

Results of the Evaluation Questionnaire for the AVEC Summer School Peyresq, 18-30 September 2005

The aim of this questionnaire was to get feedback from the participants of the summer school on the overall structure, the lectures and organization in order to compare it with the last summer school and further improve the next one. The questionnaires were already in the folders which the participants received when checking in at the summer school and they were asked to return them on the last day after the lectures were finished. Of the 37 participants 31 handed them back. Not all the questions had been answered every time so that the sum sometimes does not add up to 31. Tutors gave their questionnaires back or commented in general on the questions.

Expectations

The expectations about the summer school were rather widespread: from no expectations at all via getting an overview of vulnerability assessments to getting to know interesting people or to simply learning new things. Here disappointed expectations were already mentioned as well: there were expectations that more social aspects including cultural aspects would be treated in the lectures or more modelling practice. Ecology was mentioned here and later in respect to the excursion again where more local ecology should have been explained. Compared to the last summer school the expectations were much more precise and surprisingly even then those expectations were satisfied slightly better.

Accommodation

The accommodation was rated rather good although a few were apparently disappointed. This was already exemplified before the summer school by the request to get a single room when for students this is not possible. (This advice was taken and in the flyer for the next summer school it is explicitly mentioned that accommodation means sharing a double room.) In general it was accepted that it was basic but sufficient and some expressively appreciated the isolation. Of course with the cold weather more heaters would have been needed and welcomed. Next time it will be stressed more that no cleaning of the rooms during the summer school will take place although this was mentioned in the introduction to the place on the first day. Of course the heaters were not a problem at the last summer school as the weather was then extremely warm. Another difference to the last summer school was the new bar so consequently there were no complaints about noise late at night this year.

The cuisine was rated mostly excellent, even almost too good. One student complained about the lack in proper hygiene but this was an isolated opinion. One even complained about the long time gap in between the meals but this was unique as most mentioned they had too much food. The comparison to the last summer school showed similar views and ratings. The lack of choice in non-alcoholic beverages complained about last time could be changed now after discussing this issue with the staff and so more different teas were provided this time.

The travel to Peyresq is of course not easy but most did not complain about it. Some mentioned that it posed no problem as it was well explained in advance, which was a positive change to the last questionnaire.

The staff was rated best of all: almost everybody rated them as excellent only one participant voted "only" for good. The one missing vote was due to a misunderstanding e.g. what technical staff we meant as there were no computer assistants and the like.

Background material

The AVEC website was mainly rated with good. Apparently the link to the Foundation Peiresc had been overlooked as some missed more information on the village of Peyresq. The missing state of available comfort in respect to accommodation was already mentioned above. A list of all participants was included in the folder and it would not be that helpful if put on the web in advance as asked for as there are usually last-minute changes. This time the participants remembered at least that they had been on the site contrary

to the last time and as the wish of the former students had been followed to provide background material this was no matter of complaint any more.

In general it was approved that background material for the presentations has been supplied in advance on the website. The new suggestion to list all the background literature on one page has to be discussed further. At the moment the literature is linked to the talk and clearly allocated to the author who suggested reading this material. Most considered the material to have been too much, one article per talk would have been sufficient. Some suggested rating of the material as Dagmar did (e.g. essential/important/interesting reading) would have been very helpful. One participant missed a map of the area (provided in the folder though) or the dimensions of poster boards (which had been communicated by e-mail). At the last summer school no literature was provided in advance but some made this suggestion. This led to the new question this time of whether any of the material was actually read in advance. Some were honest and conceded that they did not read any (4) but most (27) tried to do this in advance but had not enough time to read much.

The background material on CD-Rom for the working groups was mostly considered as very good to good and no other type of distribution would have been preferred. More explanations on the CD itself on what data were available would have been a good help and would have saved time searching some stated. Making the pdf files of the presentations available after the summer school was welcomed by most. One would prefer to get the ppt format (which is not possible).

The preparation of a report on one of the talks were not unanimously regarded as useful. Some had difficulties as they did not have their own laptops, and some had not enough time to do it as they would have wanted. Some even considered it a waste of time. This was about the same At least this time all participants had to write a report so the remark from last time that only those who could do it anyhow did write a report was not a point any more.

That the group reports should be distributed on the final CD of the summer school was the almost universal opinion.

Structure and organisation of the summer school

The structure of the working days was rated mostly as good to excellent while some rated it as satisfactory. Most complained about the poster sessions concentrated on the first two days as having been too much and too intensive. The wish was voiced of spreading these sessions over a longer period. On the other hand this was also a means of getting acquainted so it is more logical to show the posters as early as possible. Some were asking for more free time which would mean having less aperitif talks which were much appreciated by others. One participant questioned the working groups altogether and would prefer to have more lectures instead. Some complained that the aperitif talks disrupted the working groups' time which was the same opinion as voiced by some last time. It was expressly wished that speakers should not overrun their time which is of course the duty of the session chair.

