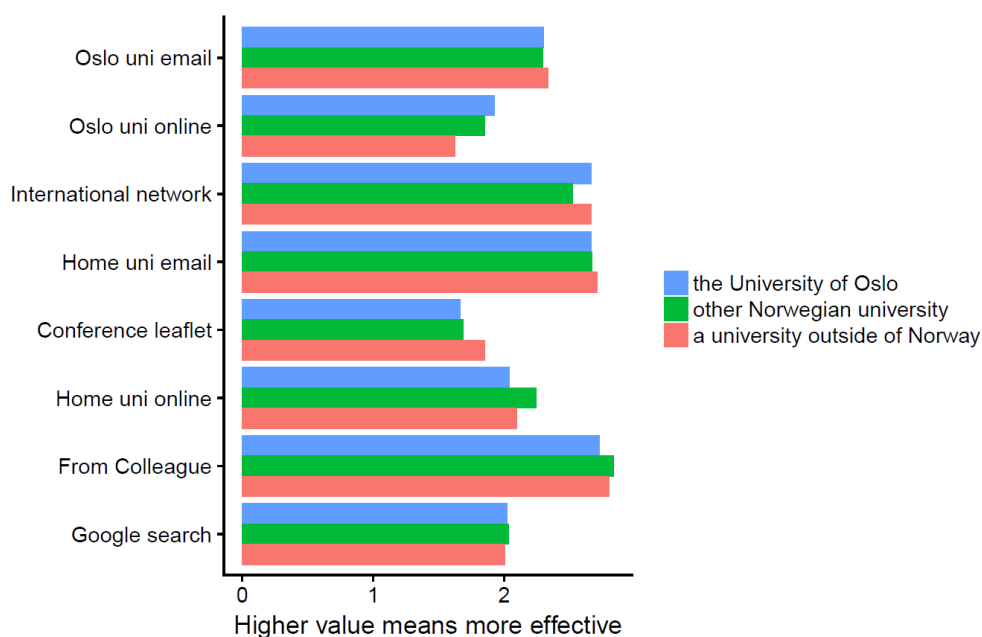
There are somewhat contradicting recommendations concerning student's presentations. Some students would like to have more opportunities to present their work and discuss it with others. Others complained about too much time dedicated to long student presentations. This is probably course dependent, but a general recommendation could be to give students a clear (and relatively strict) time limit for their presentation and enforce it. Teachers could also instruct students not to present their work broadly, but select particular problems they want to discuss with others and only focus on those. Students' presentations in courses should not be about giving students space to present their work, but to give everybody an opportunity to learn new things by discussing particular problems.

How to attract more PhD candidates from UiO

The key question behind this aim is, whether the PhD candidates at UiO and their needs and expectations are different from those of other participants? To address this question, we group the data by the university where students were based at the time of their attendance of the OSS. It turns out that there are almost no differences between them and other participants. Figure 4 shows that

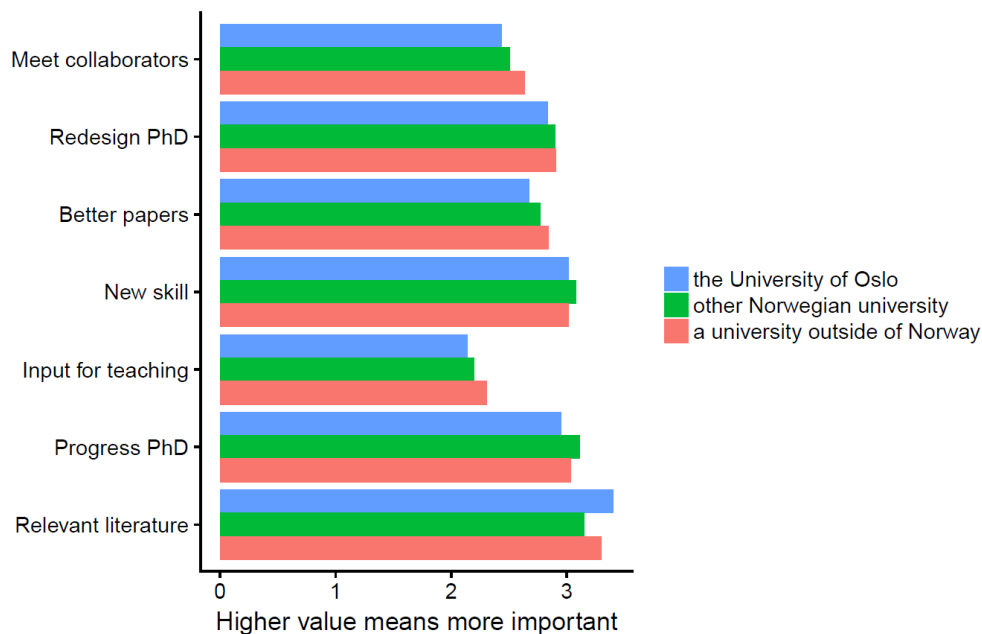
more or less the same advertising channels are perceived as effective by the UiO PhD candidates as by everybody.

Figure 4 Figure 3 “What do you think are effective ways to advertise the OSS to people like you?” GROUPED BY WHERE THEY ARE BASED (n = 297 as the small group of participant not based at any university was excluded from the analysis)



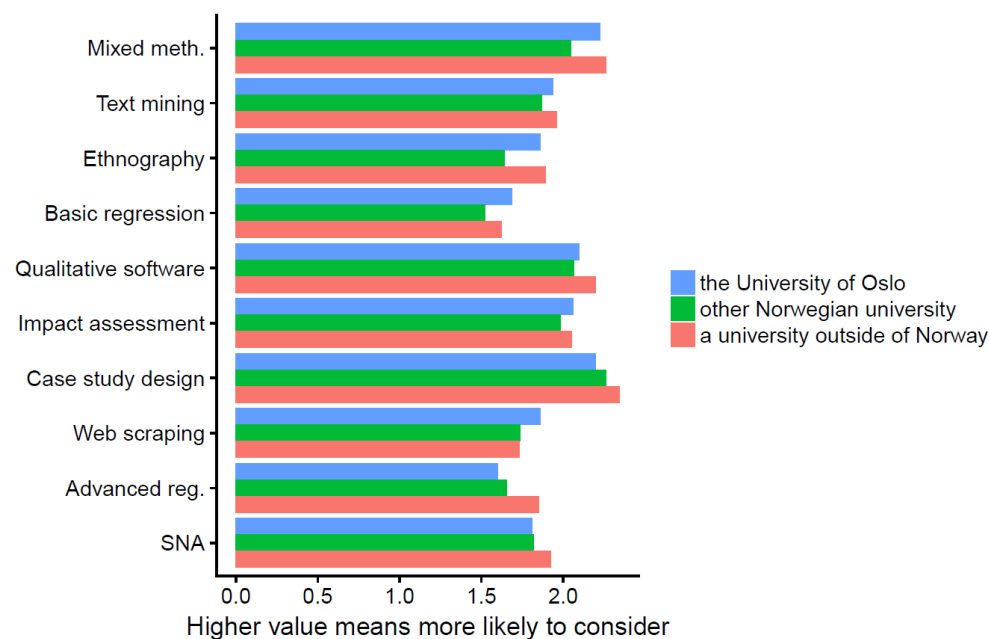
Similarly, UiO PhD candidates have very similar expectations from a good summer school as everybody else (they might be even slightly more interested in getting tips for relevant literature and slightly less interested in getting input for their own teaching, but the difference seems negligible) (Figure 5).

Figure 5 “We would like to know what you expect from a good summer school.” GROUPED BY WHERE THEY ARE BASED (n = 297 as the small group of participant not based at any university was excluded from the analysis)



Finally, the general recommendations about potentially popular methodological courses to open in the future also apply to the subgroup of UiO PhD candidates (Figure 6).

