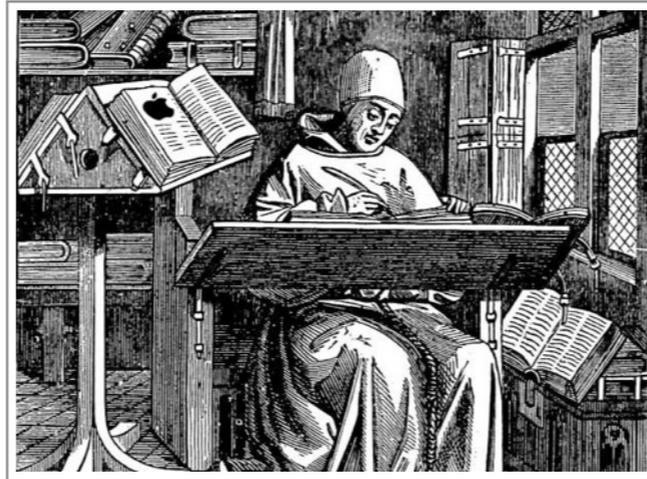

Teacher Times

GRADUATE SCHOOL – TEACHER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER, AUTUMN 2016



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Ever heard of R, NVivo, Hadoop, PSPP, Trendalyzer?
We think that we all need to know more. Read on!

Issue 1 – September 2016



1

Letter from the Director of Studies



Mikael Sundström
Director of studies at
Graduate School

Hi from Graduate School!

Dear GS Teachers (and other valued friends of Graduate School),

Henry Ford once said “coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success”.

He apparently also said “history is more or less bunk,” but that somehow seems much less heartening, so I’ll run with the first quote for now.

Graduate School is an almost entirely virtualised department – we draft you, or try to, when we need your particular brand of expertise. Some of you we are fortunate enough to see regularly, others are more like commandos charging in doing their thing (and doing it well!), then retreating back to base. Coming together is a great start, sure, but we want to keep together and work together more than we do.

This newsletter is an attempt to keep you better informed about what we are up to. At Graduate School we use English as our primary working language, and many international staff members around the Faculty will at some point teach in one of our courses, or supervise our thesis students. We hope that a relatively chunky newsletter in English will be a welcome addition to the relatively few information sources that are immediately accessible to international staff. Feel free to spread the word, and this very issue, to English-speaking colleagues who might not yet be among our formally listed friends: we will try not to be too myopic, but address issues with bearing outside of Graduate School too.

A case in point is this issue’s focus on methods, where, as you will see, the discussion is by no means limited to what’s going on at Graduate School. This is surely an area where we need to work across unit boundaries to be successful, and we would love to hear what you think about the things we have been discussing.

Mikael Sundström,

Director of Studies, Graduate School



2

Graduate School – facts and figures

As a Graduate School teacher it might be interesting to have an overall understanding of what this virtualised unit is all about. Here we outline our organisation, how our programmes are structured and provide some related facts & figures.

The Graduate School organisation

Graduate School is run by two interlocking teams. Shoshana, Milan, Mikael and Helena (with Pal standing in while Helena is on maternal leave) run and administer the day-to-day show and continually work to integrate and develop the three programmes.



In this we are ably helped by our Directors' team including programme directors Rebecca (Gender), Karin (LUCSUS) and Annika (Political Science), as well as our Methods Director Chris (Sociology).



The Graduate School Board

Our formal decision-making body is the Graduate School Board, which convenes about three times per term. Currently serving staff members are (in addition to people already mentioned above) Nicklas Guldåker, director of studies at the

department of human geography; Anna Sonander, director of studies at the sociology of law department; Jakob Gustavsson, director of studies at the department of political science; Leili Laanemets, director of studies at the school of social work; Christopher Mathieu, director of studies at the department of sociology and Lena Karlsson, director of studies at the department of gender studies. In addition, the Board includes student representatives from the GS programmes, currently Mert Demircan, Sanna Peijer Hedlund and Katharina Jemima Hopp. It is hard to imagine a board more packed with high-grade experience, and the cross-faculty composition makes for consistently interesting and constructive discussions. We would like to take the opportunity to thank our Board members for their work!

Our vital friends

We have outsourced some of our economic administration to Sofie Magnusson at the faculty, who helps us stay on track economically and, not least, grapples with esoteric-sounding economic/administrative systems that we are a little bit afraid of. “Raindance”, the name of the new economic management system, somehow does not exude confidence and precision for instance, and so we are very happy indeed to be able to draw on Sofie’s magical powers and rain-dancing prowess.

Katarina Follin and her team help us with exchange studies, both incoming and outgoing, and Malin Schatz and crew help us think about how our programmes and courses are set up – such input is vital in that it helps prevent our thinking going stale or too parochial.

In all honesty there is probably not a single cubicle or room in the central faculty office that we do not visit in a given term, and we are always patiently helped by friendly and knowledgeable colleagues – a great boon. We similarly buzz or visit a wide variety of staff members at individual departments and assorted LU central functions in order to resolve all the little administrative snags that come with the territory.

Graduate School programme structure

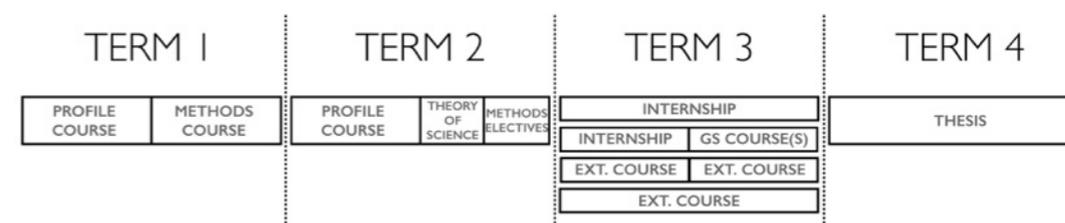
Our three masters programmes all have a similar structure and consist of a total of 120 Swedish credits (2 years).

The **first** term for all three programmes begins with a profile course (15 credits) introducing the students to the main themes and issues of the programme. This is followed by a course introducing a variety of research methods (15 credits) that we’ll get back to in a later section of this newsletter.

The **second** term begins with second profile course (15 credits) directly related to the main theme of the programme. Through the profile course students further increase their understanding and knowledge through a deeper comprehension of theories and current research. This is followed, in the second half of the second term, by a course in theory of sciences (7.5 credits) and another course in either theory of science or research methods (7.5 credits).

The **third** term consists of optional courses that the students can take in Lund or any other recognised university. Courses are chosen after approval by the programme coordinator, and enable students to tailor the programme to suit their particular interests. During this term there is also an increasingly popular option to go on exchange studies or to do an internship, abroad or in Sweden.

During the **fourth** and final term students complete the programme with a thesis, which provides the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of theories, methods and argumentation.

