



Minutes of Steering Committee Meeting of Statistics@SLU

23.05.2017, 14.00–15.00 hrs, by telephone

Participants

Kristina Blennow (LTV), Claudia von Brömssen (NJ, deputy director), Richard Johnson (NJ), Johannes Pohl (SLUSS), Arne Pommerening (S, director), Göran Ståhl (S, chairman).

Absent

Erik Bongcam Rudloff (VH)

1 Opening of the meeting, approval of the minutes of the last meeting and of the agenda

The minutes were approved. Kristina added a query on Bayesian statistics to the agenda, see AOB.

2 Staffing situation in Statistics@SLU

Göran gave a brief account of the preparatory telephone meeting involving Richard, Per-Anders Hansson (Head of the Energy & Technology Department hosting the Ultuna unit of Statistics@SLU), Arne and himself on 16.05.2017. During this meeting the consequences of Mikael Franko leaving SLU were discussed and problems were identified. An important outcome of that meeting was that the NJ Faculty supports SL positions with 35% of their salary costs and the Department would add another 15%, which would help to relax the financial situation at the Ultuna Statistics Unit. Arne explained that the Centre acts on behalf of the vice-chancellor and all SLU, but does not have the remit to employ staff which is the departments'/faculties' task. These units, however, have criteria and expectations associated with a new post that differ from the needs of Statistics@SLU. Also the staffing of Statistics@SLU is generally very tight at best, so that if personnel have to pull out for whatever reason, certain activities need to be cancelled with no fallback. – In the following discussion we decided that the general staffing issues will be discussed at the face-to-face

meeting in autumn (see AOB, item #5) where heads of departments/faculty heads would be invited to. For preparing to solve the immediate crisis at Ultuna, Claudia and Arne (in collaboration with Per-Anders Hansson) will put together an emergency plan detailing options for temporarily bridging the gap that Mikael Franko will leave behind. These may include advertising a junior and a senior position at the same time, external resources, assistance from other staff at the NJ Faculty with a background in statistics, temporary consultation assistance from Arne's staff among others. Replacing Mikael Franko will most likely take a year and a draft advertisement will be submitted to the NJ Faculty shortly. One remaining issue is the question whether VH are willing to contribute to the staff costs of the Statistics@SLU unit at Ultuna, since they are relying on the services of this unit. Here we need some input from Erik.

Decision

3 Research School in Applied Statistics & Scientific Computing

Göran and Arne reported their efforts to marry research-school courses in applied statistics with consultation by coordinating the courses and eventually uniting them under the common roof of Statistics@SLU. Currently the staff of each consultation unit also offer research courses for non-specialists. These courses are currently funded separately from different sources outside the budget of Statistics@SLU and there is no coordination. Consequently they are not an official activity of Statistics@SLU. Göran and everybody at Statistics@SLU believe that considerable synergy effects would originate from uniting consultation and courses. This, however, is not a smooth process, as various committees and faculties need to be carefully approached and convinced that this is a good initiative. Presently Arne's Research School in Applied Statistics & Scientific Computing has been granted a new budget for four years by FUN-S. We intend to use this funding as an opportunity to gradually build a course provision for the whole of SLU under the auspices of Statistics@SLU. At the same time we will have discussions with FUR to potentially fund all basic courses in statistics so that the faculty FUNs in the long term only fund advanced and specialised courses. The members of the steering committee approved of these efforts and also agreed to act as the steering committee of the Research School in Applied Statistics & Scientific Computing.

Decision

4 Software for logging down consultations

In the last meeting, it was decided to authorise Arne to investigate the possibility of establishing a web-based log system for consultancy hours that would potentially increase transparency of the budget and allow faster, more timely analyses of the budget spent. Eventually Arne got in contact with Carola Ekman and she kindly offered to develop a version of the Agresso software that would provide this functionality. The work on this application has proceeded quite quickly and the recent version has been thoroughly tested at the beginning of May by a number of colleagues at Statistics@SLU. To date the conclusions

and feedback are positive so that the financial reporting for the next quarter (April - June 2017) can be achieved by using Agresso. The Steering Committee was pleased with this development.

5 AOB, next meetings

Kristina mentioned the importance of Bayesian statistics in teaching and research of many subject areas and wondered what provision SLU and particularly Statistics@SLU have in this direction. Arne replied by pointing out a recent course that was delivered in this field by the Research School in Applied Statistics & Scientific Computing at Umeå (Anders Muszta). Based on feedback from Claudia he also mentioned that Mikael Franko and Johannes Forkman have done work in Bayesian statistics in the past. In terms of recruiting new statisticians in the future, we are confident that Bayesian statistics is well covered in all degree programmes in statistics in Sweden and elsewhere.

We decided to have a face-to-face meeting at Ultuna on **27 October 2017** and a telephone meeting on **29 November 2017** between 0900 and 1100am.



Arne Pommerening
Director



Göran Ståhl
Chairman

Appendices

Minutes of the meeting on 03.03.2017

Report of the Staffing Situation in Statistics@SLU

Proposal entitled "Research School in Applied Statistics & Scientific Programming"