Experiences International Course Offer

Austrian PhD Student, Economics: Principles of Private Investing (SS 2020) & Introduction to Financial Decision Making (WS 20/21)

"Principles of Private Investing" was a one-week block course, held entirely online. Grading was based on the participation during the course, homework exercises and their presentations, and a term paper. The course aimed at providing the students with the tools needed to make educated financial decisions (e.g., becoming stock market participants, taking out an insurance). An overview of the financial and insurance market was given and a special focus was on possibilities private investors have to enter these markets and to protect themselves against adverse market scenarios.

For the online teaching I used the Web Conferencing tool Zoom and the online learning platform Ilias. Frankly speaking, I was surprised how well everything worked. Neither the students nor me were facing any technical problems, the students showed a lot of effort in the online discussions and we had lively discussions and interesting presentations.

Furthermore, participating in the Teaching Assistantship Programme was great for my personal development due to several reasons:

- I improved my management skills. Although, the support of the International Office in administrative matters was outstanding, I learnt a lot about organising an entire course on my own.
- I learnt to explain concepts from scratch. It was new to me to teach such a heterogeneous group of students. During the course I realized that some concepts that are completely clear to me are difficult to understand for students who are not familiar with Finance at all. This realization will be especially helpful when teaching other undergraduate courses.
- I got a lot of useful advice from my supervisor who is a really experienced teacher. He always shared his ideas for improving the course with me.
- The students broadened my horizon as they all had different ways of thinking because of their different fields of study. It was interesting to hear their perspective and they made me questioning concepts I have always taken for granted.

Especially if I stay in academia (which is currently my plan) this scholarship was of high value for me as teaching will then be an essential part of my job. I hope to be able to participate in this amazing programme again and to be able to apply my newly acquired skills.
The online course “Introduction to Financial Decision Making” offered undergraduate and graduate exchange students from all fields of study the opportunity to gain knowledge about financial decision making. After the course, the students are now equipped with the tools needed to weigh pros and cons of different investment opportunities to make educated financial decisions in the future.

The course consisted of two parts: a theoretical part which aimed at providing the students an overview of financial decision making theory and an applied part which aimed at providing the students the tools needed to make educated financial decisions (e.g., asset allocation and asset location decision, decision on necessity of various insurance contracts) on their own.

**Teaching Methods**

“Introduction to Financial Decision Making” was a one-week block course, held entirely online. I used the Web Conferencing tool Zoom and the online learning platform Ilias.

I combined various learning methods: active (creating blogposts, think-pair-share, preparing short presentations), experiental (developing own trading strategies on a trading platform), and passive learning (short overview of concepts / introduction to new topics by me).

Grading was based on the participation during the course, homework exercises and their presentations, and (optionally) a term paper.

**Personal Experiences**

Participating in the Teaching Assistantship Programme was highly beneficial for me. I learnt how to design an online course from scratch and what details require special attention (e.g., announcing important administrative details always in written form).

Content-wise I learnt to explain concepts from scratch and to familiarize students with no prior knowledge with advanced financial concepts. This will also help me when teaching other undergraduate courses.

I was really impressed by the quality of the student’s work and enjoyed the fruitful discussions we had. The students broadened my horizon as they all had a different academic background. It was interesting to hear their perspective on the topics we discussed and to get insights into their different fields of study.

Furthermore, I really benefited from the useful advice I got from my supervisor, Marcel Fischer, and the outstanding support from the International Office in administrative matters.
Bosnian-Herzegovinian PhD Student, Economics: Morals and Markets (SS 2020)

I applied for the teaching assistantship programme and got the chance to teach one of my favorite courses – Morals and Markets in the summer semester 2020. I am doing research in the field of applied microeconomics and political economy so I decided to teach a general course that will give students a solid introduction into the main topics in political economy, and economic theory, combined with basic philosophical questions that are very intriguing and interesting for discussion. I made the course available for economics students, as well as political science or social science students. In principle anyone who was interested in the topic could have followed the course.

Since I am additionally doing empirical research, I also gave short introductions into the basics of empirical research whenever that was possible. The most relevant articles in this field are more focused on economic theory giving the students a chance to critically evaluate economic models from philosophical point of view, but also understand why these models exists and what are their benefits.

