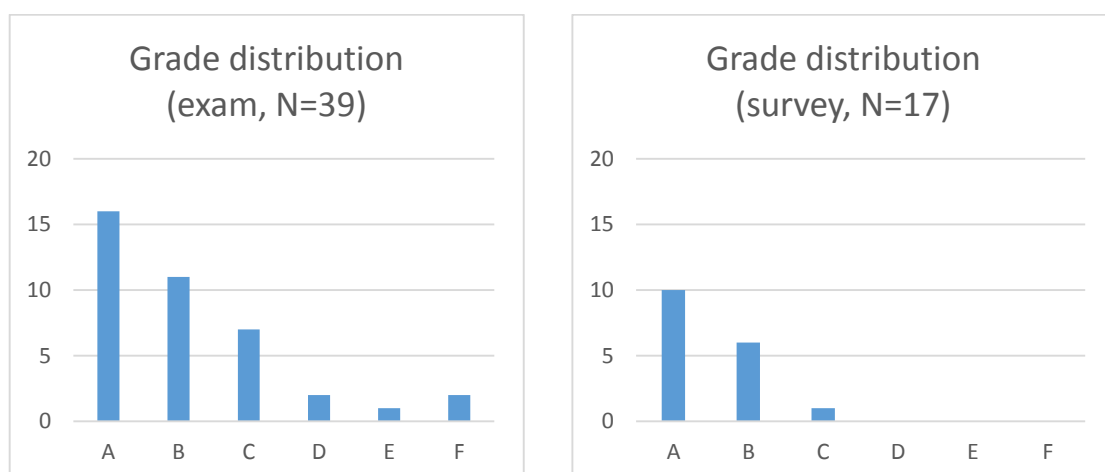


PSY-2585 Social and Community Psychology (Spring 2015), Course evaluation

“PSY-2585 Social and Community Psychology” is a mandatory course in the clinical psychology program (“profesjonsstudium”). In 12 two-hour lectures, the course introduces core concepts, theories, and methods from social psychology and from community psychology (see the next page for a list). The lectures build on a compendium (course readings) that comprises textbook chapters, literature reviews, and original research articles. Classroom demonstrations and exercises complement the readings. The course ends with a four-hour school-type exam that covers contents from all parts of the course (see Appendix 2 for details).

Thirty-nine students were registered for the course in Spring 2015. After the exam results had been published, the class was invited by email to participate anonymously in an online course evaluation (invitation: 24.06., reminder: 01.07.).

The survey received 21 visits and was completed 17 times (last visit: 06.07., last completion: 03.07.). Thus, circa half of the class participated ($17/39 = 44\%$). The distribution of self-reported grades in the survey corresponds approximately to the distribution of actual grades in the exam, although feedback from students with grades in the D-F range is missing (and would have been desirable). Overall, the survey sample appears roughly representative of the class.



The survey is shown on the next page, the results are presented afterwards.

Course evaluation for "PSY-2585 Social and Community Psychology" (Spring 2015)

Thank you for participating. The evaluation is run by the course teacher (Assoc. Prof. Frank Siebler, frank.siebler@uit.no). Your answers are anonymous. If you are currently in a bad mood, then please try to find a harmless explanation for it first -- the weather outside, perhaps? :-)

Here is a reminder of the course contents:

"Sosialpsykologi omhandler individets forhold til andre og belyser hvordan sosiale og kulturelle faktorer påvirker det enkelte individ. Undervisningen fokuserer på en rekke basalemaer innenfor sosial kognisjon, blant annet automatiske tankeprosesser, holdninger, stereotypier og fordommer, sosiale normer, relasjoner mellom grupper, og selvbylde. I den samfunnspsykologiske delen fokuseres på sosialpsykologi som anvendt disiplin. Det vil bli lagt vekt på intervensjonsplanlegging med hensikt å endre atferd og å løse helse-, sosiale eller andre problemer som kan oppstå i nærmiljøet, i en kommune, organisasjon eller i samfunnet generelt."