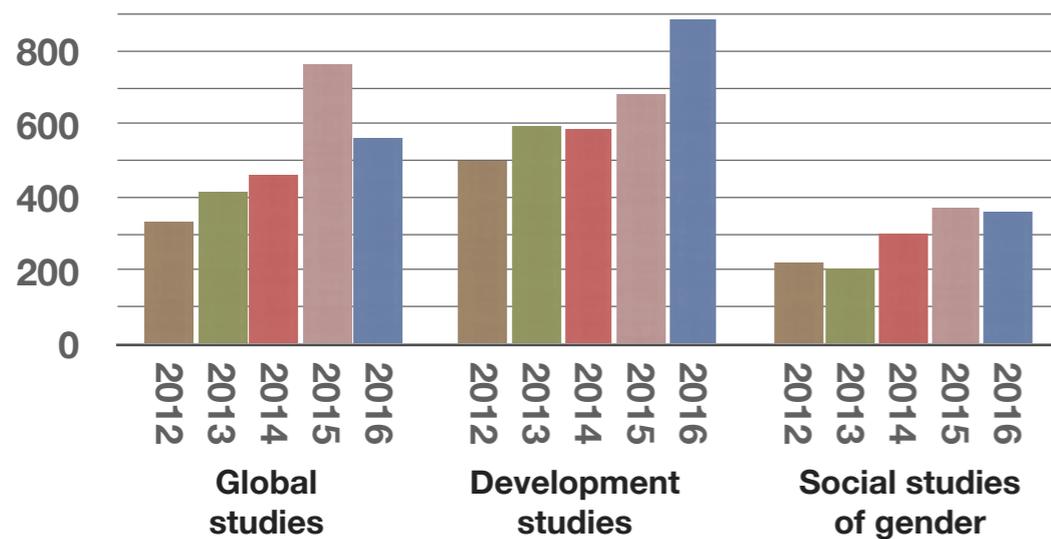


Programme structure: an overview

Our students

Graduate School is truly international – and popular. This year we processed almost 2,000 applications; twice as many as five years ago.

Application numbers 2012-2016



Our aim is to admit around 40 students per programme and cohort. The Social Students of Gender programme usually ends up with slightly fewer students than that, although this year seems unusually promising in this respect so far, while the remaining two tend to end up close to the sweet spot. This means that we usually have some 200 active students in our system, plus a fair number of students from other departments that attend some of our courses.

Of the admitted students in 2015 (we are still processing the 2016 batch as this is being written), around 40 per cent were from Sweden, with the rest coming from 38 other countries. Turkey and the UK provided the largest contingents, and we are praying that Brexit and the political turmoil in Turkey will not disrupt or break our excellent links with higher education institutions in these countries.

Our teachers

Graduate School does not employ teachers directly, but “borrows” from the departments as needed. In 2016 we are on track to employ slightly more than 100 different teachers from all over the faculty, and sometimes beyond, to man (or woman) a total of some 20 courses. This number includes thesis supervisors and examiners (around 25 different examiners helped out in June for example). Some teachers clock in hundreds of (clock) hours in a year while others stay in the low single digits. To manage this we rely a *lot* on our course coordinators who more often than not helm multi-departmental crews – and we regularly try to meet the entire teaching teams. This year, 13 coordinators have headed or are about to head our courses (some more than one):

- Johanna Alkan Olsson, Centre for Environmental and Climate Research
- Mimmi Barmark, Sociology
- Annika Bergman Rosamond, Political Science
- Catia Gregoratti, Political Science
- Lars Harrysson, School of Social Work
- Anne Jerneck, LUCSUS
- Marta Kolankiewicz, Gender
- Hans-Edvard Roos, Sociology
- Helle Rydström, Gender
- Rebecca Selberg, Gender
- Priscilla Solano, Sociology
- Karin Steen, LUCSUS
- Christopher Swader, Sociology

We tend to be relatively generous when it comes to course coordination remuneration, because of the inherent difficulties in coordinating across institutional boundaries. We also try to meet all teaching teams at least once a year both to keep track of specific courses, and to help disseminate insights and innovations between the many different teams.



3

What happened in 2015/16? (and a peek at the coming academic year)

This year was spent on continuing to improve our overall functioning as a team, including integrating the skills and visions of our new Methods Director Chris Swader into the team. We kicked off the academic year with developing our communications strategy, as well as moving into more efficient ways of managing our internal information. We have placed more focus on becoming more visible at the faculty, and spreading our activities to targeted audiences. In addition to these more long-term visions, below are some examples of specific activities that have kept us busy during the academic year of 2015-2016, and a quick peek at our plans for the year ahead.

Programme Director changes

In the autumn of 2015 Kristina Jönsson, Director of the *Development Studies* Programme, stepped down and has been replaced by Karin Steen at LUCSUS, who took on the new role during the spring of 2016. Sara Goodman has stepped down as the Programme Director of the *Programme in Social Studies of Gender*, and has been replaced by Rebecca Selberg from the Department of Gender Studies. We would like to take the opportunity to thank Kristina and Sara for their long and successful stints as PDs – you will both be missed!

We also welcome Karin and Rebecca to the team, and are already happy to see you carry on Kristina's and Sara's fine work. Keep it up!

The year has also seen the introduction of a new directorship, where our methods offerings and planning efforts are organised into a common fief headed by Chris Swader from the department of sociology. Chris will introduce some of his work later in this issue.



Sara Goodman



Kristina Jönsson



Rebecca Selberg



Karin Steen



Chris Swader

More integrated academic support

Over the past three years we have been building up a structure to support Graduate School programme students' academic writing and library skills. One of the main goals with this is to offer new programme students relevant skills as early as possible, in order to increase the chances that they will successfully complete their studies. We have developed the *Summer Platform*, which kicks off during the summer prior to the programme. The platform is a way to kick-start incoming students before they even arrive in Lund, by allowing them to read some introductory literature from their respective programme themes, test their

academic writing through a quiz, and discuss relevant topics with student mentors and peers. Once they begin their studies proper, they are offered a series of lectures, workshops and seminars by Ladaea Rylander from Academic Support and Maja Carlson from the Social Sciences Faculty Library, during their profile course. This includes lectures on reading and note-taking strategies; on the writing process; and on global coherence, while the sessions organised by the librarians include an introduction to the library and a seminar on information literacy.

Making Graduate School's behind-the-scenes efforts visible at conferences

A selection of projects that received *kvalitetsmedel* (development project funding) were asked to be presented and shared at the EQII day on April 27th. One of these projects was the Graduate School *Summer Platform*, and Shoshana Iten presented the background, contents and effects. At the *Utvecklingskonferens* (development conference) in November 2015 Shoshana and Lena Örnberg presented a shortened version of their co-written chapter *Building a Home: the role of Administration in master's education* (included in a forthcoming anthology). A poster presentation based on the same chapter was then presented at NU2016 in Malmö in June.

Spreading the word: Newsflash, Newsletter and Guides

In 2015-2016 we have worked on a more coherent way to keep our various audiences informed. Our student receptionists help compile important information, news and events from Graduate School and the broader faculty into a *Newsflash* which is distributed (e-mailed) every other week. We have also continued developing our biannual student *Newsletter* with special focus areas in each issue. In 2015-2016 we focused on methods and methods developments at Graduate School, and on the role of education in questions relating to career prospects. You have probably received a hard copy in your pigeonhole, and we look forward to your feedback. Our next issue will focus on internationalisation, and any thoughts from you are of course welcome!

We have also developed various other guidebooks, including course handbooks and other guides focusing on complex processes that affect both teachers, admins and of course students. The aim is to present all information and material related to a specific project or course in a single document that is available to all involved parties. We hope this will improve communication and clarity both internally and externally.

You are finally holding (or reading online) our latest information outlet, the teacher newsletter. Would you like to contribute? Give us a shout!

We plan to return to our information strategy in a future issue of the teacher newsletter so stay tuned.

Graduate School's seminar on dissemination and publications

Graduate School arranges an annual seminar on dissemination and publication. This event was held on May 27th with a small group of graduating students discussing various aspects of why and how one can go about disseminating research. The seminar was led by Catia Gregoratti and Ted Svensson from the department of political science and Maja Carlson from the Social Sciences Library. Various less obvious form were discussed, such as publishing through newspapers, working papers, and chapters in edited volumes, as well as the more well-known peer-reviewed journal articles. The risks of scams and alternative ways to disseminate, such as through social media, were also discussed.

