

**Program Advisory**

**End Report**

**Examination & Tutoring**

2012-2013 Trimester 3



RSM  
**Student  
Representation**

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## Introduction

This Trimester, among others, it is studied whether the workshops are relevant, the skills of tutors sufficient enough, participation grades etc. This trimester, the workshops in general are the main focus of Examination and tutoring committee. We have chosen this topic for this trimester because we already studied two times an 'examination' topic. Students were approached individually and were asked to comment on workshops in general and for course specific workshops (i.e. LSG, Statistics, Micro and Academic writing). In response, the elaborative opinions and results presented below have been gathered.

With kind regards,

Committee members Examination & Tutoring  
Program Advisory

## Methodology

During this trimester, our Examination & Tutoring has gathered feedback in another specific way as the first and second trimester. All students have been approached personally which covered the qualitative part of this research. Besides this, students have been approached with surveys to cover the quantitative part of this research (see Appendix 1).

The Examination & Tutoring committee considered this to be an important change. The 7th trimester committee and the general committee already used this style of gaining feedback. After an internal discussion we, the whole committee, agreed with this change of gathering feedback.

Moreover, we used the feedback from the Focus Group event to evaluate our feedback. We gained some new feedback from this event. The Examination & Tutoring committee stands for the methodology of approaching and talking to many students to form a good overview on the opinions of the Examination & Tutoring topics.

## Subject 1: Specific Workshops BA and IBA

We studied workshops for BA and IBA separately this trimester. This is because of the different courses and the different kind of feedback we gathered. This trimester we studied LSG, Statistics, Mathematics, Workgroups of ABM (SMT), operations management and 'Marktcontext'. These aren't all the courses with workshops. That's why the examination & tutoring committee will look into the other courses next year to have a whole overview for all the courses regarding the workshops.

For IBA, we chose to look into LSG, Microeconomics & Markets, Academic writing, and operations management. During the focus group, we received some feedback about Financial Accounting. However, we didn't look into Financial Accounting this trimester. That's why; we forwarded this feedback to the representatives for FA. Next year, the committee will research the other courses, which this trimester aren't researched, as well.

### Subject 1A: Specific Workshops BA

#### Leadership, Sustainability and Governance

Overall, students find the LSG workshops to be rather informative. Topics that were discussed were considered to be current and interesting. The actual application and method of implementation of the workshops is somewhat controversial among the students. The majority of the workshops were organized in the G-building, which was viewed as acceptable by most students. Negative points, however, lied with the tutor feedback. Often, it was unknown to the students how the final grades given by the teaching assistants were achieved.

It seems that currently, teaching assistants grade the contribution of students by means of a 'tick-system'. The amount of 'ticks' that a student receives will determine his/her final grade. However, no feedback is provided regarding the performances of the students. This method of grading is a very subjective one and is therefore not optimal.

**Solution (LSG):** A possible solution could be adopted by the teaching assistant. He or she could perhaps lay out a general division among students in order to indicate whether the students did a good job or not. Consequentially, students will have a clearer view of their performance during the workshop.

## Statistics

Not many remarks have been made concerning the workshops taught in the Statistics course. Students prefer the small workshop sizes (approximately 50 students) as this allows them to have more interaction with the student assistants. The possibility for more interaction also stimulates students to ask more questions in case there are any difficulties regarding the learning material. This is often one faced constraint when it comes to workshops of bigger sizes.

The applied bonus system motivates students to attend the workshops and show participation during class. It is observed that students assign a strong preference to step-by-step solution discussions during class, as well as the post-workshop availability of the lecture slides on BlackBoard. The latter provides students with the possibility to have another closer look at the material that was discussed during the workshops.

**Solution (Statistics):** Not applicable

## Workgroups Business Mathematics

Students who have done the course for the second time have mentioned that the new method of the workgroups has improved significantly. Previously, the workgroups were held on a large basis in large classrooms by the professor. The students did not really have the chance to ask questions during the workgroups. Since the workgroups are now held in small classrooms of the T-building with a single tutor per 50 students, the workgroups have become more interactive. This is all very positive news.

However, the expertise and teaching skills turned out not be homogeneous among all tutors. Since many students argued that the teaching skills of the tutors were good and many students argued that tutors have a lack of teaching skills, there has something to be done. To recruit a group of tutors with great teaching skills, tutors could be tested on this skill during the interview. By asking the tutor to give a short presentation to explain a certain theoretical problem, the interviewer would get a good impression of his or her teaching skills. Expertise is just as important as the teaching skills, since tutors should have the ability to bring their expertise to the students.

**Solution (Mathematics):** Recruit more tutors with good technical skills and social skills. These skills can be tested during their interview.