PART 1: LEARNING & TEACHING

How useful was each of the following elements for your own work with the course contents?

(If you don't remember an element or have not used it, then please leave that line unanswered)

	not useful					very useful
The articles and book chapters in the course readings ("kompendium") were ...	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The lectures (the course teacher's live presentations) were ...	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The classroom activities (videos, live IAT, social psychology trial exam, intervention plan in small-group work) were ...	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The downloadable lecture slides on Fronter ("Powerpoint") were ...	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The downloadable notes for the exam preparation on Fronter ("exam tips") were ...	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

PART 2: EXAMINATION & EVALUATION

How much do you personally agree with the following statements?

(If you have absolutely no opinion on a statement, then please leave that line unanswered)

	completely disagree					completely agree
"The course taught theories, methods, and techniques that are very practical and important for professional psychologists."	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
"The four-hour exam was an excellent match to the course contents."	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
"It was very clear for me how to prepare myself for the four-hour exam."	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
"At the end of the course I could easily have passed a much longer and more difficult exam about the course contents."	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
"It was no problem for me that the lectures and lecture slides were in English language."	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Summary evaluations

(If you don't want to answer a question, then please leave that line unanswered)

	A	B	C	D	E	F
What grade did the course give you?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
What grade do you give the course?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

PART 3: OPEN-ENDED FEEDBACK

If you want to make comments or suggestions, then here is the place to do so. It can be on anything: the general course organization, the materials, the lectures, the exam, things that you missed, and so on. You can list (få/mange) things that you liked, and (få/mange) things that you did not like about the course.

That was all, thank you!

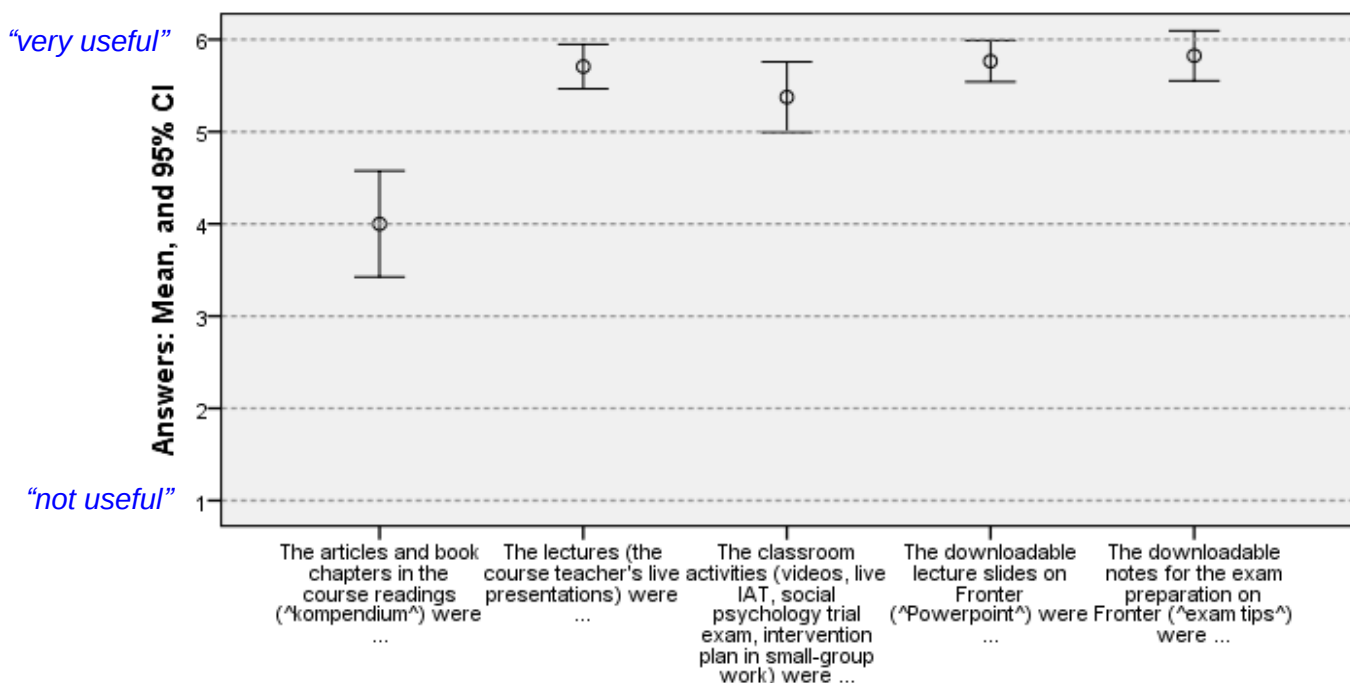
Please click on the button below to send your answers.