Career Development Day

Graduate School and Lumid organised a joint *Career Development Day* at the end of May, providing graduating students with some tools and tips regarding their next big step: to look for actual paid work. This year we had the pleasure of welcoming the energetic and experienced Sara Sterner who works as a consultant for a recruitment agency. We also invited representative from UNDP in Copenhagen to shed some light on the greater UN apparatus, an overwhelming

but much sought-after career option for many of our students. One session included Graduate School and Lumid alumni who shared with the students their journeys since graduating, offering tips and networking possibilities. Last but not least, we organised a workshop on soft skills, what they are, how to identify and work with them. The day was wrapped up with a joint faculty career panel with various representatives from different local NGOs.

Graduation Ceremony

Another successful Graduation Ceremony for master's programmes at the Faculty was organised by Graduate School staff on June 8. This year there were 16 participating programmes. Our commencement speaker was Professor Ian Manners from the Department of Political Sciences at Copenhagen University, who gave an inspiring talk about the role of social scientists playing a crucial role in a future we are yet to know.



The graduands and programme directors have entered the University *Aula* and are about to be seated

The year ahead

This upcoming year will be spent developing further many of the aforementioned activities and initiatives. We also have some other ideas in the pipeline that we hope to be able to explore and realise. This is a selection of upcoming things.

Cooperation with the Master's Programme in Disaster Risk Management

We love the idea of opening more links to other faculties and when the good people over at the Faculty of Engineering contacted us about a potential collaboration, we were all ears.

As a result, our students will now have the opportunity to apply for a limited number of spaces in two courses related to disaster risk management offered as part of the master's programme in *disaster risk management*. The two 7.5 credit courses (*Societal Resilience*, and *Foundations for risk assessment and management*) clearly have implications for social scientists (and vice versa!). In exchange, we are allowing some of their students to take our elective courses *Migration and Development and Gender, Development and Post-Colonialism*, provided they meet the eligibility requirements. "Thesis preparation course"

Methods

As you will see later in this newsletter, we are hard at work upgrading our methods offerings. Read on for details!

Structural changes

We aim to take a long look at the programme fundamentals, and how we organise the two years of study. Can we improve the way we link "side-"seminars and activities to the core structure? Can we get students psychologically to "commit" to thesis work long before the thesis course starts? We think we can, but let's get back to you as our plans solidify.



4

We are working to refine and improve our methods offerings as well as restructure how methods are built into our overall curriculum. Bigger changes are coming in 2017-18!

A word from our Methods Director



Chris Swader
Methods Director at
Graduate School

Paying Attention to Methods

I would never argue that methods are more important than theory. Social theory is the language that we use to communicate our explanations and understandings of the social world, yet our methodology and methods have a major role in affecting whether or not others, the public and our peers, are inclined to believe these scientific claims. It is no surprise then that Graduate School master programs devote 50% of their first year time to teaching methods.

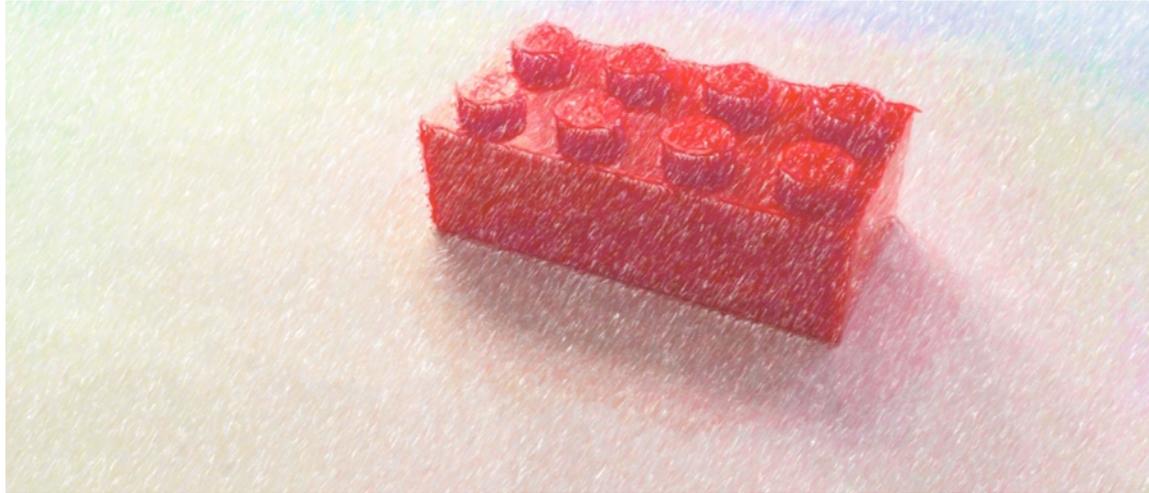
My role as the Methods Director is to coordinate the methods curriculum of Graduate School. My focus is to oversee all Graduate School methods courses in terms of short-term quality management and instructor support but also in terms of long-term development of the curriculum. This is no easy task, considering the school serves multiple Graduate School programs, the many departments of the social sciences faculty, other degree programs, and visiting students from abroad. My own background in interdisciplinary, international, and mixed- and multi-method social sciences has convinced me that the only way to succeed in this diversity is to be undogmatic when it comes to disciplinary borders and methods approaches.

While methods and methodologies are multiple, a common feature of these across the social sciences is that they need ‘to fit,’ to be justified and integrated in relation to specific research questions and designs. This also implies that research questions should not be driven merely by methods path dependencies. In light of this, we want to provide the opportunity to all students to appreciate how a variety of conceptions of science can be used creatively and result in different designs. We also want to provide students with a basic background in both qualitative and quantitative methods so that they can understand and use these different options. Our goal is to offer a wide range of excellent methods courses for students at different levels of mastery.

The following section lays out some of the changes that we are planning in order to achieve these goals. Some of them are simple: introducing new courses. Others are more strategic and long-term: altering the curriculum, sequence of courses, and focus of methods training.

Chris Swader,

Director of Studies, Graduate School



5

What we are working on – methods courses



For the last year or so, we have been working on upgrading our methods offerings – though “our” is a bit of a misnomer: we collaborate both with individual departments and our friends who organise the PhD candidate side of the student divide. We believe that if we can organise courses that attract a variety of Masters’ and PhD-level students, that will clearly bring a lot of benefits. Here we offer a peek at our current courses and the thinking behind them. In the next section we present a set of rougher ideas, some of which may eventually make it into the pipeline.

First: our existing courses

The wide-spectrum sweep: SIMM41 – Methods for Research in the Social Sciences

The three Graduate School programmes (like most other ones) accept students whose knowledge of social science methods vary a great deal. SIMM41 is intended to at least get them all on the same page.

Helmed by course coordinator Rebecca Selberg from the department of Gender Studies, the course introduces different approaches in the Social Sciences, and also forces students to think about how a research project (based on a set of predefined themes) is planned and executed. This is a sneaky way to get students into a thesis-ish mode of thinking at a very early stage, so that mistakes and misunderstandings can be prodded now rather than when the thesis process proper is underway.

We also try to link introductory themes in this course to later in-depth courses, so the students are made aware how that theme can be explored later. For example, SIMM41 students will, in some cases for the first time, acquaint themselves with quantitative methods. They will at that point also be informed about the two quant methods courses that are available in the Spring to get an early heads-up what to expect. We similarly introduce theory of science which will return with a vengeance in the spring.

The course has been designed to be easily expandable (we expect about 120 students this autumn), and this term we welcome students from our sister-programme at the Sociology of Law Department, the brand new *Master’s Programme in Sociology of Law*, for whom this course will also be made mandatory.