The general quality of lectures was rated mostly excellent and by half "only" good which is better than last time. Explicitly mentioned was the under-representation of socio-economic presentations which was regretted by some.

The opportunity for discussing the lectures was generally rated at least as good but more as very good. Some complained that the speakers should have been stopped when they overran their allocated time and the discussion time had to be shortened in consequence. One even complained that the discussion should not be closed when it was lively.

The topical lectures were not as highly rated as the aperitif talks which were considered as more intellectually challenging and more provocative. Especially the invitation of the Buddhist nuns was appreciated and in general more socio-economic talks were asked for/demanded here again. This was exactly the case at the last summer school as well while this time the rating was a bit better for the aperitif lectures.

The group work has a wide variety in its rating: from excellent to rather poor. Most considered the beginning as very hard and even taking too much time. More help from tutors would have been much appreciated in this situation. Others considered this to be simply a learning process and that the process

was more important than the result itself. Surprisingly participants' own working group was rated less favourably than the working groups in general. But this was the same at the last summer school.

The answer to the question what did you learn from your case study was mostly explicitly that working in such a team was the most interesting experience. Of course the 8-step approach and the vulnerability assessment were mentioned as well. Participants of the former summer school did not specify any specialty they learned.

The contribution of tutors was mostly rated as excellent or good, only one participant rated the tutor as satisfactory and two as rather poor. As mentioned already, the start of the working groups were considered the most difficult time of the group work and then the help of the tutor was needed most. At that stage better guidelines would have been appreciated by the students. Some rated their tutor as being too weak but maybe this depended on the configuration of the group itself. Compared to the last summer school the rating of the tutors was slightly less favourable.

The preference of more presentations or more breakout time was answered with favouring more breakout time (7) compared to more presentations (4) while most (12) considered the balance as good as it was. At the first summer school more breakout time outranked the other possibilities as well but nobody voted for more presentations.

What worked best resulted in a long list of favourites like starting at 9:00 o'clock, having long coffee breaks with great discussions and long lunches, the morning lectures etc.. The Buddhist nuns were mentioned by two participants.

The reverse question was what worked most poorly: here the poster sessions were rated as too long, the beginning of the working groups was rated as too tiresome and that the aperitif talks was interrupting the groups' work. And again the exceeding of time limits of some speakers was mentioned. In both – best and poor – cases some names of speakers were openly mentioned which we will not repeat here. Overall this was similar to the points made last time.

The field trip was enjoyed by almost all while the bus ride was considered too long and walking or hiking was missed by many. This was similar to the last excursion while more hiking was asked for this time. Of course the lack of non-alcoholic beverages was mentioned but this was a mistake by the kitchen staff and will not happen again.

Contrary to the excursion the free day was rated as excellent by twice as many participants and most stated that it was definitely needed to recharge the batteries. One wanted to have some excursions offered for that day but the initiative of organizing the trip to the Lac d'Allos themselves was definitely an improvement compared to last time.

Organization

The question in respect of changes in the organization was nicely answered that it was already flawless. It would be rather difficult to put biosketches of all participants on the web beforehand as proposed. The number of PCs is not in our competence but more information on practical matters is of course possible.

The suggestion of other ideas almost repeated the answers given on the organization. It included the suggestion of an intro of all participants including the organizers on the website. This would of course depend on the input of the participants themselves but could be tried next time. The size of the working group with six participants we had at both summer schools is really not too big so that a reduction would be needed or would be feasible. The request of involving more stakeholders in the aperitif talks is well taken. More free time or another free day is simply not possible with the task set to the summer school.

The advertisement of the summer school was this time apparently more successful than two years ago as 91 compared to 52 applications were received. The participants mostly learned about the summer school from their supervisors or their institute but former participants were good in encouraging new applicants as well.

Excursion

The more detailed question on the excursion was introduced only this time. It was rated mostly with good (15) and by fewer as excellent (8) or satisfactory (6). Again the long bus ride was a reason to complain as

was the lack of opportunity for a longer walk or hike. The lack of non-alcoholic beverages will not happen again.

Overall rating

The overall rating of the summer school was very high: most participants rated it as excellent (20) while (10) as good. This is really in praise of the effort of all who were involved. This very satisfactory classification was the same as last time and of course the organizers are grateful.

Many participants were of the opinion that the summer school will influence their own studies in the future.

One open question was voiced, namely whether the participant could come again next year (which is not possible of course).