## Workgroups SMT

The workgroups were held in order to help students to write their case. The workgroups were held in the PC rooms with mostly one tutor per classroom. Students have mentioned that during these workgroups, a lot of students were raising their hand to ask questions. This resulted in long waiting times to ask a question to the tutor. This problem could be solved if two or three tutors would be present during crowded workgroups. Nevertheless, it turned out that the tutors have much expertise and knowledge about both the course and the case. The tutors were therefore able to give useful answers and add a lot of value to the workgroups.

Next to those workgroups, the professor also discussed certain exercises during the lectures. We have not received sufficient feedback about these workgroups. Our plan is to do research for these workgroups next year.

**Solution (SMT Workgroups):** this is discussed by the representatives during their feedback session with the professor. The conclusion were, referring to this topic, that the professor will try to recruit more tutors next year or to work with more time-frames to create smaller workgroups for the students.

## Workgroups Operations Management

Most students complained about the size of the workgroup. The students think there is no good opportunity to ask your questions, because of the amount of people in the room. During the workgroups, the professor sometimes walks around the room. But because the students think there is not a possibility there questions will be answered, they do not even ask it. It is a good initiative to walk around the room, though one professor for approximately 400 students is not sufficient. Besides, someone who is sitting in the middle of a row, is not able to ask the professor or student assistant a question, as they could never reach to him.

**Solution (Operations Management):** If personal attention is necessary, the groups should be decreased in size. A possible solution is to appoint more student assistants and to divide the group.

### **Workgroups Marktcontext**

The critics on the Marktcontext workgroups are comparable with the critics on the Primaire Processen workgroups. However, in the Marktcontext workgroups, there is not a possibility of asking a question at all. These workgroups only take 45 minutes, where the exercises are being discussed in. There is one student assistant for approximately 100 students.

**Solution (Marktcontext):** A possible solution is to extend the duration to 90 minutes and to appoint roughly 3 or 4 student assistants per 100 students. In that way, the students are able to ask their questions.

## **Subject 1B: Specific Workshops IBA**

### **Leadership, Sustainability and Governance**

One of the courses in which opinions seem to be clearly expressed is "Leadership, Sustainability and Governance", or simply LSG. In respective course, 25% of the students' final grade is comprised of participation, i.e. the contribution that is made during (case) discussions. Attendance is mandatory for all students. Opinions among students vary from 'strong disliking' to 'acceptable procedure'. Starting off with the negative side, many students seem to find this method of grading to be unfair. The first negative point of discussion lies with the personality of students. In every group of students, a selection can be made based on, for example, outgoing and talkative students or those who are shy and somewhat introverted. Needless to say, those who are hesitant to speak out loud in a crowd are left in the shadows compared to those who do not mind expressing their opinion on every matter discussed. This distinction between students is an everlasting occurrence and cannot be solved in a simple fashion. The second point of discussion is related to the way of grading. Assigning grade values to students who share their contribution is a very subjective action. Suppose a student shares an opinion a handful of times, whereas another student speaks his mind whenever possible. Hypothetical grades assigned are 6.5 and 8, respectively. Taking quality and quantity of the contribution into consideration, can this way of grading be viewed as fair?

Referring to the positive sides of this participation/bonus system, valuable insights have been gained from one of the participants during the focus group. Respective participant was a LSG teaching assistant himself and shared his view on the applied system. Although agreeing with the reasons behind students' dissatisfaction, it had been stated that discussion skills are required in the teaching program of the (I)BA bachelor. As upcoming and future managers, students are required to learn how to think critically and express this in interactive case discussions. Among the other participants that were present, there was no disagreement regarding the necessity of this skill.

**Solution (LSG):** This matter was discussed thoroughly during the focus group. Despite the lack of a clear-cut solution, the E&T committee has come up with several solutions of its own. Firstly, it could be considered to reduce the weight of the participation grade (i.e. 15% of the final grade rather than 25%).

### **Microeconomics & Markets**

In Microeconomics & Markets, the bonus system is executed as followed: during the span of the course, four bonus experiments are conducted. Bonus values are credited based on the degree on how well the student performs in the experiment. For instance, when the topic discussed in class focuses on pricing, an experiment can be set up asking students to make as much profit as possible. In this experiment, students who manage to obtain high profits, get a chance of 'winning' a bonus. Attendance for the students is not mandatory, as the obtained bonus grade is simply an addition to your final grade (contrary to the previously-mentioned LSG system). Even though no active discussion took place regarding this course, one student expressed how the application of the taught material in the bonus systems was very appropriate and allows students to see how theories are exercised in daily (business) life.

**Solution (Microeconomics & Markets):** Not applicable

### **Academic writing**

The Academic writing course, almost solely based on workshops, is considered useful, especially by 2nd and 3rd year students that acknowledge the importance of referencing. The effectiveness of the AW workshops appears to depend on the specific tutor, as there was a lot of variation in terms of (dis)liking the course, especially between students with other tutors.

