



Minutes of The Annual Meeting of Statistics@SLU

16.02.2017

Participants

Mikael Andersson Franko, Claudia von Brömssen, Jan-Eric Englund, Johannes Forkman, Anders Muszta, Ulf Olsson, Arne Pommerening, Jaime Uria-Diez.

What do we expect from Statistics@SLU?

Since we now have a new name and a new föreståndare, we had an initial discussion about the future of Statistics@SLU. We agreed that the Centre should be more pro-active in that the föreståndare could meet with the heads of the consultation units, their Dptm Heads and the Rektor to discuss strategic matters.

*Arne, Heads of
Units*

Mikael mentioned that many staff from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science (VH) use statistical consultation but the Faculty does not make a financial contribution to the staffing costs at the Ultuna consultation unit. It may be an option to take this matter further with Mikael's and Claudia's Dptm Head and the VH Dean in conjunction with the funds they received for competence development to employ a new part-time statistician.

*Claudia,
Mikael, Arne*

Jan-Eric suggested we could encourage the use of the names Statistics@SLU/ Centre for Statistics in the affiliation statements of our own research papers but also encourage those that we help with consultation to put them into the acknowledgements of their scientific articles. We agreed that this is generally a good idea.

Exchange of current matters

Jan-Eric is planning to recruit a statistician at Alnarp to support him in his consultation and teaching work.

Mikael reported the successful move of the Unit of Applied Statistics and Mathematics to the Dptm of Energy and Technology in summer 2015 and mentioned that they were granted SEK 1 Mio/year for five years of which a substantial amount had to be used to cover a past deficit. The Unit prefers to use

the remainder for recruiting a new (part-time) statistician. Claudia added that she continues to specialise on environmental statistics and intends to maintain her connections with FOMA. To this end she has recently had a meeting with Kevin Bishop (see below).

Johannes informed that he currently supervises one PhD student and plans for another. For the latter he has two-years worth funding in place and is looking for matched funding from the industry. A problem arises from the fact that his research is in biometry, a PhD subject area, which is not owned by his Dptm, the Dptm of Field Research Ecology. There is a need for him to get affiliated with the Dptm of Energy and Technology, so that he can supervise the new PhD student in this subject area. Johannes continues to specialise more on research in biometry.

Anders gave an account of the efforts to expand the consultation unit at Umeå. Hilda Edlund was recently employed in Arne's Chair at the Dptm of Forest Resource Management. She has a permanent part-time post (50%) and is mainly responsible for the consultation of MSc students at SLU in Umeå. In addition to that Jaime Uria-Diez offers specialised consultation in statistical programming related to R. This offer has been taken up very positively. Both initiatives were coupled with an intensive advertising campaign. The consultation unit at Umeå has also been granted a dedicated consultation room (to the memory of the late Prof. Bertil Matérn) and this new facility will probably be officially opened in May 2017.

Changes in Statistics@SLU

The Centre has a new name. We agreed to use the English acronym as often as possible in our day-to-day business and in more formal contexts the full name "Centre for Statistics" in both languages. A Swedish version of the Centre's instructions has recently been adopted by the Steering Committee in their last meeting on 2 December 2016. There is a preliminary English translation of this document and perhaps it is sufficient to leave things there.

We briefly discussed the requirement to confirm a list of statistical consultants eligible to receive funding from Statistics@SLU and agreed that this a matter for the heads of each consultation unit to decide. The names of eligible consultants are then published on the website of the Centre.

Another important change concerns the rules for organising workshops and mini conferences as proposed by Claudia and adopted by the steering committee. They are detailed in a separate document. There has also been talk in the steering committee that the föreståndare is free to allocate SEK 50,000 to activities within Statistics@SLU without prior approval by the steering committee.

Other upcoming matters

In December Mikael suggested taking special account of the website duties in the salary percentages that are granted to the Statistics@SLU officers. He particularly suggested that 2.5% of his 5% should be transferred to Claudia for

Heads of Units
→ *Claudia*

developing and maintaining the Centre's website. Claudia announced that she would like to drop this activity to free up time for other things. We all agreed that Claudia has managed the website well and that we would like her to stay in office. Arne suggested that the Umeå group could talk to Hilda Edlund to see if she would be inclined to relieve Claudia, as Hilda has skills and interest in this field. Anders will report back to Statistics@SLU and depending on the outcome we will make a new decision and inform the steering committee and the S Faculty economist.