Second term elective courses

In the second half of the second term we offer a set of different methods courses for students to choose from. These include *Fieldwork* (coordinated by Helle Rydström from the Department of Gender Studies); *Methods for Text and Discourse Analysis* (coordinated by Marta Kolankiewicz from the Department of Gender Studies); *Evaluation Research – Theories and Methods* (coordinated by Johanna Alkan Olsson from the Centre for Environmental and Climate Research); and

Participatory methods of change and development (coordinated by Hans-Edvard Roos from the Department of Sociology). These are all tried, tested and well-liked courses that attract students not only from our own three programmes but from a range of other ones too.

2016: Two new quant courses

The most recent additions are two different but related quantitative methods courses: one (*Quantitative Methods*) aimed at more or less complete quant newbies, the other (*Quantitative Methods: Multivariate Analysis*) for students with some previous experience of quant.



Both courses are coordinated by the same teacher (Mimmi Barmark from the Department of Sociology) to ensure well organised and thought-through progression between the two courses.

We expected that PhD candidates would be interested in the more advanced course, and thus designed a complementary PhD course syllabus (this helps streamline the application process, as it is then considered a “normal” postgraduate course) from the start.

As it turned out, there was an even greater interest in the introduction course, and even though we did not actively market it we got a lot of applications, including some from PhD candidates from other Swedish universities. Because it is so clearly an introductory course we have not turned it into a fully fledged PhD level course with its own syllabus, but given the evident interest we will continue to offer PhD candidates the opportunity to participate – with the proviso that their respective directors of study and/or supervisors must allow it.

In the pipeline

2017: Digital media research

Last autumn we were approached by the Department of Media and Communication. They asked us if we would like to collaborate and organise a

new methods course that would be mandatory for their students, and open to students from other disciplines. From our point of view this is almost a poster example of how we wish to collaborate: we add to the opportunities of our own students, while making interesting new courses more viable. As a pleasant bonus we get to initiate very close cooperation with other units at the faculty. We are thus happy to team up with course coordinator Annette Hill, Director of Study Fredrik Schoug, and the group of digital media research teachers. The course will first be offered in the second half of the spring term 2017.

2018 (tentative): Qualitative coding and analysis (computer aided)

Many of you will have heard words like “Atlas.ti” or “NVivo” bandied about and may even know that these are programs designed to aid analyses of qualitative material. As far as we can tell, however, computer-aided qualitative research methods have never been taught at the faculty. Encouraged by the Dean and her team, and working closely with Christofer Edling in his vice-Dean capacity as head of the PhD Education Council, we are currently working eventually to set up a Masters/PhD level course with this focus.

We will first organise a staff workshop in March 2017 in order to ensure that we have solid teaching capacity in place (and at the same time spread, more generally, knowledge about this methodological approach). The aim is to open a 7.5 credit course for students in the first half of 2018. You will soon be getting information about the workshop and related plans. Feel free to contact Chris Swader to express your interest in taking part.



2018: Updating our programme structure

The three Graduate School programmes have so far had a second term that looked like this:



Theory of science has been an obligatory 7.5 credit for all Graduate School students (and open to some outside punters too). This has meant that all our elective methods courses had to share the final slot of the term, making it impossible for students to explore more than one methods track that term, and making it hard for us to plan for progression between courses (such as between *Quantitative Methods* and *Quantitative Methods: Multivariate Analysis*). We have also found it a bit awkward to offer a 15 credit methods course in term 1 *before* students have encountered any theory of science. Moreover, theory of science offered after the methods course makes it difficult for students to connect it to their research design process.

We have now started work to tweak the structure of our programmes to allow two consecutive methods elective slots:



This means that, beginning in the 2017-18 academic year, students will have more freedom to mix and match methods courses (and some other offerings too) in the second half of the term. Because theory of science remains important, we will introduce it in condensed form in the big methods course in the first term and turn the existing theory of science into a regular elective course, that will be on offer in one of the two electives slots.

Thinking about methods course renewal at Graduate School

Refreshing course offerings is a natural part of what Graduate School must do to stay relevant and attractive of course, but it demands careful consideration, and a *lot* of input from teachers/researchers and others. There is a definite risk of becoming parochial, and parochialism has real and tangible costs.

We are lucky in that our Methods Director Chris Swader has also been drafted in to gather and analyse methods-related information across the faculty. He thus gets to hear about many of the great methods-related initiatives which should minimise redundancy and increase collaboration opportunities. That is an important point: we are emphatically not in the empire-building business, but want to cooperate much more than we already do with the various departments.

Among other things, Chris has conducted a PhD candidate survey to find out more about their perception of methods teaching, and what might possibly be added to improve their skill sets further. He will be reporting some central findings shortly, and we can guarantee an interesting read.

Chris will catch many but not all of the interesting methods projects that you are working on. Please help him, and us, keep up to speed! Chris runs the *Methods and Methodologies, Lund University, Faculty of Social Sciences* mail list. Check it out here:

<http://tinyurl.com/methodsnews>

It is a great way to share ideas and keep abreast of what is going on in this field at our faculty (and often beyond).

Another worry is that we might renew our offerings in exhausting bursts followed by long periods of inactivity and recuperation. Our aim (whether we succeed is a completely different matter) is to continually but at a steady, comfortable pace review our courses, examine what might be needed in the future and then replenish our planning pipeline accordingly. The process from

embryonic idea to course can, at a pinch, be rushed through in slightly more than a year, but we generally prefer a more languorous tempo.

One thing we need to succeed is a rich set of potential ideas to work with, prioritise and *maybe* turn into more concrete and pipeline-ready items. We talk with a lot of interested parties, and in the next section you will find some of the things we have been discussing. But we need more! Join in! What should we be offering to Master and PhD level students? What sort of staff skills do we need to nurture? How can we make methods-related issues make it through the white noise of everything else we need to do and talk about as teachers and researchers? Keep us posted!

Finally (as might have been gleaned already), we expressly want to make sure we always consider collaboration with the PhD candidate side of things. This is made easier by the fact that Shoshana Iten at Graduate School is also helping with under-the-hood administration of Faculty PhD courses and thus savvy to what is going on. At least for now, we admit relatively few doctoral candidates and this obviously puts some strain on the provision of courses as these tend to become economically viable only when you have a certain number of students attending. As a comparison, a total of seven faculty-level PhD courses attracted 125 students in 2012, while six courses attracted 81 students last year. More specialised courses – including some of the options we will discuss in the next section of this newsletter – may never be realisable unless we draw on both pools of students.



6

What we talk about when we talk about methods

Special focus:
Methods

*What to feed into the methods planning pipeline? What do students need? What sort of skills do newly minted PhD need? What do **we** need as senior and junior faculty in our roles as researchers and teachers? Here are some embryonic ideas.*

Crude and pungent prototypes

Reviewing *Don Quixote*, Martin Amis once wrote that it was like staring into the primal soup of fiction “steaming, burping, fizzing with potential life, thick with crude and pungent prototypes”

When we decide to feed stuff into the Graduate School planning pipeline, it has been kicked, prodded, bent, glossed, buffed and burnished to the point where the original idea that we plucked from the burbling pool is scarcely recognisable (arguably a very good thing). But the pool with its “crude and pungent prototypes” (not *that* pungent either) is vital – that’s where it all starts.

So let’s have a look at some of the ideas that have been bouncing around in our methods discussions, remembering that that’s what they are at this point: rough ideas; prototypes; things to engender discussion. If one or two of these items get you thinking we are halfway home; then we just need to hear more about those thoughts.