**Solution (Academic Writing):** Not applicable

## **Operations management**

Operations Management workshops are considered pretty useful, although this is mainly the opinion of the students that attended the workshops. Students that did not attend, mainly stated they did not need the explanation and not that they disliked the workshop for some reason. Students that did attend sometimes noticed that the time dedicated in class to making questions did not really contribute. They would rather have more teaching. Others however did not agree, as they did not make the questions beforehand. All in all this workshops is evaluate positively.

**Solutions (Operations Management):** Not applicable

## **Subject 2: Workshops in General**

### **Subject 2A: Participation Grades**

Concerning participation grades, the students' feelings are twofold. On the one hand they like them as they can earn good grades before the exam, resulting in less risk. On the other hand they dislike participation grades sometimes as a result of the way they are awarded. There are workshops in which grades are solely awarded by the tutor based on their (subjective) impression. This is often not regarded as fair. For example in the LSG workshops, where students feel not everyone gets the chance to participate equally, resulting in a lower grade. In addition, some feel they are limited in choosing their own way to study as attending the workshops becomes more or less compulsory. Ultimately, students do understand the function of participation grades, but are not really satisfied with the way they are awarded.

### **Subject 2B: Contact availability of tutors**

After approaching students about their experiences regarding the contact availability of tutors, it was clear that most students are satisfied with the way it's done. Most tutors have a separate e-mail address, which makes it possible to contact them. The discussion board is a handy tool to ask the tutor a specific question. However, students mentioned that the tutor is not always responding on this board. Therefore, contacting tutors by e-mail is the most preferred method.

### **Subject 2C: Approach students for their opinions on workshop tutors in general.**

The students agree that there is a disparity in the quality of the tutors. They were not able to generalize the quality of the tutors. There are some very good tutors, but unfortunately also some tutors who are not that good.

An important skill, according to the students, is teaching skills of the tutor. Most students assume that, at this moment, most of the tutors are selected based on high grades. But if someone, with a high grade, is not able to explain the theory, his knowledge is certainly not utilized. The students think that there should be more emphasis on teaching skills.

Perhaps a solution is to create a mandatory short course on teaching skills, before students are allowed to stand in front of a group of students. In the opinion of the students it does not make sense, someone who passed the concerning course with a high grade, apparently should be able to teach.

## Conclusions

What has been seen is that students are more critical about tutors in the courses that are perceived as more difficult, such as SMT and mathematics. For these courses, it is absolutely important that the tutors have all the knowledge and are able to explain everything to the students. Moreover, tutors are often in charge of the grade of the students, thus students are concerned about the insights and the evaluation process of the tutor. Perhaps there could be a discussion with the parties responsible in these cases, to create a tutor-skill-workshop which can be given three times a year for tutors that are starting their work on RSM.

Furthermore, the bonus system in workshop has been mentioned a lot. Students are content with the bonus system as long as they perceive this as reliable and relevant for the course itself.

*The courses that are not studied in this report, will be studied next year in the Examination & Tutoring committee.*

## Appendix 1: Survey Workshops & Tutoring

### StudentRepresentation: Program Advisory

The Student Representation is an independent organization that represents students of BA and IBA program. The Program Advisory provides the Programme Management with advice based on feedback they have gathered from their fellow students during the trimester. By filling in this form you can help the Student Representation to improve the quality of your education!

#### SPEAK YOUR MIND!

With this form, you are giving feedback about the **tutors and workshops**. We are interested in both positive and negative feedback and suggestions.

You are:  BA  IBA  Premaster  
In what year are you?  1<sup>st</sup>  2<sup>nd</sup>  3<sup>rd</sup>

How would you rate the overall quality of workshops in your Bachelor Program?

**Bad**  1  2  3  4 **Really Good**  5

Are there specific workshops you are particular satisfied or dissatisfied with?

How do you feel about the function and goal of participation (bonus) grades in workshops?

**Bad**  1  2  3  4 **Really Good**  5

What do you think of the manner participation (bonus) grades are awarded?

**Bad**  1  2  3  4 **Really Good**  5

Explain:

How do you evaluate tutors in general? (e.g. knowledge, professionalism)

In general, how accessible and easy to approach are tutors (in- outside workshops)?

**Bad**

1

2

3

4

**Really Good**

5

How do you evaluate the knowledge of the tutors that is needed for the course?

**Bad**

1

2

3

4

**Really Good**

5

If you are a BA student, please rate the workshops of the following courses to your satisfaction (start with the best workshop) and explain:

(a) Ondernemingsplan, (b) LSG, (c) Statistiek, (d) SMT, (e) Primaire processen, (f) Innovatie management

If you are an IBA student, please rate the workshops of the following courses to your satisfaction (start with the best workshop) and explain:

(a) SBP, (b) LSG, (c) Micro, (d) OM, (e) AW

### General feedback

Here you can leave additional information and/or suggestions.

Date: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_\_\_

(dd, mm, jjjj)

*Thank you for your feedback in this survey. We will handle it with privacy.*