Part 1: Learning and Teaching

“How useful was each of the following elements for your own work with the course contents?”

(Answer scale from 1 = “not useful” to 6 = “very useful”)

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
The articles and book chapters in the course readings (“kompendium”) were ...	17	4,00	1,12
The lectures (the course teacher's live presentations) were ...	17	5,71	,47
The classroom activities (videos, live IAT, social psychology trial exam, intervention plan in small-group work) were ...	16	5,38	,72
The downloadable lecture slides on Fronter (“Powerpoint”) were ...	17	5,76	,44
The downloadable notes for the exam preparation on Fronter (“exam tips”) were ...	17	5,82	,53



Verbal interpretation

Four course elements received the highest possible usefulness ratings in this survey, namely mean answers between the scale points 5 and 6. These elements are the course teacher's *live presentations*, the *classroom activities*, the downloadable *lecture slides*, and the downloadable *notes for the exam preparation*.

The fifth course element, namely the *course readings* or “kompendium”, received a mean rating of 4.00. The midpoint of the answer scale is 3.5. Thus, the respondents *did* rate the course readings as having been useful for their own work, just not quite as useful as the other four elements.

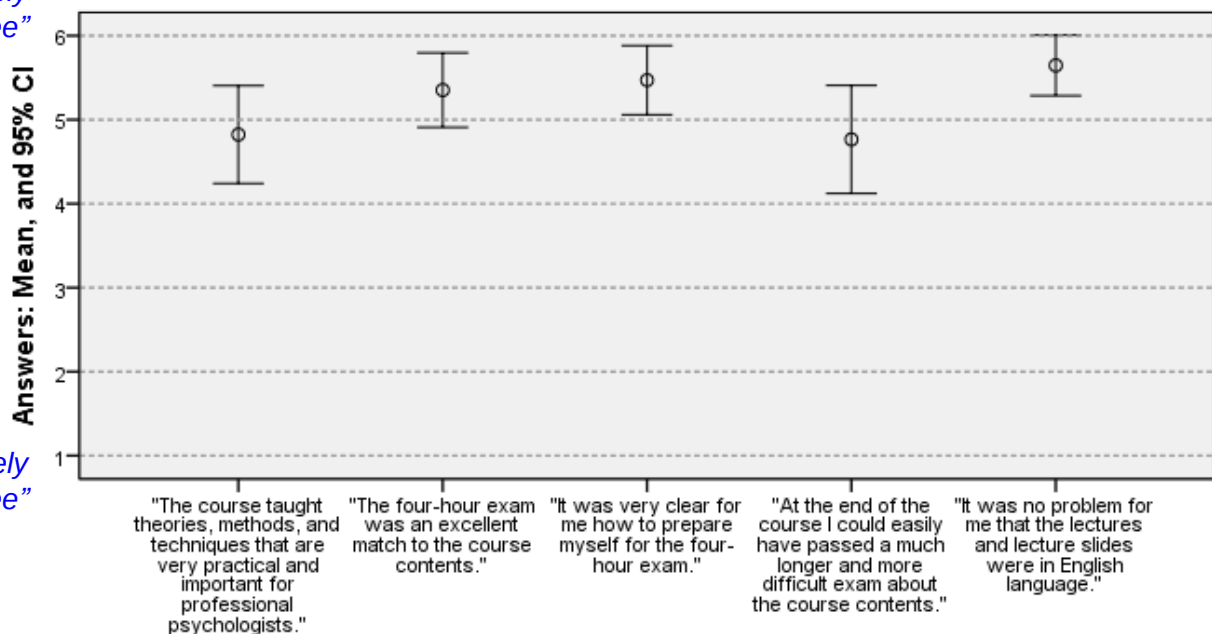
Part 2: Examination and Evaluation

“How much do you personally agree with the following statements?”

(Answer scale from 1 = “completely disagree” to 6 = “completely agree”)

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
"The course taught theories, methods, and techniques that are very practical and important for professional psychologists."	17	4,82	1,13
"The four-hour exam was an excellent match to the course contents."	17	5,35	,86
"It was very clear for me how to prepare myself for the four-hour exam."	17	5,47	,80
"At the end of the course I could easily have passed a much longer and more difficult exam about the course contents."	17	4,76	1,25
"It was no problem for me that the lectures and lecture slides were in English language."	17	5,65	,70

“completely
agree”



“completely
disagree”

Verbal interpretation

Three statements about the course and its exam received the highest possible agreement in this survey, namely mean answers between the scale points 5 and 6. These statements are that the *exam was an excellent match to the course contents*, that it was *very clear how to prepare for the exam*, and that the *use of English language in the lectures was no problem*.

Two statements received mean answers close to the second-highest scale point 5. The first of these statements is that the course's *theories, methods, and techniques are very practical and important for professional psychologists*; the second statement is that the respondent *could easily have passed a much longer and more difficult exam*.

Summary evaluations