Some of the presented ideas might turn out to represent small niches that would require collaboration well beyond the faculty to turn into viable courses; others might make for good sub-components to be slotted into existing ones. Some will need a lot of tender love and care to evolve from their embryonic state; some will never evolve into anything at all. That’s fine. We feel that it is essential that we put even such unpolished ideas on the table for all to see and ponder.

So: the following little list is thus by no means exhaustive and included items are not (yet) in the process of being turned into something more concrete. They are points of interest, things we would like to look at more carefully – and, we repeat, get feedback on.

R

SPSS, *Stata* and *SAS* have been quantitative analysis bulwarks for a long time. *R* is a relatively new kid on the block, but it is seeing fantastic adoption rates, in part surely because it is open source and so free. It is much more flexible than the mentioned program suites as it is, in its basic form, a programming *language* rather than a product. This language is specifically tailored to statistical computing and graphics, and is backed by a veritable army of statisticians (professionals as well as



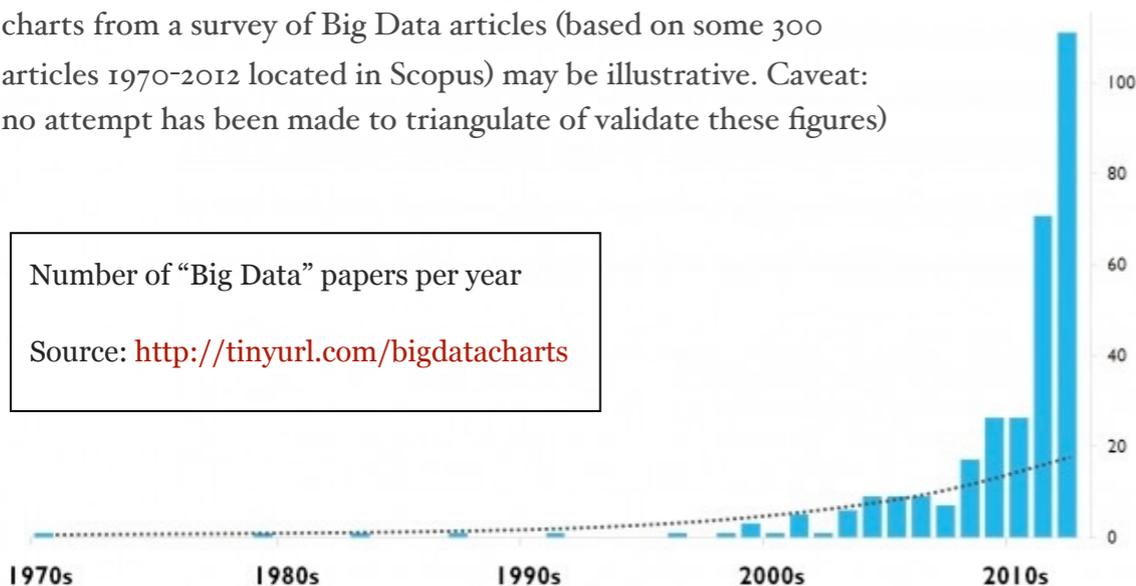
amateurs) who produce, freely share and improve programs to take on specific statistical challenges (this allows R to mimic many functions in existing commercial software packages). The Department of Psychology has officially sanctioned it as a preferred tool within its master-degree training, and a number of individual researchers from other departments around the faculty are proficient users. It should thus be relatively easy at least to organise seminars where *R* can be demonstrated and discussed.

Big Data Methods



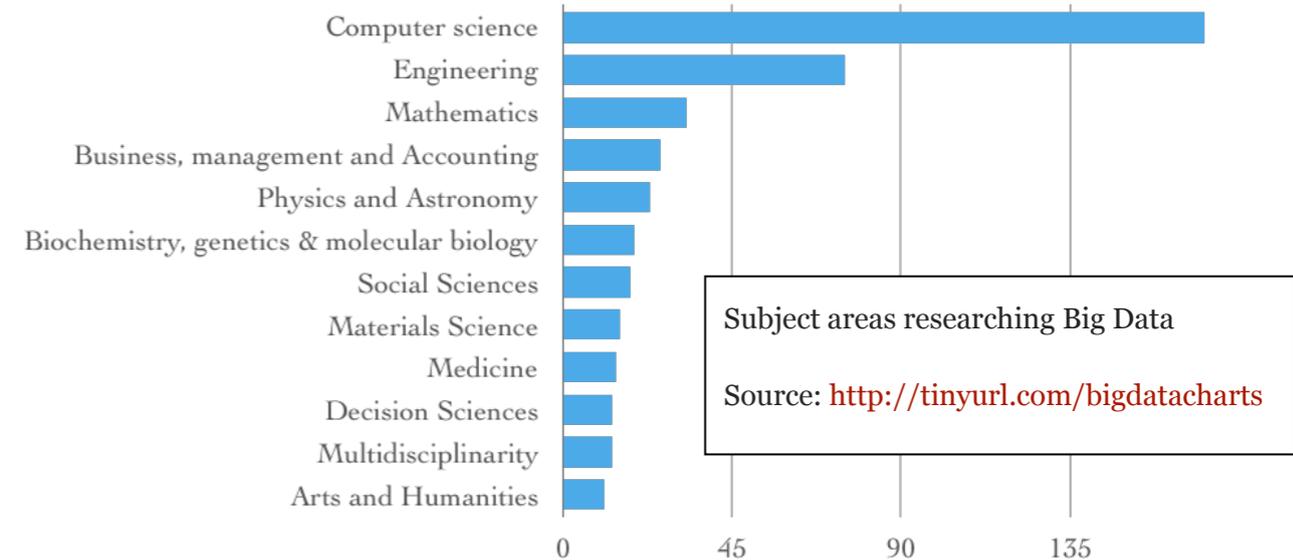
SPSS, SAS, Stata and similar programs are quant analysis mainstays, but there comes a point when even they choke on the sheer humongousness of the data sets they are asked to handle. That's where a different class of programs and methodologies, usually referred to simply as *Big Data*, comes into play. *Hadoop* is the best known (open source) product, but *Rapidminer*, *Cloudera* (basically Hadoop with some extra bells and whistles attached) and *MongoDB* are just some of the big names in this rapidly growing field. To manipulate such huge data sets would seem of interest to the social scientist of tomorrow (and maybe today too!), and so to gain an overarching understanding of what they can offer, and how Big Data can be connected to our existing models and modes of research would seem essential.

Predictive capacity is at the heart of Big Data analysis, and from that perspective too it seems odd that the field is not populated by more social scientists. Two charts from a survey of Big Data articles (based on some 300 articles 1970-2012 located in Scopus) may be illustrative. Caveat: no attempt has been made to triangulate or validate these figures)



Number of "Big Data" papers per year

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/bigdatacharts>



Subject areas researching Big Data

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/bigdatacharts>

Infographics

Presentation of data can be done effectively and... less effectively. "Infographics" is a bit of a vague term, as it encompasses everything from how a good chart might be designed to modern ways of presenting complex results in a clean and appealing way.