Additional comments

Here some praise or shortcomings which had been said earlier were repeated again. For example simply thanking the organizers or complaining about missing blackboards for the working groups. Very reasonable was the comment the missing TV and the slow internet connection had put people together. The suggestion of incorporating the Mercantour National Park has been noted but then the excursion to the Gorge du Verdon would be rerouted to that Park as well.

Second AVEC Summer School
Integrated Assessment of Vulnerable Ecosystems under Global Change
18-30 September 2005

Evaluation

Please answer the following questions by circling the numbers given for each of them. We also appreciate any additional comments you make, either directly in relation to each question or on the back of the last page.

Excellent/Easy/Yes - Poor/Difficult/No

Expectations

Did the summer school meet your expectations? 1 2 3 4 5
 What did you expect from the summer school: _____ 14 _____ 17 _____
 did not have big expectations; get an overview of vulnerability assessments (5); get to know interesting people (3); build a European network (2); learn new things; expected more social and cultural aspects (2); expected more ecology (2); expected more modelling practice.

Accommodation

How would you rate the accommodation of Peyresq? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: _____ 15 _____ 12 _____ 2 _____ 1 _____ 1
 A nice change compared to dumb standard hotels! Bathroom and toilets not too clean after some days; should have been mentioned earlier that no single rooms are available; basic but sufficient; more heaters needed (6); good to be isolated.

How would you rate the cuisine at Peyresq? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: _____ 21 _____ 8 _____ 3 _____
 Perfect; delicious; too fat; too many eggs for vegetarians; the breaks between meals were too long; more protein options for breakfast; poor hygiene with hairs and flies in some dishes (1).

How would you rate travelling to Peyresq? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: _____ 17 _____ 12 _____ 2 _____
 No problem; long but well explained (3); worth it though! tiring.

How would you rate the technical staff at Peyresq? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: _____ 29 _____ 1 _____

Background material

How would you rate the AVEC website? 1 2 3 4 5
 What could be improved at the AVEC website? _____ 9 _____ 19 _____ 3 _____
 All papers on one page would save clicks; sorting like Dagmar did, would be helpful; more information on Peyresq (2) and accommodation (2); some links did not work; participation list in advance.

How would you rate the background material on the website? 1 2 3 4 5
 _____ 12 _____ 16,5 _____ 1,5 _____

What other background material would have helped?
 Explanation or additional comments: good to have it in advance; more “readable” material was needed; one paper per talk would be sufficient; on vulnerability in general; detailed agenda; poster board dimensions; maps of the region.

Did you read anything from the background material of the internal website in advance? yes / no
 Which material? Only from the first three days; the biosketches; downloaded all but glanced only at 27 4
 some; nice to have them on the internet; should be sorted according to priorities like Dagmar did; not enough time;
 Explanation or additional comments: from Stephan (2) being the first speaker; first concepts should be given;
 shorter articles (max. 15 pages) should be preferred. _____

Was the provision of background material on CD-ROM for the working groups adequate? 1 2 3 4 5
11 13 7

Would you have preferred a different type of distribution? No (11)
 Explanation or additional comments: web data not CD was used; more explanation and less data preferred; it was
 good having it vague because this helped thinking ourselves; a guide on the CD which data were included would
 have helped; more data than time to use them; more local info was needed.

Are you satisfied with receiving pdf-copies of the presentations and additional
 background information after the summer course? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: would prefer ppt, not pdf. 25 2 2

Do you find it useful that participants were asked to prepare a report of each
 lecture and the discussions? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: 10,5 11,5 7,5 1,5
 OK but difficult without own laptop; purpose should have been explained; is not necessary I rely on my own notes;
 not enough time to do it good; waste of time.

Do you want that the regional assessments of each group is distributed on the
 final CD-ROM? 1 2 3 4 5
27 2 1

Structure and organisation of the summer school

How do you rate the structure of the working days? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: 9 17 4
 Poster sessions should be distributed over more days; not the same structure every day; more lectures and excursion
 instead of working groups; aperitif talk disturbed working groups (3); let speakers not overrun their time; instead of
 aperitif talks some walks into the surroundings; should be more relaxed and skip some lectures; intensive but well
 organized; more free time. _____

How do you rate the general quality of the lectures? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: 19,5 11,5
 Very high; too many and some redundancy; almost all interesting; missed more socio-economic talks. _____

How do you rate the opportunity for discussing the lectures? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: 19 10 2
 Some speakers talked too long; longer discussions should be made possible; when lively discussions are ongoing,
 do not close them; enjoyed talking to lecturers during meals. _____

How do you rate the topical lectures? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: 15 15 1
 Sometimes redundant in 2nd week (2); more socio-economic (3); international law. _____

How do you rate the 'aperitif talk' lectures? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: 24 6 1
 More provocative; IHOPE, Buddhist creative; although with drinks in the hand not that much difference. _____

How do you rate the group work developing a regional assessment? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: 8 17 5 1
 Good exercise (2); hard work; more instructions needed; process/learning more important than "product";
 inefficient but learned a lot; smaller groups in the beginning would be better; summing up with other groups; group
 dynamics!; lost time.