Figure 6 "Should you go to a summer school for a methodological course, how likely would you consider the following options?" GROUPED BY WHERE THEY ARE BASED (n = 297 as the small group of participant not based at any university was excluded from the analysis)



(See similar charts grouped by country of origin in Appendix 4 and by year of participation in Appendix 5.)

We can conclude that UiO PhD candidates have approximately the same needs and expectations as other participants of the OSS. Attracting more of them does not imply taking decisions that would alienate external participants. The recommendations about (a) how to effectively advertise the OSS, (b) what courses to add, and possibly most important (c) what general features to focus on in order to improve course quality, all seem general enough to apply for both UiO and external participants of the summer school.

However, in addition to these recommendations, more refined steps could be taken to attract specifically UiO PhD candidates. These steps are inferred in the next section from the evaluation of the PhD program at the Faculty of Social Sciences, which took place last year and demanded closer linking between the OSS and the PhD education at the Faculty.

Linking the Summer School to the PhD education at the Faculty of Social Sciences

The Faculty of Social Sciences undertook an evaluation of its PhD program last year. In the context of this evaluation one issue was the course component included in the PhD education at the Faculty. The evaluation report specifically refers to the OSS and states that:

"The committee noted that the Oslo Summer School provides important courses for a number of the tracks, and discussed whether the kinds of cross-disciplinary synergies that are developed there could be reproduced in a common Faculty-wide induction event (possibly modelled on the Faculty of Medicine's induction) that brings together all PhDs to participate in a series of problem-based activities."

Besides this recommendation the structure of the OSS also has the potential to address other recommendations made by the evaluation panel and through this foster cooperation among the

tracks of the PhD education as well as increase the number of internal PhD candidates that take part in the OSS.

One key suggestion from the evaluation of the PhD program was that there is a need for more inter-disciplinary courses between the different tracks of the program. Here the OSS with its more general methods courses clearly offers one venue where this could be intensified. In addition, it would also be a possibility to develop specific courses that foster inter-disciplinary understanding, communication, and cooperation around a specific topic (e.g. economic, political and sociological approaches to climate change). It would, for example, be possible to have one such course each year that is dedicated to inter-disciplinary exchange, which also acts as a bridge between the different tracks of the PhD education at the Faculty by e.g. being compulsory for PhD candidates that have started at the Faculty in the previous year.

Another option to better link the OSS with the PhD education at the Faculty would be to create synergies by making the person responsible for PhD education in the different departments ex officio also the person who represents the department in the cooperation with the summer school.² This would improve the flow of information from the different tracks of the PhD program to the planning of the OSS. Through these linkages it would also be easier to identify methods courses that could be relevant for multiple tracks of the PhD education program at the Faculty and possibly offer 1 – 2 additional courses each year that can be counted as part of the compulsory courses of several tracks of the PhD program.

Finally, one issue that the evaluation of the PhD program also addressed was the lack of access of PhDs to courses that teach generic skills:

“ [there is a] lack of access to more generic/transferable skills training, for example: academic writing in English, getting published, time management, project management, financial management, working with your supervisor, teamwork skills, grant application, and communication – presentation skills, communication with the media, and management of social media as well as other ‘soft’ skills”

Thus, it could be an option for the OSS to offer, besides the regular courses, additional shorter courses that focus on these skills. Such courses could, for example, take place shortly before or after the regular courses (maybe on a Saturday before or after the regular courses), and could generate additional income as it would be possible to charge extra fees for them. Finally, they would make the OSS also more attractive both for internal as well as external PhD candidates, and link it better to the Faculty’s PhD education.

OSS’s competitors

The biggest OSS’s competitor by far, as perceived by surveyed participants, seems to be the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) summer school. It was mentioned by 22 of the ca. 150 respondents who decided to answer this voluntary open question (“From your perspective, which summer schools are most direct competition for the OSS?”). Other mentions which appeared at least twice were Essex (6 mentions), CEU in Budapest (2 mentions), and the London School of Economics (2 mentions). The vast majority of answers to this question were answers such as “I don’t know”, “no idea” etc., which are not very different from not answering at all. In other words, only a relatively small minority of students was able to name a competitor. What is more interesting, some

² This would also be possible with regard to other Faculties that could have an interest in buying courses in the summer school. Thus, having a stronger link to UV’s or HF’s PhD education through bringing in their representatives for PhD training in the planning of the OSS could attract more PhD students from inside UiO but outside of SV.

respondents reflected that there is no or limited competition that they know of with focus on thematic courses. Some of them mention that ECPR is only competition for method courses, but not otherwise. Examples of such answers are following:

- “In case of methods training - ECPR summer and winter schools. When it comes to theoretical/empirical focus - there are summer schools that some research communities organize (e.g. ECPR Standing Group on Interest Groups) but the OSS has the broadest offer.”
- “About methods, the ECPR methods summer schools are quite competitive.”
- “OSS offers thematic courses (e.g. on Democracy or Inequality) and this makes it different from Essex or Ljubljana schools which focus exclusively on methods.”
- “None- for me it was all about the professor.”
- “I don’t know of any other summer school that offers these high level theory courses (for methods: ECPR, Nuffield, Essex)”
- “specifically on methods - ECPR summer school on methods.”
- “Uhh... there's a competition? If so, Everyone should up their game of advertising summer schools. I only ever found information by my own intense searches online and through several listservs. I only know of a few big ones, mainly located in the UK. Perhaps competition should not be the focus but rather focus on offering quality regardless.”
- “at the time there weren't any others offering something comparable”
- “ECPR. But not that much as they offer few thematic courses.”

This feedback suggest that the OSS holds a unique competitive advantage, at least in the eyes of participating students. Apart from adding one or two popular methodological courses (or instead of it), the OSS could also leverage this unique advantage and use it in its advertising to stand out among other international summer schools. This will be a challenge for the OSS’s marketing strategy. On the one hand, marketing methodological courses, which generally tend to have more participants, could attract extra students, but also eclipse the uniqueness that the OSS offers. On the other hand, it is not clear if the unique offer on more thematic courses is what many students who go to summer schools really want. It is not possible to conclusively answer this dilemma within this small study.

Part 2: Funding

Income

The OSS has three main sources of income (1) a grant from the Faculty of Social Sciences, (2) grants from departments that buy additional courses, and (3) course fees paid by students. The grant from the faculty as well as the student fees each make up approximately 44% of the income, while the grants from departments make up the rest. This year's summer school saw the highest number of participating students since 2005 (the earliest data point available for this report).

Given the aim stated by the Faculty of Social Sciences, that they are looking for ways to reduce their financial involvement in the OSS in the long run without endangering the existence of the institution, it is necessary to evaluate different ways to alter the distribution of income between the three main sources. A first obvious option would be an increase in the course fees. At the moment, the OSS charges 3.500 NOK (ca. 367 EUR) for one course or 6.000 NOK (ca. 630 EUR) for two consecutive courses (week 1 + week 2). For this fee students receive additional services on top of the course they take, which amount to approximately 2.000 NOK (ca. 210 EUR) of the fee (lunches, social events, printing etc.).

This fee is comparatively low when looking at other social science summer schools in Europe. The winter as well as summer methods school organized by the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), for example, charge between 500 EUR and 900 EUR course fees for one week courses or between 1.000 EUR and 1.800 EUR for two week courses. The Essex Summer School in Social Science Data Analysis charges around 1.100 GBP (ca. 1250 EUR) for courses involving 35 hours of teaching.