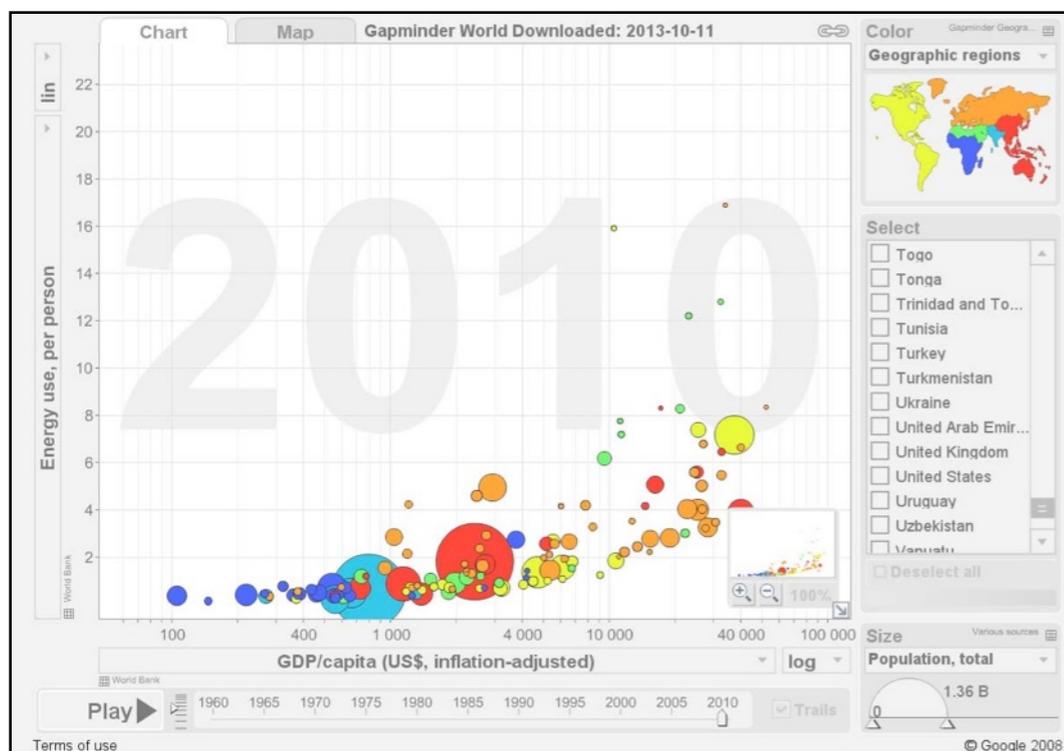
Many of you will have seen the program *Trendalyzer* in action without realising it – it was developed by Hans Rosling's *Gapminder Foundation* and is what Rosling normally uses when dynamically presenting multidimensional data. The software was later bought by Google and a version of it is available as part of the *Google Visualizations API*.

We actually have a world-class company in this realm right on our doorstep. Qlik is based in Lund, and made headlines a few months ago when it was sold for a cool SEK 25 bn. Their flagship product is *Qlik Sense Desktop* and like *Trendalyzer* (now called *Gapminder World*) it is intended to aid visualisation of complex data.



Both *Qlik Sense Desktop* and *Trendalyzer* are free to explore and use, and it might be possible to collaborate with the people over at Qlik given the favourable logistics. Lund university's own *MediaTryck* unit has expressed an interest in this field, as they see it as a nice complement to what they are already doing. Could we partner up with them somehow?

Infographics is not limited to quant visualisation – to present qualitative data effectively is arguably even harder. In both cases (quant and qual) we think that both LU researchers and students could benefit from more input from infographics experts.



Screenshot of *Gapminder World* (Google's rebranded *Trendalyzer*) in action

Quant instead of quaint qual?

The text so far might give the impression that we somehow favour quantitative methods and want to improve/evolve only aspects connected with quant. Far from it! We want well-rounded offerings, and developing/evolving qualitative methods is just as important. In fact, one of the first things we dug into when we set about our renewal work was the computer-aided qualitative research strand, where programs such as NVivo and Atlas.ti (and a host of others) can be used to

enhance qualitative methods. As you saw in the previous section, this idea has already made it to the actual pipeline, and we are on track to present connected workshops and other activities relatively soon. Stay tuned for more information about that! Another example is the “netnography” idea that will be presented below. But we would love to learn more about your ideas about qualitative methods, and how we can evolve related matters.

Ethics

We have spent some time thinking about how to organise the inclusion of *ethics* in our various methods courses. In many cases course teachers do bring up these tricky questions in the context of their presented methods perspective, but it might possibly be complemented with recurring (mandatory?) seminars and/or an actual strategy to have a steady hum of ethics pervade everything we teach our students throughout the programmes. One idea might be to produce an informal “meta syllabus” of learning outcomes that we then make sure are being somehow addressed in the various methods courses. What might such a meta-set of learning outcomes include? We need your insights.

Netnography

Our friends over at Media and communication have an idea that the previously mentioned *Digital Media Research* course (launching in 2017) might be complemented with a more advanced course where the focus would be ethnographic studies of web-based material (such as might be available in social media). Given the shift of communication and social interaction to the digital domain, we find the concept highly alluring, and think it would appeal to a wide group of students.

A final tip: did you know?

There is an open-source (and so free) alternative to SPSS called PSPP. Unless you are into some *really* advanced stuff, PSPP does everything its commercial competitor can do. Syntax and data files are compatible with those of SPSS, so you can try it out on your own existing projects with a minimum of fuss.

<https://www.gnu.org/software/pspp/>





Report of Key Results PhD Candidate Survey

(conducted December 2015 to February 2016)

7

Report of Key Results
PhD Candidate Survey



Chris Swader
Methods Director at
Graduate School

This section is not strictly speaking of Graduate School origin, even though it was authored by our Methods Director Chris Swader. Chris has been drafted in by the faculty to examine a range of things connected with methods teaching inside and outside of the faculty.

This report about how our PhD candidates view methods-related issues is one result of his endeavours. As it both connects to the thematic core of this newsletter, and has affected Graduate School thinking about methods more generally, we thought it a good way to round off this issue. The report was disseminated to some parties by means of mail in late August.

Introduction

This survey aimed to use the knowledge of our faculty's PhD candidates in order to get a better overview of a range of methods-related issues in the faculty. In this way, we draw on their knowledge of the PhD-specific curriculum in the faculty but also their previous methods experiences in Lund (which gives us information on BA & MA programs in Lund and comparative information from abroad).

Indeed these results are a snapshot that form one part of a more complex picture. Nonetheless, they are presented as useful points for common discussion, and the recommendations I make are intended to be wide enough to be considered as potentially relevant at various organizational units of the faculty.

Summary

- Based on this survey, the overall quantitative and qualitative assessment of our faculty-provided PhD curriculum is below "satisfactory." Candidates with prior degrees from abroad and who are the most advanced in their PhD studies rate us most negatively.
- The most praised methods options for our candidates are not our standard courses. Rather they are reading course options and external methods schools.
- Many of our PhD-level courses are interdisciplinary. However, this appears to neither substantially impact learning nor the candidates' evaluations of our PhD curriculum.
- Joint MA-PhD courses, in themselves, do not seem to contribute to any significant positive or negative impact on overall PhD level education. Rather, it is the difficulty level of the course compared to the competence level of the individual student in that particular method which matters. In other words, candidates with basic starting knowledge ask for access to basic-level courses, and advanced candidates want access to advanced courses.
- Careful selection of PhD-level instructors as well as ensuring adequate depth (immersion) and various appropriate starting points for PhD candidates are highlighted.
- There appears to be a Lund-specific production of "pure qual" candidates. Compared to candidates who received prior degrees from outside of Lund, our qualitative Lund candidates have had an equal immersion to qualitative methods, but in a way that neglects quantitative methods, overall research design, and qualitative analysis

software. If this background carries this trajectory through also to the PhD level, it is plausible that our “pure qual” researchers are less prepared for the job market than their international qualitatively focused counterparts.