(Answer scale: 1 = "A", 2 = "B", 3 = "C", 4 = "D", 5 = "E", 6 = "F")

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
What grade did the course give you?	17	1,47	,62
What grade do you give the course?	17	1,71	,59



Verbal interpretation

On average, the respondents reported to have achieved a grade between “A” and “B” themselves. On average, they also gave the course a grade between “A” and “B” as their summary evaluation. The grade given to the course was unrelated to the own grade in the exam, $r(16) = -.11$, $p > .67$. Thus, a respondent’s summary evaluation of the course did not simply reflect her/his own exam result.

Part 3: Open-ended feedback

Nine respondents also gave verbal feedback. Appendix 1 shows the full answers; below I will refer to the answers by their number in the appendix. Qualitative responses are of course open to multiple interpretations. Nevertheless, three conclusions seem warranted:

A) Overall, the class was satisfied with the course. Four answers contain clear positive summary evaluations (3, 5, 6, 7). One answer contains a negative summary evaluation (9), and for one critical answer it is not clear whether it was meant as a summary evaluation or as feedback on a single aspect of the course (1). The other answers discuss detail aspects, but do not contain summary evaluations.

B) Strategies for and expectations towards “studying at the university” are heterogeneous, and are incompatible across students. From the reading list to the final exam, the course provides an integrated platform as a safe basis and starting-point for the students’ independent work with the course contents. One answer recognizes and greatly appreciates this platform (3). Two answers indicate that the respondents misunderstood the platform as aiming to *replace* the own independent work with the course contents (1, 4). One respondent felt under-examined in relation to the own independent work beyond the platform (2). A final answer indicates that the respondent did not see an integrated platform at all (9).

C) Major critical remarks reflect individual views rather than consensus. Three major points of critique were voiced: exam questions may be translated badly (6), the intervention part of the exam may be unrelated to the course contents (8), and, the course may not give a broad introduction into social psychology (9). These points, if true, would be *serious* problems. At the same time, they would also be *obvious* problems. Yet the three points appear in a single answer each. They were not raised by the other students who took the course and its exam, or by other professionals involved in the course.¹

¹ The translations stem from native Norwegian speakers with Master or professional degrees in psychology. The materials see regular review by other academics and practitioners, namely internal examiners, external examiners, and the substitute teacher when I have a sabbatical.