Both comparisons clearly indicate that there is room to increase the participation fees for the OSS. However, three points should be taken into consideration when considering the new level of course fees. First, the other summer schools which have been used as a reference are focusing explicitly on methods courses. These types of courses run a smaller risk of not creating enough demand as they are general enough to be relevant for PhD students with very different projects. One of the strengths of the OSS is that it also offers more topical and specialized courses that are relevant to a narrower group of PhD students working in a specific subject area. Increasing the course fees could cause a drop in student numbers, which could be especially problematic for these types of courses, while e.g. the course on Case Study Methods most probably won't experience such a problem. Second, costs for accommodation and food in Oslo are comparatively high, thus creating a certain cost disadvantage for the OSS as PhD students have to be able to cater to these costs in addition to the course fees. The ECPR, for example, holds its summer and winter schools in Budapest (Ljubljana before that) and Bamberg respectively, all these cities have lower costs of accommodation, food, and leisure. Finally, shifting parts of the income from the faculty grant to course fees paid by students while parallel to that aiming to increase the number as well as percentage of internal participants (i.e. PhD students from the Faculty of Social Sciences or the University of Oslo in general), will mean that more costs will be indirectly covered by the different departments as most internal PhDs receive departmental support to cover the course fees. Thus, there might be a certain trade-off between increasing the number of internal participants and increasing the income through course fees. Another option to shift the distribution of income for the OSS would be to increase the costs for departments and institutes to buy additional courses. At the moment, each additional course costs 50.000 NOK. However, given that on average there are only three additional courses the total gain of increasing these costs is rather small relative to the course fees.

Expenses

The expenses of the OSS amounted to approximately 1.5 Mio NOK per year for the years 2015 – 2017. They can roughly be divided in two categories. Around 700.000 NOK per year are “fixed costs” that cover the expenses for the Summer School Secretariat including its administrator, the chairman etc. Around 450.000 NOK per year are spent to finance the lecturers of the different courses, while 325.000 NOK are budgeted for lunches and social events for participants and lecturers. Finally, printing of course materials amounts to 50.000 NOK per year.

When analyzing the expenses based on the aim to reduce the financial involvement of the Faculty in financing the OSS, a first option to reduce costs would be to not provide free lunches anymore. This would reduce expenses by approximately 100.000 NOK per year. However, from a practical perspective making it an individual responsibility to get lunch could create logistic problems (e.g. long lines in the cafeteria that might delay courses from starting again after lunch). An alternative option could be to charge lunch as an extra expense to the course fees to generate additional income and then use a similar system as was used e.g. for the ECPR conference this year to incentivize participants to pre-order and pre-pay lunches to reduce waiting times etc. Expenses for other social events (reception etc.) amount to 225.000 NOK yearly and could also be an area where there is potential for cost cutting. Finally, the lecturers at the OSS are paid based on two factors, a) a general fee for teaching the course and b) additional fees for grading the papers that depend on the number of papers that have been submitted. To make the costs more predictable it could be an option to slightly increase the general fee for the lecturers and abolish the additional payment for the grading of papers.

Profits and Losses

Based on the data that has been provided for the evaluation, the OSS, with the exception of the year 2013, regularly makes a loss. It should be mentioned though that from 2011 until 2016 the loss steadily tended to decrease. In 2016 the loss still amounted to approximately 46.136 NOK. For 2017 the numbers are still preliminary as the books have not been closed yet and there is no final account of this year’s activities. Another reason to handle some of the calculations carefully is that there seems to be some discrepancy between the accounts that the financial officers of the Faculty provide and the calculations of the Summer School Office and it is not always clear what the overall income or expenses are in specific categories.

The table below gives a brief overview of the development of the OSS’s finances as well as student numbers and acceptance rates³ over the last eight years. The numbers in the table as well as the overall profits / losses highlight that it is necessary to solidify the income base of the Summer School to ensure its long-term stability.

As the table shows both the number of applicants as well as the number of accepted students fluctuates over the years with 2017 being an especially successful year with regard to the admitted students. The income from course fees fluctuates similarly to the student numbers, the slight differences can most probably be linked to the number of students taking two courses in a row instead of just one. The average net income per student is comparatively low also because the direct course costs increase with the number of students due to expenses for lunch, printing etc. As

³ It should be kept in mind that those who apply but do not accept a place at the summer school include both people being sorted out by the Summer School Administration as well as applicants who refuse to accept a place in a course that has been offered to them.

indicated in the footnote to the table, the fiscal numbers for 2017 are still somewhat preliminary, but if there are no major discrepancies in the provided statistics and the year with the highest number of participating students since 2010 will also be one of the years with the highest fiscal loss, then this indicates that there is a need for fiscal readjustment.

	2010	2011	2012	2013***	2014	2015	2016	2017**
Applicants	320	296	227	290	285	260	307	303
Student number	221	181	187	202	216	188	166	228
Acceptance rate	69,1%	61,1%	82,4%	69,7%	75,8%	72,3%	54,1%	75,2%
Income course fees ****	821.265 NOK	744.918 NOK	734.992 NOK	859.629 NOK	817.800 NOK	792.000 NOK	728.500 NOK	825.994 NOK
Direct course costs* ****	--	606.690 NOK	562.179 NOK	603.347 NOK	529.019 NOK	682.504 NOK	490.838 NOK	779.400 NOK
Average income/student	3.716 NOK	4.116 NOK	3.930 NOK	4.256 NOK	3.786 NOK	4.213 NOK	4.389 NOK	3.623 NOK
Net income/student	--	764 NOK	924 NOK	1.269 NOK	1.337 NOK	582 NOK	1.432 NOK	204 NOK
Win/Loss summer school ****	-1.697 NOK	-264.473 NOK	-154.694 NOK	105.488 NOK	-68.189 NOK	-79.090 NOK	-46.136 NOK	-240.857 NOK

* teaching staff, travel, printing & lunch

** As the books are not yet closed, the numbers for 2017 are not final and can still fluctuate

*** In 2013 the costs for other personnel have been accounted as an income, for the sake of this calculation they have however been regarded as an expense

**** Data based on the calculation provided by the Finance Department of the Faculty

Taking into consideration the aim of the Faculty to reduce their financial involvement in the OSS and the available alternative sources of income, which de facto means course fees paid by students, in relation to the structure of expenses some caveats need to be highlighted. First, depending too much on student course fees as a source of income for the OSS might be problematic due to the substantive amount of “fixed” costs that occur independently of the number of students participating in the Summer School. While the number of students that participate in the Summer School has increased over time, there is a still significant fluctuation visible, for example, in the reduction of students from 2014 to 2016. At the same time, the “net per student income”⁴ has never been higher than 1.450 NOK, meaning to cover “fixed costs” without faculty or department support even with the highest “net per student income” would demand the participation of around 500 students. This shows that there is a need to find a way to support at least large parts of the “fixed costs” from other sources to create a situation in which the OSS could be sustainable without the Faculty’s support. If the Faculty can find an arrangement with the Departments to cover a large part of the “fixed costs” - which would also allow the Faculty to decrease parts of its 44% provision of income for the summer school - the financial security of the summer school could be ensured also with fluctuating student numbers and only modest increases in course fees. This could be part of a larger arrangement that would also give the OSS a bigger role in the PhD education of the Faculty and increase the number of internal PhD candidates that take part in the Summer School.

⁴ For this report „Net per student income“ is defined as the difference between the income from course fees and the direct costs associated with students participating in courses (e.g. fees for lecturers, printing costs, lunch).

Part 3: Academic standing of the summer school

In this section, we assess the academic quality of the teaching, and the effect of the summer school on the faculty's reputation.