- There is a big knowledge gap regarding qualitative analysis software. The use of such software is by now mainstream within qualitative research communities in other parts of the world. Although our faculty has a majority of qualitative researchers, our PhD candidates have almost no background or exposure to such software in Lund.
- We seem to lack advanced courses and substantive training in research design.
- These results should not be treated merely as a collective negative discourse about PhD courses in the faculty. Negative evaluations presented here are systematically linked to candidates’ claims about learning/support outcomes relevant to their dissertations, are patterned according to candidates’ methodological backgrounds, arise in concrete and contextual specificity in qualitative accounts in a way that matches quantitative findings, and can be seen also when comparing Lund to programs abroad (for instance by comparing candidates who have earned degrees abroad and those who have not).

Recommendations

- Advanced courses for MAs and PhDs on qualitative data analysis (using software) could be developed.
- Research design might be explicitly integrated in the MA and PhD curricula. At best, it is now covered to some degree within 15 ECTS block methods courses at the master level and again touched upon by advisors during the thesis-writing phase. Other solutions could be sought, such as integrating research design more closely with theory of science precursors or opening up additional methods-devoted ECTS.
- Continued ‘multiple-method’ focus. Students at all levels should be exposed to and be provided with progressions for appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods. Theory of science should be employed in a way that encourages and supports multiple and mixed methods understandings rather than deterministic and closed ‘single path’ solutions, whether quantitative or qualitative.
- These issues should be continued to be studied formally and informally within the faculty. Improvement of the methods curriculum requires a systematic, ongoing approach that is interdisciplinary, connecting different levels of study, and involving comparative (Sweden and international) dimensions. Moreover, continued

engagement by the faculty provides a support system and means of cooperation for various departments.

As follow-ups to this survey, I would recommend (A) conducting a range of qualitative interviews with Lund PhD candidates as well as (B) comparing the methods curricula in targeted Swedish and international universities with our faculty.

Survey Information

This survey aimed to use the knowledge of our faculty’s PhD candidates in order to get a better overview of a range of methods-related issues in the faculty. In this way, we draw on their knowledge of the PhD-specific curriculum in the faculty but also their previous methods experiences in Lund (which gives us information on BA & MA programs in Lund and comparative information from abroad).

Indeed these results are a snapshot that form one part of a more complex picture. Nonetheless, they are presented as useful points for common discussion, and the recommendations I make are intended to be wide enough to be considered as potentially relevant at various organizational units of the faculty.

PhD Candidate Backgrounds

PhD candidates from every department in the faculty answered the survey, although some were underrepresented because their PhD candidates did not, or were unable to, respond to the survey (for instance, only a few candidates from psychology and human ecology were involved). I would target these underrepresented groups especially during the follow-up qualitative interviews. Within this report, I will not break down responses according to departments because (a) the numbers are too small within individual departments to be meaningful unless we would get a nearly 100% response rate, and (b) it is proper to preserve the anonymity of the respondents. As a result, the results should be interpreted as approximating the general faculty as a whole, except when broken down into other meaningful categories (such as methods background, previous degrees abroad, etc.).

Of our sample, 76 PhD candidates, only 31% received their first degree (BA equivalent) from Lund, while 46% received their master degree from Lund (and stayed). Almost half are about halfway through their PhD process, only 15% are finished or almost finished, and around 35% are at the beginning stages of their PhD.

One of the important ways I will present results in this report is through the methods background of the respondents. We learn about this through the question “which of the following methods skills have been relevant so far to your career?” This question is followed by a list:

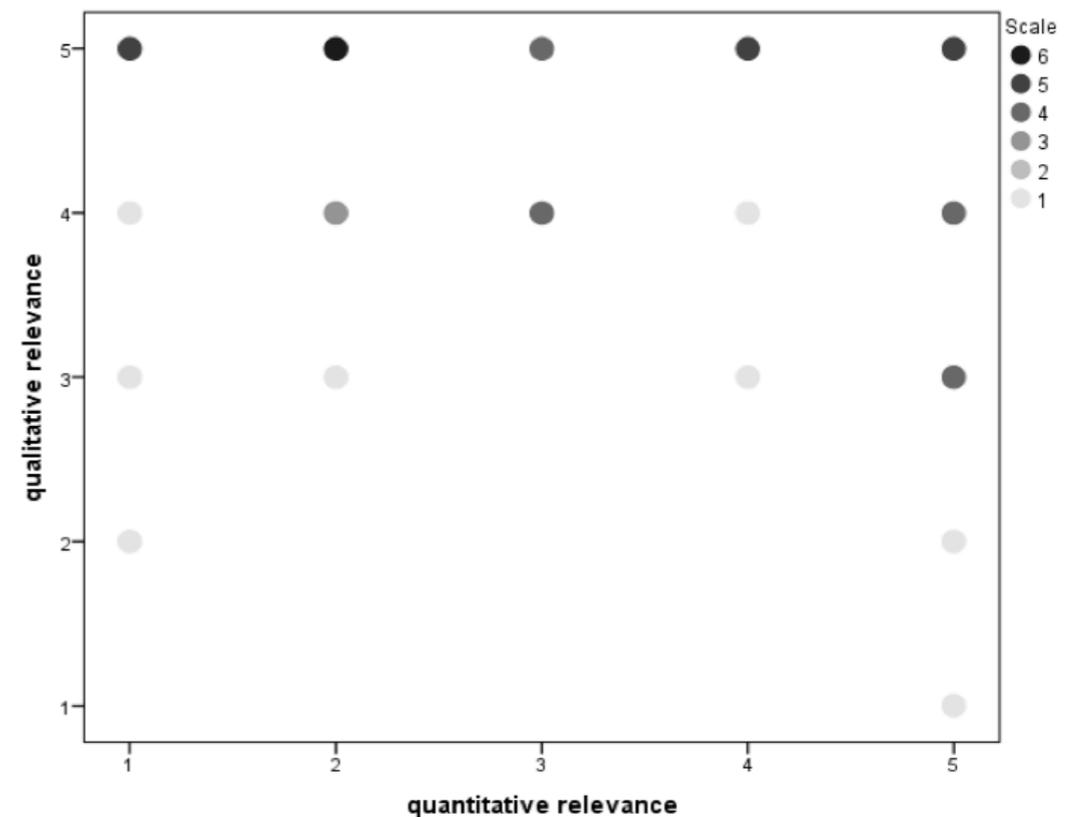
1. Research design/methodology: Nearly 40% of respondents said this has been quite important to them. Only 11% said “not so important”, and none said that this has been irrelevant. However, many were unable to, or chose not to, answer the question.
2. Theory/philosophy of science: Most respondents said this was “relevant”, followed by “very relevant” and “neither relevant nor irrelevant”. About 9% did not have a strong theory of science background.
3. Qualitative methods: nearly 80% have said that qualitative methods have been very important to their development so far. Only 5% of our sample do not seem to have a basic qualitative background.
4. Qualitative analysis software: In striking contrast to the question on qualitative methods, our respondents have had very little experience with qualitative analysis *software* (such as Nvivo, AtlasTI, MaxQDA). Of those answering, 65% say such software has not been relevant so far in their careers, compared to about 6.5% saying it has been relevant. Moreover, this question has almost twice the rate of missing, “don’t know” answers as the other questions in this category, with the majority of respondents being unable to answer the question. *There is a clear need here to provide our primarily qualitatively oriented PhD candidates with knowledge of the capabilities of qualitative analysis software packages to facilitate their coding and analysis, where relevant.*
5. Quantitative methods: Of the sample, 30% say that quantitative methods have been relevant so far in their careers, with about 25% saying irrelevant. *Notably, the amount of candidates with no experience in quant is much greater than those with no experience in qual.*
6. Quantitative analysis software: Roughly corresponding to the above, about 20% have found quant analysis software to be relevant in their careers, while 30% report it as irrelevant.