Anders, Arne

Arne proposed to organise a professional repository of feedback on consultation work, which could be used for internal reports/reviews and/or for advertising. We decided that it is sufficient for every unit to keep the corresponding documents in a dedicated folder. We also briefly discussed the possibility of asking clients to fill in feedback forms, but weren't quite sure whether this would not add to the existing burden of filling in questionnaires.

Heads of Units

Based on recent experience we agreed that advertising the services of Statistics@SLU and of other activities of Statistics@SLU staff (research schools/courses ec.) is very important both for recruiting more clients and for a better visibility of the Centre throughout SLU.

Arne proposed to ask the S Faculty/SLU to commission a software company for developing a web application, which allows to log down consultation hours and create instant reports including financial breakdowns. This would potentially lead to more transparency and faster financial reporting. Potentially such software does exist already and SLU can just purchase a license. We agreed that this is a good idea and that Arne should follow this up with Göran Ståhl.

Arne

Claudia briefly reported about her recent meeting with Kevin Bishop. In this meeting they agreed to involve Claudia more in FOMA coordination meetings. Claudia may also advise in matters of digital archiving and data quality. Kevin is aware of the fact that any activity beyond consultation requires additional funding.

As mentioned, the experience in R related computational consultation at Umeå has been very encouraging so far and we intend to continue this activity.

We exchanged information on recent conferences such as the Winter Conference in Statistics 2017 at Åre (see www.math.umu.se) and the 125th IUFRO Anniversary Congress at Freiberg (see iufro217.com), where Arne is involved in running a session entitled "Cross-boundary modelling in a changing world". The Nordic-Baltic Region of the International Biometric Society will hold a conference at Copenhagen on 19-21 June 2017 (see nbbc17.sund.ku.dk).

After lunch we had a nice short guided tour of the Alnarp campus and Linda-Maria Mårtensson gave an interesting presentation of the SITES organisation and Lönnstorp research station. Linda also posed an intriguing research question concerning the design of statistical experiments for whole agricultural systems. We were grateful for her contribution.

Plans for 2017

Claudia and Mikael will not organise a workshop this year, but Claudia is considering to offer a half-day local mini-conference on sensitivity analysis (life-cycle analysis).

The next steering-committee telephone meeting will be on 3 March 2017. There will be further meetings in May/June (Ultuna), October and November. Naturally it is always possible to raise important matters with Arne and Claudia on a continuous basis.

We discussed the possibility to extend the Umeå Research School in Applied Statistics & Scientific Computing to become a generic research school at SLU level for all faculties, where the members of Statistics@SLU will play a key role. Everybody thought this is a good idea and Arne will take this idea up with Göran Ståhl and others. *Arne*

Claudia presented the current version of the website of Statistics@SLU, explained the structure of the site and pointed out where there is a need for more action. We thanked her for her amazing work.

Any other business

Jan-Eric kindly volunteered to draft a small article that is suitable for both Resurs and Qvintensen and would outline our approach in statistical consultation for a large natural-science university such as SLU. *Jan-Eric*

Jan-Eric suggested that we revise the mailing list of all those that wish to be somehow related to Statistics@SLU. We decided that the heads of the consultation units report a list of the local staff who are interested in the Centre to Arne. *Heads of units*
→ Arne

There was a brief discussion on statistical/mathematical software and we concluded that R is the application used by most clients followed by SAS. Minitab is important in student consultations.

We agreed that Arne will make an effort to introduce a new budget item for competence development. This item will provide an opportunity to receive funds for travelling and subsistence in connection with professional workshops, courses and conferences. All members of Statistics@SLU will be able to apply for this grant and the steering committee will approve/reject the proposals. We also agreed that every applicant should make an effort to obtain funds from other funding bodies before turning to Statistics@SLU. *Arne*

Arne Pommerening, föreståndare.