Summer schools have a long and venerable tradition in academic life. In addition to serving as an opportunity for particularly motivated students to meet and engage with leading academics, they afford the same academics opportunities to work in a focused yet relaxed environment to present and discuss topical issues and methods. Summer schools in themselves also function as informal networks between hosts and visitors, and also among the visitors themselves forming and sustaining "invisible colleges" and in creating intellectual novelty and variation. In doing so, they also contribute to the long-term viability of the host environments, enriching also settings located somewhat outside the scientific centre of gravity.

Summer schools thus have a potential that goes far beyond the confines of a few weeks of course giving. But if a summer school is to achieve these laudable goals, it needs a clear identity, and a strong network, but also leadership with the capacity and willingness to rejuvenate and perhaps even transform its offering, to keep it from stagnating.

How well has the OSS done in these respects? Ever since it was inception in 1993, the OSS has offered courses that reflect several of the most topical issues of the social sciences, and cutting edge methodological approaches. Many of the invited lecturers belong to the leaders in their respective fields, and come from renowned institutions. It is also clear that the school has provided leading scholars the opportunity to present on-going research and publications that have been recently published or which are in the process of finalization. This has included, over the years, issues like studies of case study methods, comparative methodologies, political protest, cultural sociology, technological change, scientific risks, life course analysis, just to mention a few. The quality and topicality of the issues chosen are undeniable.

OSS's activities are firmly rooted in the competitive advantage of the Nordic countries in social science, with a focus on issues like labour markets, welfare systems, and higher education organization. While this, wisely, reflects the historical strengths and directions of Norwegian social science, the school has gradually widened the net and incorporate issues like globalization, justice and citizenship which are more generic in nature and which are not specifically tied to the profile of Norwegian social science or to the Norwegian society. The core content remains, however, located in macrosociology, comparative politics, and political economy, with adjacent methodological approaches (quantitative, historical, mixed methods). In this sense, the OSS has contributed to reinforcing the strengths of Norwegian social science and aligning it with leading international scholarship. It is another issue if the faculty has been able to fully capitalize on the first-rate capacity that the school has afforded, but it seems abundantly clear that the school's offering is excellent. Simply put, the OSS and its activities reflect scholarship at the a very high international level within the broad framework of comparative social sciences.

When it comes to leadership and the capacity for rejuvenation over time, the OSS has always been labelled a school of comparative social sciences, which reasonably reflects the overall direction of the school. The focus is, as mentioned above, on a specific form of comparative social science studies, in particular those that articulate with the legacy of comparative studies at the intersection of politics, society and markets. The OSS has extended its reach. This we also take as an indication that the school aims to connect with the social science faculty as a whole, also when this means stretching the notion of "comparative social science".

Leadership has been exercised in the sense that the school's articulation with the faculty has been retained over time as the faculty's profile has widened. Leadership, it must be added, has also been proven in the consistently high level of the school's course offering, at a level which would be enviable to any social science faculty in the world. A summer school is highly dependent on intellectual and organizational leadership that monitor and reflect the moving frontlines of social science research, and Oslo has certainly benefitted from the depth and breadth of Lars Mjøset's network and own engagements. It is vital for the school that leadership at this level is maintained.

In addition, the outstanding work provided by the OSS's administration, especially the long standing administrator Tron Torneby, should be highlighted as an additional factor that ensured the success of the OSS in the last years. Through his initiatives, such as creating and administering a Facebook group that brings together alumni of the OSS, he provides a link to the OSS's alumni and acts as the main contact point for potential as well as former participants of the summer school. His work throughout the year and during the OSS with students as well as incoming lecturers lays the foundation for the smooth operation of the two weeks of courses.

Does the school add to the value of the Faculty of Social Sciences at UiO? If judging from the composition of the courses, both content wise and regarding recruited lecturers, it is without any doubt that the school showcases the Oslo faculty to the world, but also concomitantly that it exposes Oslo to the world. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this report, and also pointed out by the evaluation of the PhD programme in 2016, there seems to be room for further improvements in the PhD programme, improvements in which the school's focused and broad profile could contribute.

The composition is clearly structured according to the foundational composition and direction of the school, a trajectory that has been reproduced over time in a highly consistent manner. This means that students and lecturers who seek to elucidate the specific political, social and economic conditions that underpin welfare states and their labour markets, and who are engaged in methodological developments to understand these processes, will find Oslo a congenial home. We see, however, fewer indications of this core of the summer school being aligned more systematically with areas that were sparsely represented in the early years of the schools, like psychology, anthropology or economics, or finding manners in which these can be incorporated under the umbrella of "comparative social sciences". The growing engagement with science and technology studies has also largely been conducted without any specific articulation with the summer school's core.

This points to the risk of a certain marginalization of the OSS in relation to the expanding fore of the faculty. This is not necessarily a problem in itself as the school is an appendix of the faculty, not its centre, but we believe that the faculty should make more use of the school's capacity as a global intellectual meeting space, and that it should engage the faculty more in and around the school's activities, for instance by engaging lecturers in departmental activities, but also by creating integrative settings where the different lecturers engage in interdisciplinary talks and meetings, perhaps in the form of a workshop or symposium at the end of the summer school's period. We realize that the timing of school activities (summer term) is not ideal for such alignments, but in a faculty that aims to be a leading Nordic social science faculty with a strong international presence, the school is definitely a resource.

Conclusions and recommendations:

- The OSS operates and has consistently operated on a very high international level.
- The themes chosen are topical and cutting edge.
- Lecturers recruited are among the leaders in their respective fields and have taken the opportunity to share and discuss their on-going research.
- The alignment between core and periphery of the OSS offering could be addressed, for instance, by better integrating economics and psychology.

- Leadership has been outstanding – the OSS’s offerings and network could not have been achieved without this.
- The faculty should take advantage of the networks that the lecturers bring with them and work to improve the alignment between the OSS and the Faculty of Social Sciences, to avoid compartmentalization and to secure its ambition to be an internationally leading faculty.
- Such an alignment could be secured through faculty workshops or symposia, which could address issues that go beyond and over the demarcations of each course. This could also strengthen the school’s and faculty’s ambition to work interdisciplinary.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Number of participants over years grouped by course theme

(Note: Only data for the years 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2017 were provided for this analysis)

<i>Themes of the courses offered in 2010</i>	<i>No. of courses</i>	<i>No. of Participants</i>	<i>No. of PhD students</i>
Economics	1	41	39
Psychology	1	34	27
Political Science/Sociology	4	55	40
Environmental Policy	1	25	16
Anthropology/Sociology	2	27	21
Research Methodology	1	39	37
TOTAL	10	221	180

<i>Themes of the courses offered in 2012</i>	<i>No. of courses</i>	<i>No. of Participants</i>	<i>No. of PhD students</i>
Economics	0	0	0
Psychology	0	0	0
Political Science/Sociology	7	110	73
Environmental Policy	2	23	21
Anthropology/Sociology	1	23	17
Research Methodology	1	31	31
TOTAL	11	187	142

<i>Themes of the courses offered in 2014</i>	<i>No. of courses</i>	<i>No. of Participants</i>	<i>No. of PhD students</i>
Economics	1	22	19
Psychology	1	29	18
Political Science/Sociology	4	80	71
Environmental Policy	0	0	0
Anthropology/Sociology	1	24	20
Research Methodology	2	61	60
TOTAL	9	216	188