Discussion

Seventeen students (of 39 who took the course) completed an anonymous online survey to evaluate the course “PSY-2585 Social and Community Psychology (Spring 2015).” Whereas the sample appears roughly representative of the whole class, the results need to be taken with some caution because various self-selection biases may have influenced who did versus did not participate in the course evaluation. For example, no student with a self-reported exam grade in the D-F range participated.

The closed-format answers show that the respondents were very satisfied, giving the course a grade between “A” and “B” as their summary evaluation. They considered the theories and techniques from the course to be very practical and important for professional psychologists. They confirmed that it had been clear how to prepare for the exam, and that the exam was an excellent match to the course contents. Further, they were convinced that at the end of the course, they could easily have passed even a much longer and more difficult exam about the course contents. The lecture and its materials (downloadable files, classroom exercises) received the highest possible ratings of usefulness for the students’ own work. The course readings were rated as useful too, although a bit less than the other elements.

The open-ended answers generally support the positive summary evaluation from the closed-format part of the survey. Further, the open-ended answers suggest that different students have different and incompatible ideas about how teaching, learning, and examination in a university course should be done. Finally, three major issues were listed in this part. These issues were noted by one respondent each, but not by any other student, and not by other professionals involved in the course. Insofar the evidence for major issues is not convincing.

In line with the overwhelmingly positive survey answers, the excellent exam result (see p. 1 and Appendix 2) also indicates that the course achieved its goals. Overall, then, it appears that the course in its present form is successful.

Appendix 1: The open-ended answers

Note: To preserve the anonymity of both the respondent and other courses' lecturers, I have shortened one answer at the places indicated by "[***]".

1. Let us think more for ourselves
2. Jeg kunne gjerne fortrukket at intervensjonsdelen av eksamen hadde et mer relevant tema, slik som mobbing, integrering, multikulturelle samfunn eller lignende. Samtidig kunne jeg ønsket at sosialpsykologi-delen i eksamen ga større mulighet til å vise selvstendig tekning og helhetsforståelse av pensum. Undervisningen var noe ensformig, men veldig lærerik og dekket innholdet i pensum på en god måte.
3. I think this is one of the best courses in psychology I have had while studying psychology. It is well organized, you know what is expected of you - so you don't have to be a nervous wreck before the exam, the information is well presented so that the practicality of it all is very clear from the first lecture - which I find very motivating. [***]
I really appreciate that the course is built so that even if you can't attend the lectures it isn't especially difficult to prepare for the exam and understand the material. [***]
I think your way is the best way: it makes us very motivated to go to your lectures - because we get a good run through (gjennomgang) of the material and good explanations if we go, but we don't get punished if we don't go. All in all - I really enjoyed this course, and I feel like I learned a lot!
4. I was, of course, disappointed with the grade. I blame myself, but also it was too easy to relax during the course because we got the impression that the course and the exam was really easy - eksamenstips and powerpoint and lectures. I felt comfortable enough not to read anything in the "kompendium", and I guess that was a mistake. But of course, that's on me. Have a nice summer!

5. Really good class course and I feel like I learned alot.
Wish we had more time with it to learn more about the field.
6. I think that some translation in the exam from english to norwegian were bad and could lead to misinterpretation of the questions, this can easily be fixed for students taking the exam next year (I ended up just reading the english versions of the questions in stead) . The course, Frank and the classes were great :) He really made the course interesting, and his practical examples in class were really great :) The one thing I could complain about is some of the articles, some of them were really hard to read and understand, but were more understandable if you attended all the classes.
7. Kunne brukt mer tid på intervensjonsplanen. Ellers var alt supert :-)
8. Jeg ble veldig overrasket over intervensjonen (den siste eksamensoppgaven), da jeg syntes det var vanskelig å trekke inn relevant teori for å besvare oppgaven. Jeg synes ikke problemstillingen i oppgaven var relevant for kurset eller for fremtidig arbeidsliv.
9. Would recommend a textbook as curriculum instead of a gazillion articles combined w detailed exam preps. Feels that i have not gotten a broad general introduction to social psychology.

