Post-graduate Training in Social Science Research Methods in Germany: The GESIS Research Methods Training Programme

DwB First Regional Workshop
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Aims

• Improving postgraduate training infrastructure to complement university education
• Promote the learning of social science research methods (theoretically based, application oriented) and thereby improve quality of substantive research
• Promote methodological research
• Improving career prospects for young researchers; providing opportunities for lifelong learning for advanced researchers
Background

• Today's programme did not fall from the sky: courses started in the 1970s already (at ZA in Cologne and ZUMA in Mannheim)
• GESIS as an association founded in 1986; exists as one institute only since 2007
• Department for Knowledge Transfer established in 2010 in order to take responsibility for training courses which were until then isolated from each other
• Currently staff of 6.5 FTE in two locations
• All courses evaluated with questionnaire
GESIS Methodenseminar

- in German, since 1980, in Cologne
- Introduction to quantitative data analysis in 4/5 modules of 4-5 days each; programme repeats every year with small changes
- Target group: postgraduates without prior methods training (e.g. from the humanities)
- Basic Module 1 (online): research methods in historical social research
- Basic Module 2: database management
- Basic Module 3: descriptive statistics
- Advanced Module 1: techniques of complexity and dimensionality reduction
- Advanced Module 2: multivariate regression in Stata
GESIS Summer School

• in English, since 2012, in Cologne

• Introduction and advanced topics in survey methodology, ~15 parallel courses of 5 days over 2/3 weeks plus short courses

• Target groups:
  • postgraduates interested in conducting a survey
  • or analysing survey data
  • junior staff of large-scale survey projects
  • junior methodologists
Main Courses

- Introduction to survey design
- Questionnaire design
- Questionnaire Translation
- Sampling and estimation
- Web surveys
- Data collection and interview quality
- Unit nonresponse
- Item nonresponse and multiple imputation
- Structural equation modeling with Mplus
- Measurement models, error and equivalence
- Mixed Methods
- Experimental techniques in survey research
- Factorial surveys
- Design and implementation of longitudinal surveys
- Cross-national comparative surveys
Short Courses

• A Refresher Course Survey Design
• B Qualitative methods: preparation for mixed methods main course
• C Data analysis using R: preparation for item nonresponse, unit nonresponse, cross-national surveys main courses
• D Data management for social scientists
GESIS Spring Seminar

• in English, since 1971, in Cologne
• Advanced methods of data analysis, 3 weeks, in English
• Target group: PhD students, junior and senior researchers with advanced prior knowledge in social science data analysis

• Programme 2013:
  • Two approaches for Causal Inferences in non Experimental Research: Structural Equation Modeling and The Potential Outcome Approach
  • My First Bayes: Why and How to Run Your First Bayesian Model Using Mplus
  • Latent Class Analyses and Categorical SEMs for Handling Survey Complexities
GESIS Workshops

• mostly in German, since 1970s, mostly in Mannheim, increasingly Cologne
• Wide range of topics related to social science research methods, 1-3 days, very flexible
• Target group: PhD students, junior and senior researchers. Prior knowledge depending on the course
• Advertisement includes Workshops where GESIS is cooperation partner (e.g. DwB)
• Topic areas:
  • Specific secondary data sources or topic-specific data (e.g. elections)
  • Survey design and methodology
  • Data analysis techniques
  • Specific software programs
  • Data management
  • Qualitative and mixed methods
Some numbers for 2012

- 59 courses
- lasting 208 days in sum
- 97 instructors (including teaching assistants)
- 945 course participations
- 323 waiting list entries (mostly for all spring seminar courses and workshops in qualitative and mixed methods and multilevel modeling)
- almost 50% of participants are PhD students
Challenges

• Securing funding/finding balance between participants' and institutional contribution
• Finding a good time of the year for additional courses
• Finding adequate teaching rooms
• Ensuring adequate low-cost accommodation for participants
• Finding good (and available!) instructors in highly specialised content areas across disciplines
• Pick up important new developments, but not every fad
• Advertise widely, build networks and reputation
Opportunities

• Medium term:
  • Consolidate the programme and network of instructors
  • Secure infrastructure
  • Increase awareness amongst young researchers
  • Increase online elements complementing courses

• Long term:
  • Systematic assessment of participants' needs (demand) and new developments in methodology (supply)
  • Develop 'webinars', online courses, or even MOOCs?
Further information:
www.gesis.org/events
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Leaflets, posters, brochures available