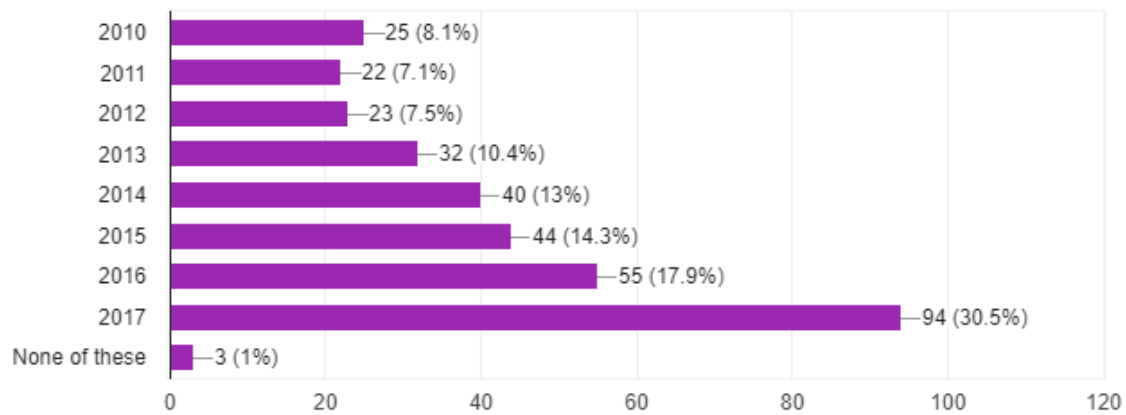
<i>Themes of the courses offered in 2017</i>	<i>No. of courses</i>	<i>No. of Participants</i>	<i>No. of PhD students</i>
Economics	0	0	0
Psychology	1	21	14
Political Science/Sociology	2	25	18
Environmental Policy	2	45	40
Anthropology/Sociology	0	0	0
Research Methodology	2	74	72
Innovation studies/Sociology	2	52	32
Education/Sociology	1	11	6
TOTAL	10	228	182

Appendix 2 Follow-up survey sample composition

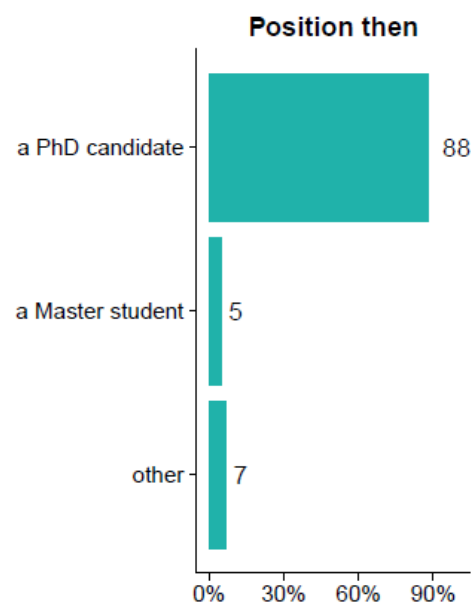
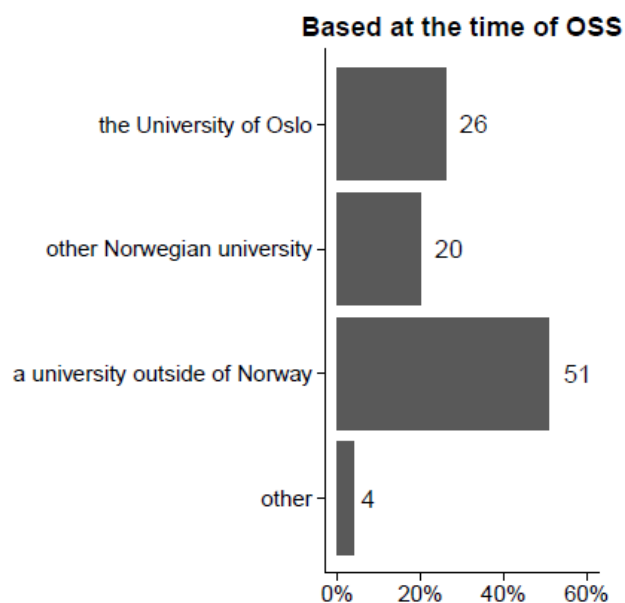
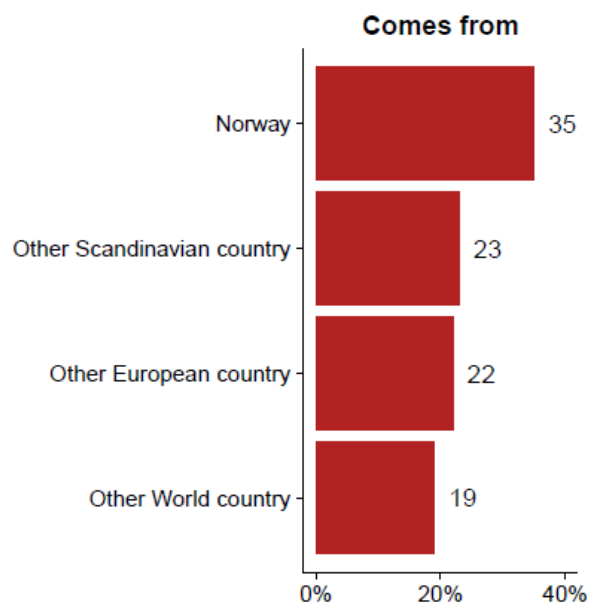
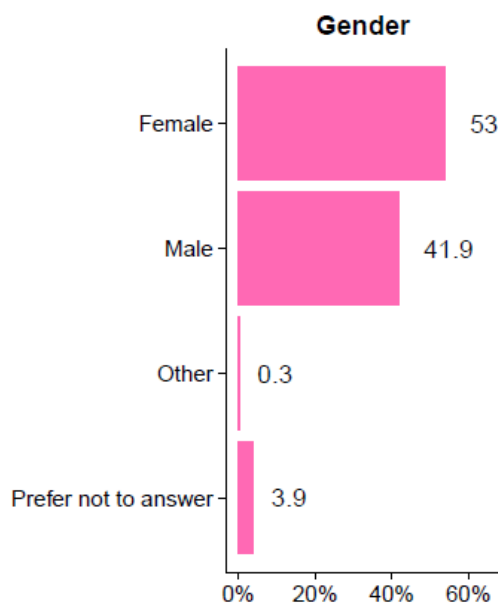
Respondents of the new questionnaire by year

In which year(s) did you attend the OSS?

308 responses

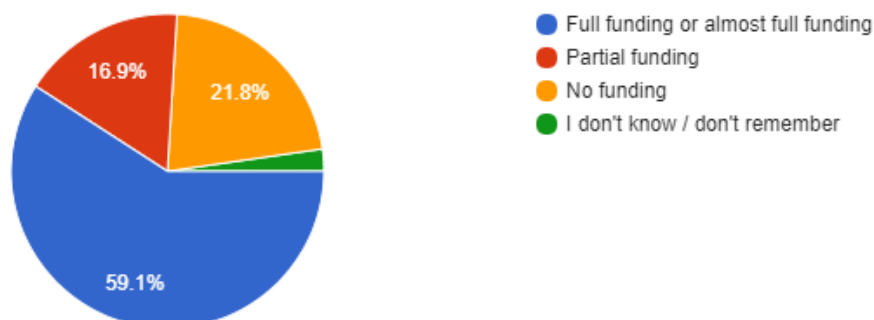


Note: Majority of respondents (279, i.e. 91 %) only visited the summer school in one year, only 22 respondents (7 %) visited it twice, and 4 (1 %) three times. Three respondents said it was none of the years offered.