Appendix 2

(The following pages show the document that was distributed to the class after the exam had been graded. The document contains the exam result for the whole class, explanations of the grading process and of the result, and statistical analyses.)

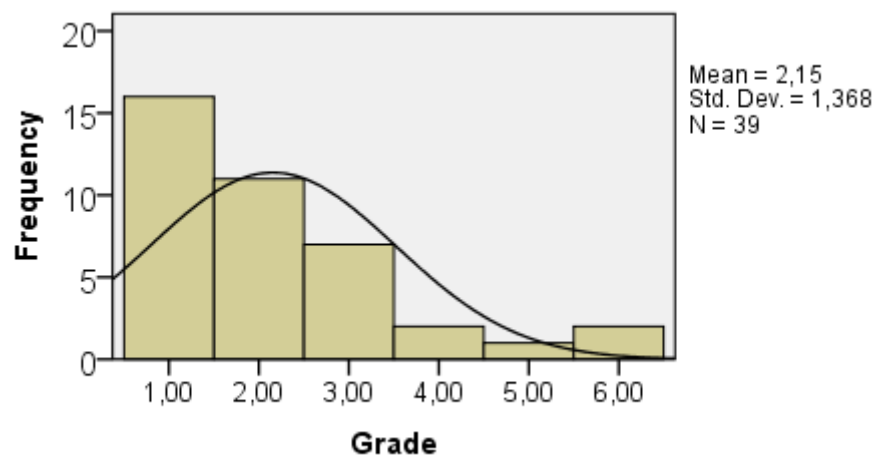
PSY-2585 exam May 2015, Grading and results

The exam for "PSY-2585 Sosial- og samfunnspsykologi" (May 21st, 2015) had 16 main questions (some with sub-questions). There were multiple-choice and short-answer questions; the longest question required to develop an intervention plan on circa 1-2 pages. Together the questions covered all topic areas from the course's 24 lecture hours. All questions had to be answered.

The evaluation committee comprised one internal examiner (a member of the Department of Psychology; actually: the course teacher) and one external examiner (a psychologist who is not a member of this Department; this examiner is a native speaker of Norwegian). The examination committee received the exams in an anonymous form, namely with candidate numbers written onto them instead of the student names. Detailed, written examiner guidelines listed the normatively correct answer to each question, together with answer variants that should also count as correct. The examiners first graded all exams independently, using the written guidelines for this exam plus the university's general "karakterskala" that defines the meaning of each grade verbally. Then they compared their ratings for each exam and determined the final grades.

Each question had a defined number of maximum points that could be achieved, from 2 points (for simple multiple-choice questions) over 3-4 points (for questions that required more thought and/or own formulations) and 9 points (for the self-formulated description of a full study or program of research) to 20 points (for the intervention plan). The maximum number of points for each question was listed in the exam; the examiners gave partial points for partly correct answers. The maximum number of points for the whole exam was 80 points. 70 points or more counted as an A. For each 10 points less, one grade was subtracted (B = 60-69, C = 50-59, and so on). The result for the class as a whole is shown on the next page.

Grade		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A	16	41,0	41,0
	B	11	28,2	69,2
	C	7	17,9	87,2
	D	2	5,1	92,3
	E	1	2,6	94,9
	F	2	5,1	100,0
	Total	39	100,0	
Missing	,00	4		
Total		43		



Almost 90% of the exams were graded C or better. That is an excellent result.

Where do the differences in the grades come from?

Not unexpectedly, the general picture is that they come mostly from the questions that required to formulate an answer in one's own words.