Concerning the above methods backgrounds, our PhD candidates with BA or MA degrees from abroad tend to have stronger quantitative, quant software, and qual software backgrounds. Moreover, qualitative methods backgrounds are equal between those who received prior degrees abroad and those who were solely in Lund. In terms of research design/methodology and theory of science, prior degrees from abroad appear to make little difference.

The survey also tells us of the multiple-methods backgrounds of the respondents. A scatterplot shows us where the candidates fall when we take quant and qual backgrounds simultaneously into account (Figure 1). In this figure, the shading represents the number

of individuals that fit into that particular category. One finding stands out in this figure: almost all of our quant-background candidates also have a background in qualitative methods (and are therefore more likely to be open to mixed-methods approaches or approaches from other methodological schools). This is not true of the qualitative-background candidates, where there is a split; more than half of them have very little quantitative methods background, and half of them have a multiple methods background. Further analysis shows that the multiple methods respondents have spent more time abroad; the more time spent abroad for BA or MA degrees, the more likelihood the candidates have a multiple methods background. Likewise, those who have only studied in Lund are more likely to fall into the “pure qualitative” category.

Figure 1. Mixed Methods Backgrounds. Quantitative and Qualitative Experience



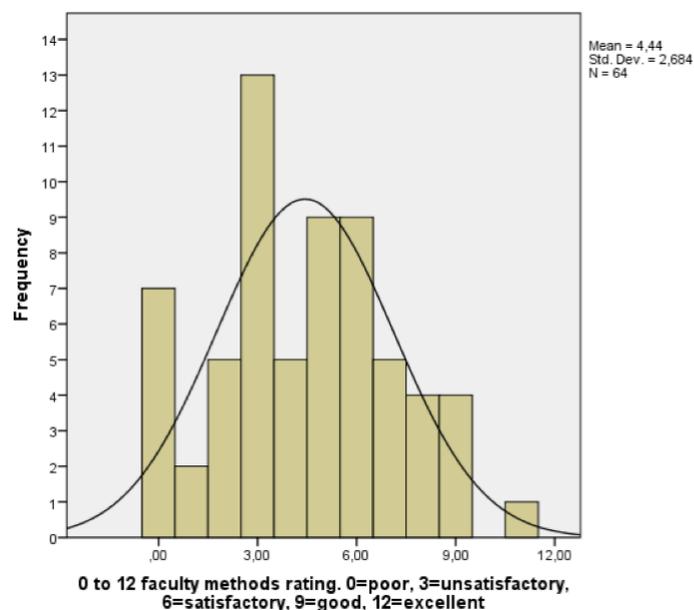
This broader multiple methods exposure is relevant for other types of methods exposure. For instance, the “pure quant” respondents have a significantly higher exposure to research design, compared to the “pure qual” group. Also, as we would expect, the “pure quant” group has vastly more knowledge of quant software. *However, the same is not true for the “pure qual” group, which has the same (poor) knowledge of qualitative analysis software as the “pure quant” group!*

There appears to be a Lund-specific production of “pure qual” candidates. Compared to candidates who received prior degrees from outside of Lund, our qualitative Lund candidates have had an equal immersion to qualitative methods, but in a way that neglects quantitative methods, overall research design, and qualitative analysis software. If this background carries this trajectory through also to the PhD level, it is plausible that our “pure qual” researchers are less prepared for the job market than their international counterparts.

PhD Candidate Assessment of the Faculty’s Methods Curriculum

The questionnaire had three questions addressing the respondents’ assessment of their Faculty-provided methods curriculum: (1) an overall rating, (2) a rating based on how the curriculum helped them prepare the dissertation specifically, (3) a rating based on how the curriculum prepared them more broadly for their careers, not linked to the specific dissertation. To summarize, I created one overall additive index from 0 to 12, where zero indicates “poor” on all three dimensions and 12 indicates “excellent” (Figure 2). The distribution is skewed, ‘leaning’ to the left, more negative, assessment. The average rating is 4.4, which is midway between “unsatisfactory” and “satisfactory”.

Figure 2. Overall Rating of Faculty-Provided PhD Curriculum (6="satisfactory")



Within our sample, the rating of the curriculum becomes lower with more previous degrees from abroad, suggesting disappointment with our curriculum especially in comparison with what candidates have received elsewhere. The curriculum rating is also lower among those who are further ahead in their PhD trajectory, possibly representing more experience with the methods curriculum and its disadvantages; an alternative interpretation is that the methods courses may have recently improved, so that new PhD candidates have better impressions.

It is difficult to say definitively from this survey whether courses have changed over time, due to the size of the sample and that it does not track individual courses, but the limited data suggests that courses may have declined in quality rapidly from 2011 to 2013 and improved thereafter from 2014 to 2015. However, this possibility could be checked, for instance, by referring to histories of student evaluations of individual PhD level courses.

Interdisciplinarity

The survey also inquires about how interdisciplinarity of methods course affects learning outcomes. 65% of PhD candidates in our sample took interdisciplinary courses as part of their PhD training. Of those answering, around 25% said that this interdisciplinarity somewhat negatively affected their learning outcomes, whereas around half saw no strong effect in either direction, and about 25% found it to be positive. Those with a qualitative methods backgrounds tend to be much more critical of interdisciplinary courses, with the “pure qual” category being most critical of interdisciplinarity within methods courses. Interdisciplinarity tends to work better with quant courses, according to the survey data. Those with more Lund exposure tend to rate this interdisciplinarity aspect better than those who have studied abroad. *However, interdisciplinarity assessments do not appear to affect overall PhD curriculum assessments. This, coupled with the fact that the mean rating of this indicator is “satisfactory”, suggests that the interdisciplinarity of PhD level courses is not a serious concern.*

Combined, Multi-level, MA-PhD courses

The survey also asked about the joint, MA-PhD multi-level, aspect of PhD courses; only 28% of our sample has taken such courses in our faculty. Of these, the average rating is about 3, “satisfactory”, in terms of how this aspect affected learning. More senior PhD candidates tend to be more critical of this aspect. Non-Lund former educational experiences tend to make candidates more positive about MA-PhD mixing. However, there is no relationship between evaluation of multi-level study experiences and overall assessment of the PhD curriculum. *Joint MA-PhD courses, in themselves, do not seem to contribute to any significant positive or negative impact on overall PhD level education. As qualitative information indicates, however, it is rather the importance of the difficulty level of the course compared to the competence level of the individual student in that particular method, which matters for learning.*

Qualitative Findings from Survey

The survey included quite a few opportunities for candidates to leave in-depth qualitative comments on various aspects of the methods curriculum. To summarize these:

- The overall assessment of the faculty-provided methods curriculum is quite bad. There are far more negative comments than positive ones, with some candidates emphasizing that the courses had been remarkably bad.
- PhD-level theory of sciences courses were especially criticized (possibly referring more to courses some years back).
- Qualitative Methods: there are not enough high-level courses that go into depth in terms of coding and analysis, and there are no courses covering use of software. Also, a few candidates have no qualitative background, and there are no appropriate courses for them to take.
- Quantitative Methods: too few courses overall, neither enough advanced nor basic courses.
- Selection of instructors for these is emphasized (teaching is at the appropriate level, motivation and preparation).

- Gap: There appear to be no courses at all on research design
- ‘Reading courses’: candidates appeared content with self-designed reading courses on specialized topics
- External training: candidates were content with opportunities (when available) to attend external methods schools and training events
- Suggestion: “supervisor seminars” with multiple candidates of the same supervisor
- Generally: whatever the course is doing should be done ‘in-depth’, not just superficially