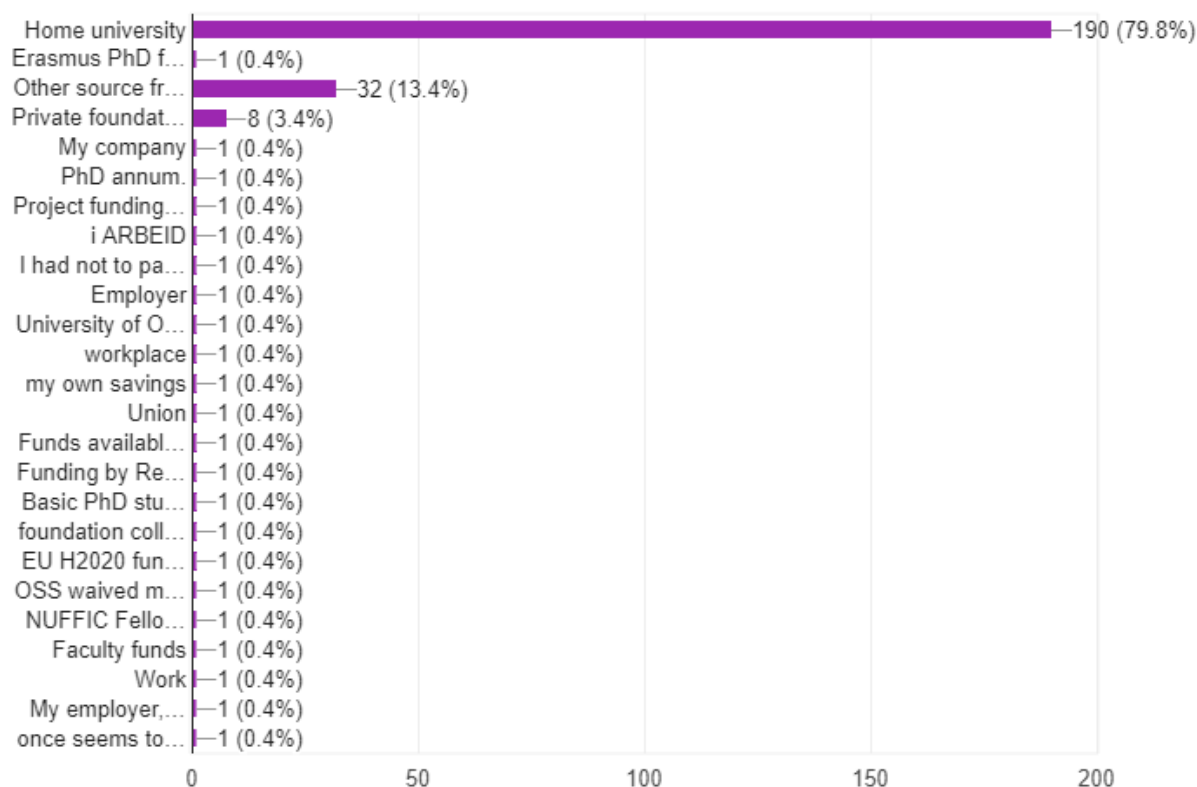
Have you received funding for attending Oslo Summer School?

308 responses



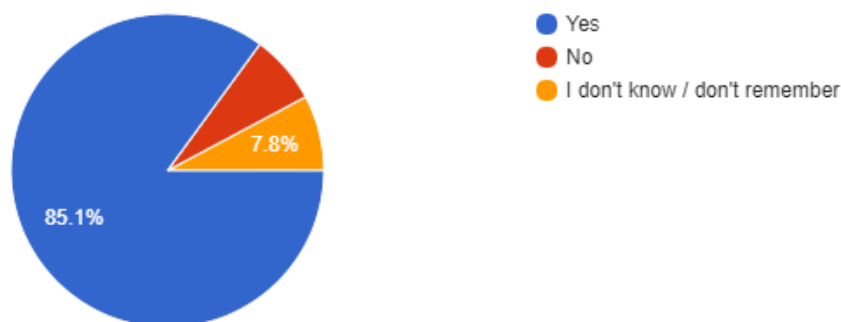
If yes, please indicate the source(s).

238 responses

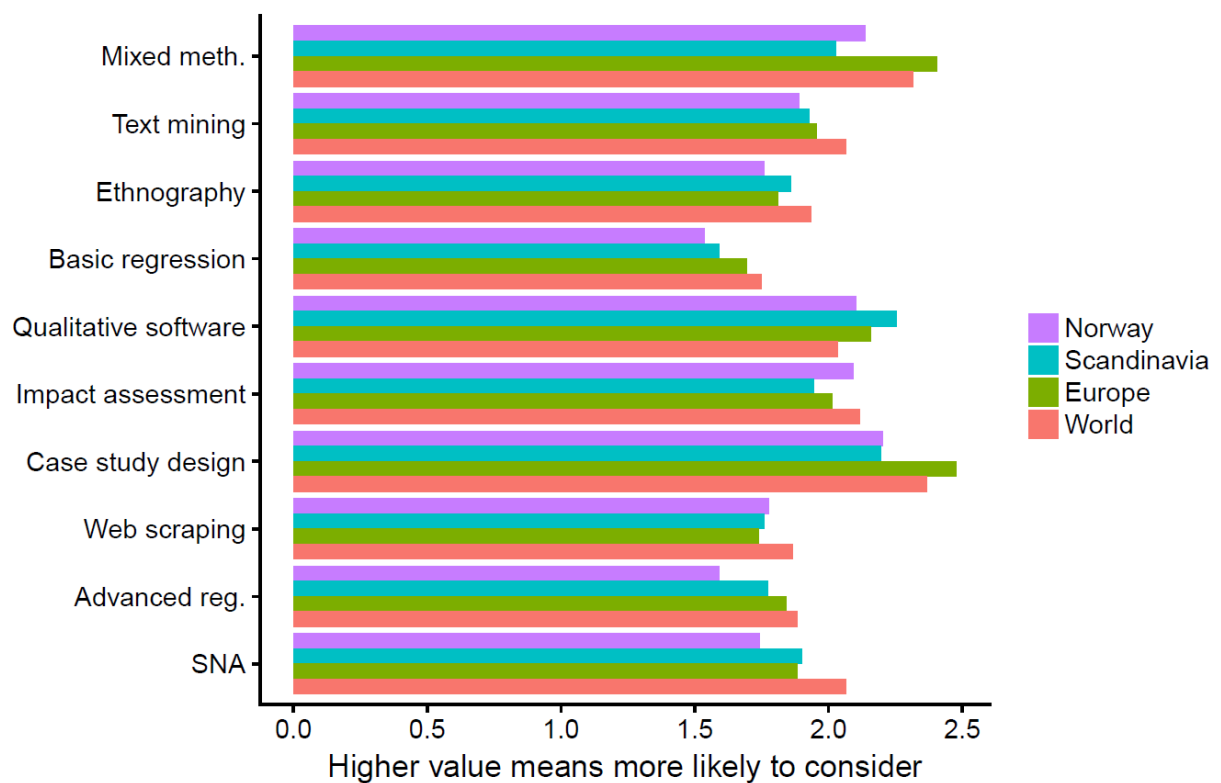
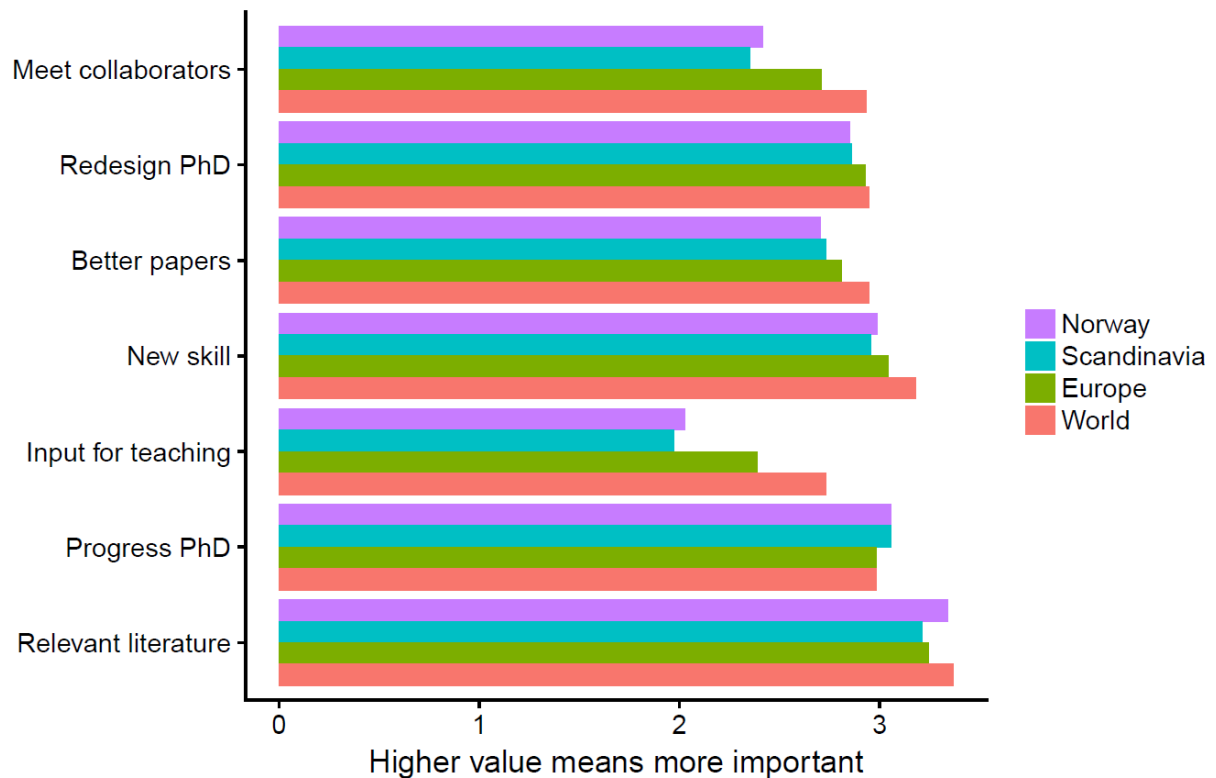