While teaching this course, I focused mostly on teaching the students how to prepare a good presentation. I was presenting few papers myself to show them how it should be done, and also gave them a lot of instructions and feedbacks. Additionally, I insisted that they write more reading reviews than in my previous class because I found it important to teach them how to do academic writing properly.

Finally, one of the most important lessons from this course was how to build arguments for academic discussions. The course provides numerous opportunities to discuss topics that are not straight forward and this was very interesting for both students and myself. I enjoyed teaching this course a lot, and I could see progress in every class in terms of students preparing their arguments and explaining their points to each other. I was highly satisfied with the progress of the group and I enjoyed teaching the course.
New Zealand PhD Student, Linguistics: Second Language Acquisition (WS 19/20)

Course description

The BA-level seminar was taught to a total of 13 international students from Italy, Croatia, Ukraine, Turkey and England in the Winter Semester 2019/2020, funded by the International Office at the University of Konstanz. The course gave an introduction to the main theories and to methodological aspects of Second Language Acquisition. I chose the topic for the course based on my background in language teaching and on my MA and PhD in linguistics (which both focused on multilingual language acquisition), and the course was an adaptation of a seminar I had already given in 2017 at Department of Linguistics in Konstanz.

In the first half of the course, we discussed the relevant theories and methodologies of Second Language Acquisition research based on readings and on my presentations. In the second half of the course, the students presented one methodological aspect of second language teaching in groups, including approaches to second language pronunciation teaching, vocabulary teaching, grammar, and error analysis and correction. In the final week of the course, the students completed an exam. The exam questions were designed to reflect the different learning stages (as proposed by, e.g., Anderson, 2001), and tested not only students' ability to recall central terms and concepts, but also to evaluate and compare these factors in short essays. The approximate topics for the exam essays were communicated in advance, so that students were able to prepare. The course was grades as the group presentation (40%) and performance on the exam (60%), and the mean grade for the course was 1.76 (German grading system).

The participants

The participants came from quite diverse cultural backgrounds, and were a highly engaged group of students to work with. They seemed to get along well with one another, though they tended to sit according to the countries they came from. The language of the course was English, and the students’ proficiency was, in most cases, very high (i.e., B2/C1 level). However, in the case of one student, a slightly lower proficiency was apparent which I, as the teacher, sometimes had to make allowances for (i.e., by repeating the input and paraphrasing things in more simple terms).

Reflections

Reflecting back on the course, I was grateful to have had my background teaching English to rely on, since this gave me the ability to appropriate gauge my language to non-native speakers if and when required. Though I am also used to working with students from diverse backgrounds, this is the first time I had the chance to do so at university, since most of the students I teach at the Department of Linguistics are German nationals, studying to become secondary school teachers. Overall, I found the experience of teaching international students to be highly rewarding, and it is something I would be happy to do more often.

In summary, I am grateful to the International Office for this opportunity and could imagine offering a similar course again at some point in the future.
In the winter semester 19/20, I taught a seminar Memory and Decision Making that was offered by the International Office. 13 students had regularly attended the course and I was supervised by Dr. Michael Dambacher and additionally also by my thesis supervisor Prof. Dr. Janina Hoffmann. The opportunity to teach the course gave me a valuable insight into the process of teaching. Being only a student attending the seminars doesn’t even give a hint about how much work and preparation is necessary to successfully hold a course. Throughout the whole course, I learned how to communicate the material in an understandable way, so that even students without psychological background were able to follow the course and gain the necessary knowledge. Additionally, it was a challenge to prepare exercises that would help students to process the newly acquired knowledge and apply it to practice.

Teaching helped to structure my schedule better, because I had to prepare (and also practice) the content for each seminar and also plan the time to give feedback to students on their presentations (if they wanted to have it before they presented). The hardest part of teaching was evaluating the students because it was the first time for me to officially evaluate someone else. Following the example of my supervisor, I prepared a list of objective criteria in advance that helped me a great deal to be able to differentiate between presentations and gave the grades as objectively as possible. Besides the benefits of teaching, I have already stated, I gained additional insights about the topics I taught and this will also help in writing my PhD thesis. I improved my social skills, my overall organization, planning and time management. With students’ feedback and gained experience I am also able to see where are my weak points (for instance: time planning of the session) and how to improve them. Teaching this seminar gave me the opportunity to be in a professional position I always saw as the final step in my career and it encouraged me to follow the career path which will include working with others and teaching.