Excellent/Easy/Yes - Poor/Difficult/No

How do you rate your own group's work? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: 7 14 8 1

Difficult beginning, very strong in the end; too much discussion, not enough conclusions; not always a friendly atmosphere; equipment not sufficient (beamer, flipchart etc.); process more important than the result; lots of communication problems; difficult to work with people from different backgrounds; very positive thanks to the tutor.

What did you learn from your case study? Look at our report! 8step approach; increased comfort with qualitative data and analysis; how to work in such a group (9); integrating stakeholders is imperative in assessments; how difficult/tricky VA is. _____

How do you rate the contribution of your tutor? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: 12 16 1 2

Very helpful when we got stuck; faster clarification would have saved time; better guidelines needed; tried not to interfere but to be present at the right time; too week. _____

Would you have preferred more presentations or more breakout activity time? no, was fine (12); more presentations (4); more breakout time (7); some physical games would have been fine; more time before dinner for walking.

What activities/presentations worked best in the summer school? Long coffee breaks with discussions; starting at 9:00h; morning lectures (5); the first week; long lunch; Buddhist nuns (2). _____

What activities/presentations worked most poorly? Some talks were too long/ redundant; poster presentations too concentrated take more days; stakeholder too basic; beginning of working groups; aperitif talks interrupted the working group time. _____

Did you enjoy the field trip on Friday 23 September? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: 14 13 3

Bus ride too long (10); skip a talk and longer walks instead; too little information on local area and local vegetation; more walking (2); meet local stakeholders; less but longer stops at the Gorge; non-alcoholic beverages. _____

Did you enjoy the day-off on Tuesday 27 September? 1 2 3 4 5
28 2

Was the day-off needed to obtain, for example, some rest? 1 2 3 4 5
 Explanation or additional comments: 23 3 3 1

Nice but not needed (2); definitely needed (2); perfect timing to recharge the batteries for the last days; more options for excursions would have been nice; one more day off would have been nice. _____

Organisation

What suggestions do you have for the organizers for how they could be more effective? Already flawless; website more appealing to invite to read more beforehand; more PCs; smaller working groups; list biosketches of all participants on the web; poster sessions distributed on more days; more information on practical matters.

What other ideas do you have for how the summer school could have been more effective? Introduction of all participants (including organizers) beforehand; more abstracts beforehand; more public PCs; some exercises based on the lectures; more guiding of working groups; smaller working groups; more stakeholder aperitif talks; more free time; another free day. _____

How and when did you learn about the summer school? Any suggestion how to improve the advertisement? Popularize through professional organizations; idw Newsletter (in Germany); from supervisor (5); AVEC website (4); my institute (3); by former participants who talked highly about it (3); forwarded e-mail (3); e-mail list (2); e-mail from colleagues of Wolfgang (2); from a speaker; poster in my institute; e-mail distributed at my university. _____

Excursion

	Excellent/Easy/Yes		- Poor/Difficult/No		
Did the excursion provide good examples for the lectures?	1	2	3	4	5
Explanation or additional comments: _____	9	15	6		

What did you miss? Nothing; longer walk; walk in the Canyon; more explanations on the long bus ride; more time in the field; talks to stakeholders; non-alcoholic beverages at lunch. _____

What would you like to have changed? more hiking (3); les bus ride (2); less stops at the canyon one walk instead;

Overall rating

What is your overall rating of the summer school?	1	2	3	4	5
Explanation or additional comments: _____	20	11			

Close to perfect; not experienced any better course; can always be improved; _____

Might this summer school influence your studies and research in the near/far future? Yes (13); hopefully (2); only time will tell; yes, especially important because at the beginning of PhD; gathered more courage; might broaden my approach; yes, a lot of new ideas and contacts.

Any open questions? Can I come next year? _____

Any additional comments?

Nice to talk to highly known persons;
Reduced shame (& fear);
Thanks for the nice climate between lecturers, tutors and students;
More material for working groups and blackboards;
A talk on the Mercantour National Park: it is so close!
No TV and slow internet put people together!
“All inclusive” the best I have ever seen!
It has been a life-time experience;
Many thanks to Sabine and the whole team;

Maybe discuss the future of Europe (this is not a theme of a summer school but it would be interesting);

Please give this form to anyone of the organisers before leaving Peyresq. Thank you!