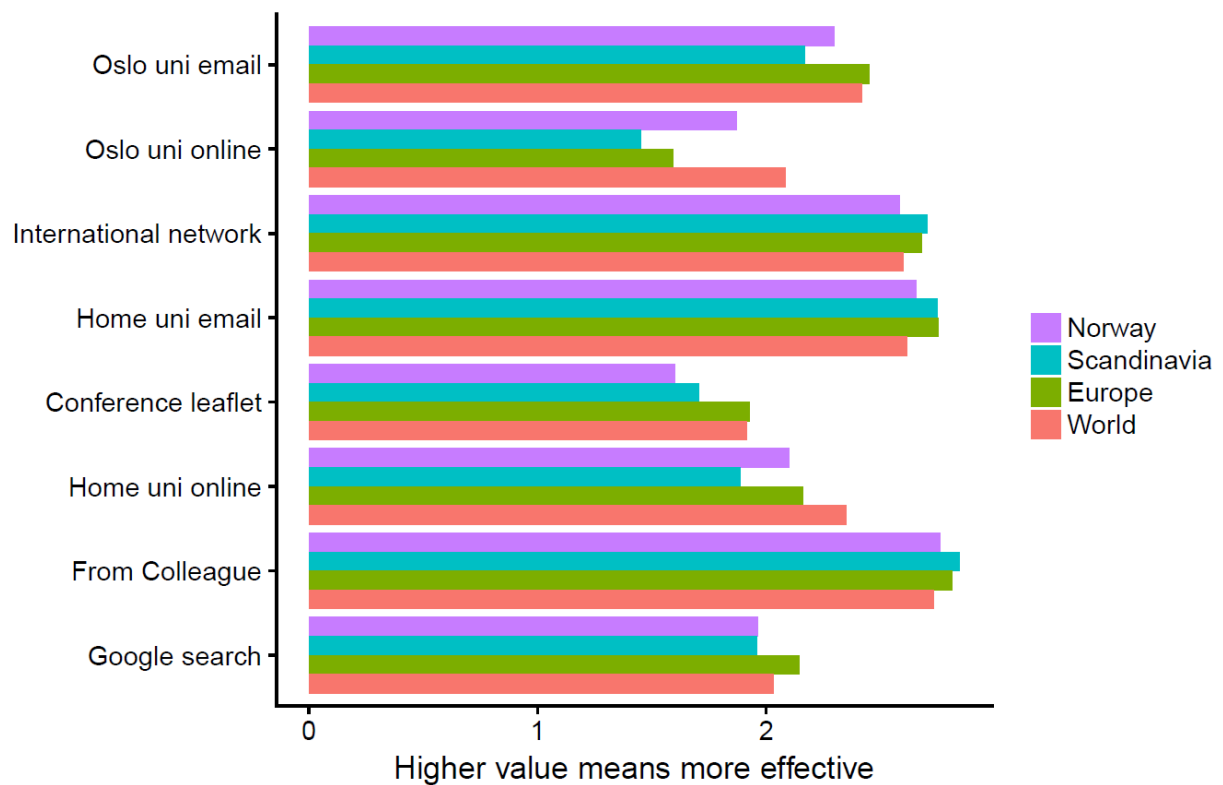
Have you recommended the OSS to your colleagues or peers (or at least one of them)?

308 responses



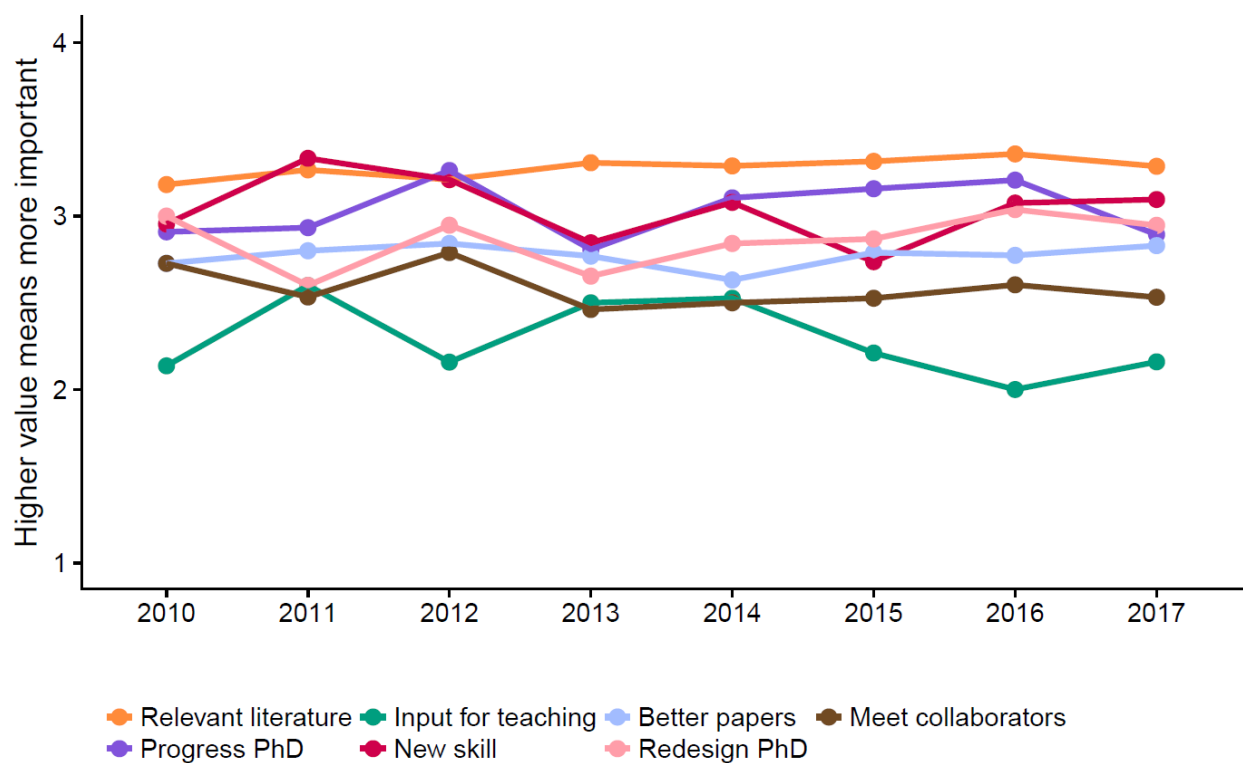
Appendix 3 Additional charts – follow-up survey answers grouped by where participants are from