Multiple-choice questions ("identify the correct one out of four pre-formulated answers") and reproductive questions ("what is the definition of ...") were answered correctly most of the time. Several questions asked to apply a specific theory or technique to a small practical problem, by filling the word-gaps in pre-formulated sentences. Here the answers were mostly correct, too.

Other questions however required self-formulated answers: to describe in one's own words a whole research program, a set of critique against a given research instrument, or to develop a full intervention plan for a novel community problem ("novel" = not presented in the lecture, not pre-solved in the pensum). Here points were lost. A major reason were answers that were incomplete, imprecise, and/or not self-explaining. To give an example: The intervention plan part asked for two principles of community psychology that your intervention uses (1 point for each principle), and for each of them, for a short explanation how your intervention uses that principle (2 points for each explanation). Nearly all exams listed two (or even more) principles and earned the 2x1 points for these. Then, however, some exams put little care into the explanations. "My intervention uses the principle of sharing psychology with others because I will share my psychological knowledge." Note that there is no explanation; there is only repetition of the principle, plus the claim that the intervention uses it somehow. Such answers received 1 point for the correct principle, but not 2 additional points for the explanation. Other exams used an extra sentence to point out clearly which specific element of their own intervention builds on exactly that principle. There the additional points were given. -- In sum: The self-formulated answers were sometimes imprecise and then did not collect all available points.

TL;DR for "Why did I get this grade?" For **A, B, and C** exams, the reason is most likely: "You missed points at several places, for wrong answers, forgotten details, or unclear formulations. The loss was small at each place individually, but it added up across the whole exam. A loss of 10 points still allowed an A, but from then on, it impacted the grade." For **D, E, and F** exams, clear gaps in knowledge and/or understanding come in addition.

Reliability I: Inter-rater agreement in the grading

Detailed, written examiner guidelines had been developed beforehand to strongly standardize the grading process. Using these guidelines, each examiner first rated all exams independently. Afterwards the examiners compared and discussed their results. Below are analyses with the point sums (theoretical range: 0-80 points) from before the discussion.

Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1 examiner1	62,79	39	13,38
examiner2	62,77	39	14,09

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation			
Pair 1 examiner1 - examiner2	,026	3,83	,042	38	,967

The two tables above show that on average, the examiners independently gave the same numbers of points ($M = 62.79$ and $M = 62.77$, respectively). The difference between examiners is tiny ($M = .026$ -- less than one point) and is far from significant, $t(38) = .04$, $p > .96$.

Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 examiner1 & examiner2	39	,962	,000

In an exam-by-exam comparison, the examiners reached the same results too. The table above shows a near-perfect correlation between their independent ratings, $r(38) = .96$, $p < .001$.

In sum, the grading process showed excellent inter-rater reliability.

Reliability II: The exam's internal consistency

The following tables show Cronbach's Alpha as the measure of the exam's internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha is frequently used for that purpose.

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
,849	,854	19

Cronbach's Alpha is .85. For a regular research instrument (f. ex. an attitude survey or a personality scale), that would be good to very good. For an exam it is excellent.

Item-Total Statistics	
	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
q1	,854
q2	,852
q3	,844
q4	,848
q5	,847
q6	,847
q7	,844
q8	,849
q9	,840
q10	,832
q11	,849
q12	,839
q13	,820
q14	,830
q15	,832
q16a	,844
q16b	,840
q16c	,841
q16d	,839

The table to the left shows, separately for each exam question, what Cronbach's Alpha would be if that question had not been asked. If a question differs from the others, then removing it would increase Cronbach's Alpha noticeably. As we see in the table, this is not the case for any of the questions. Removing any question would leave Cronbach's Alpha unchanged or would make it a tiny bit worse.

In sum, the exam's internal consistency was high, and all questions contributed to the total grades in the same way.

← q1 to q15 are the social psychology questions, q16a to q16d are the four parts of the community psychology intervention plan