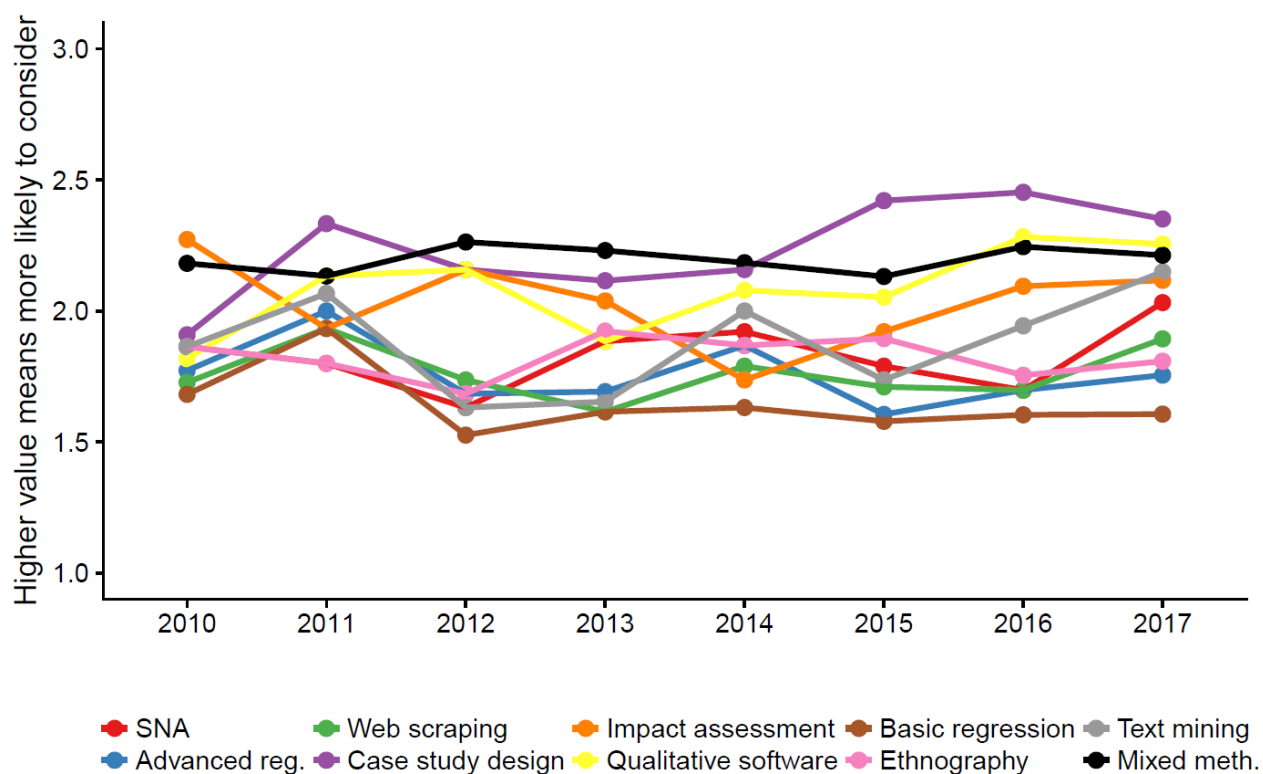
Appendix 4 Additional charts – follow-up survey answers grouped by year of participation

What are participants expecting from a good summer school - grouped the year of participation



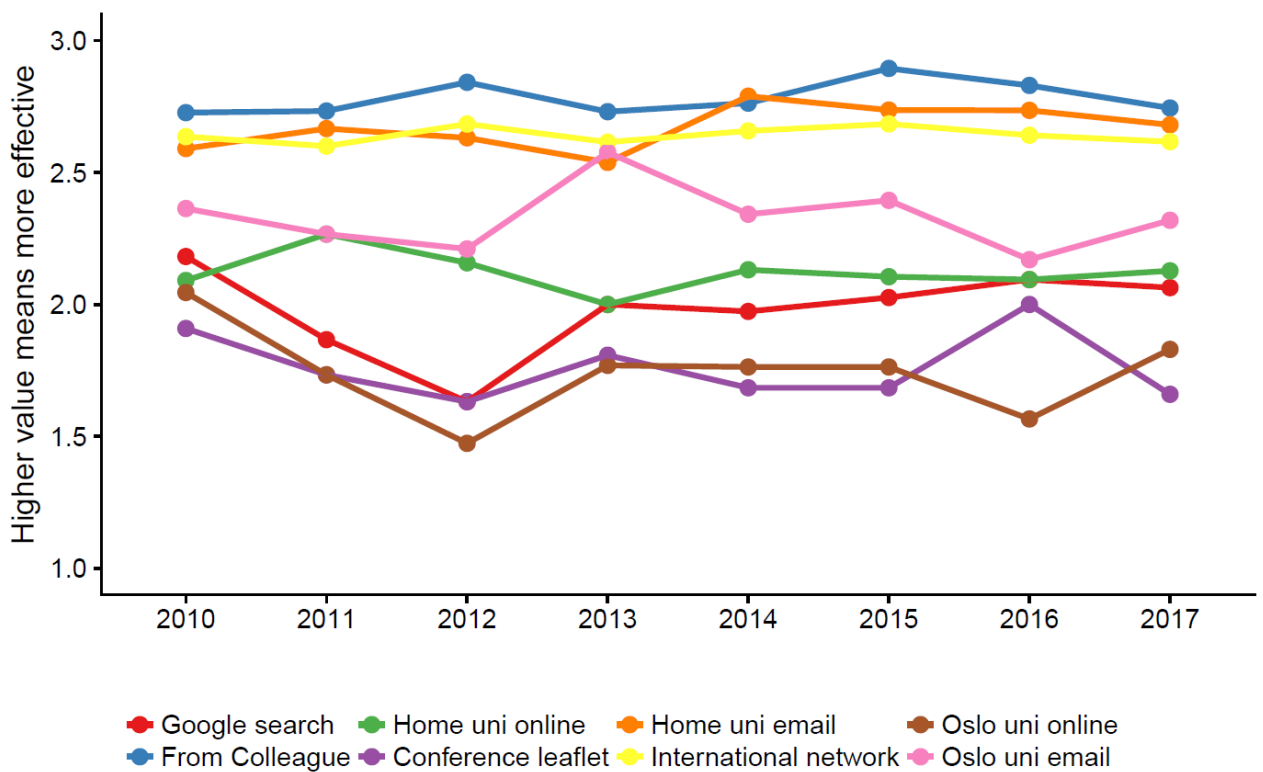
Note: the data comes from the 2017 survey covering participants from different years.

Which methods would participants consider - grouped the year of participation



Note: the data comes from the 2017 survey covering participants from different years.

Which ways of advertising do participants consider effective - grouped the year of participation



Note: the data comes from the 2017 survey covering participants from different years.