THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

2025-26 Winter Term 2 UBC-V Individual Instructor Report for FRE_V 521-E_002 - Topics in Food and Resource Economics (Kevin Laughren)

Project Title: **2025-26 Winter Term 2 UBC-V Instructor SEI Surveys**

Course Audience: **19**
Responses Received: **17**
Response Ratio: **89 %**

Report Comments

Recommended Minimum Response Rates

Class Size	Recommended Minimum Response Rates based on 80% confidence & ± 10% margin
< 10	75%
11 - 19	65%
20 - 34	55%
35 - 49	40%
50 - 74	35%
75 - 99	25%
100 - 149	20%
150 - 299	15%
300 - 499	10%
> 500	5%

Legend

N: Invited
n: Responded

Frequency Distribution
SD: Strongly Disagree
D: Disagree
N: Neutral
A: Agree
SA: Strongly Agree
N/A: Not applicable

Statistics

IM: Interpolated Median
DI: Dispersion Index
PF: Percent Favourable

Creation Date: **Monday, May 4, 2026**

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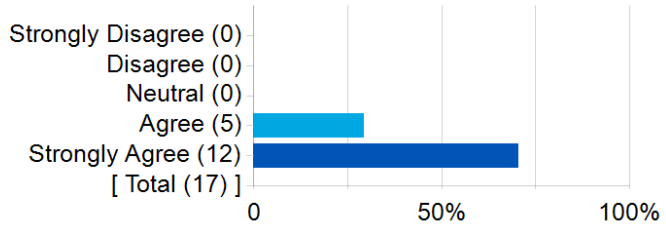
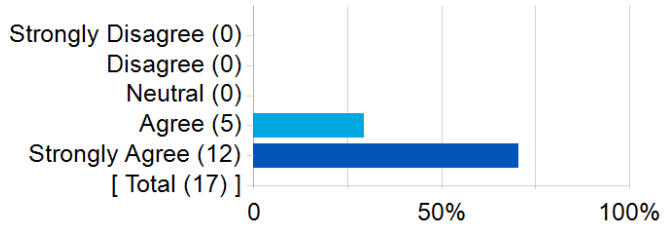
University Module Questions

University Module Questions

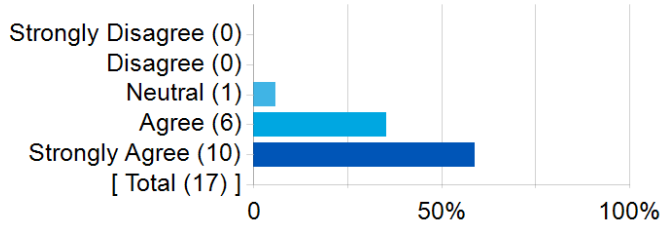
1. Throughout the term, the instructor explained course requirements so it was clear to me what I was expected to learn.



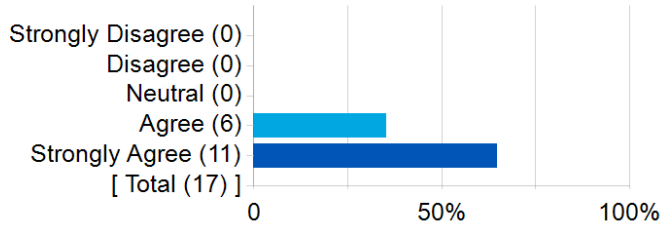
2. The instructor conducted this course in such a way that I was motivated to learn.



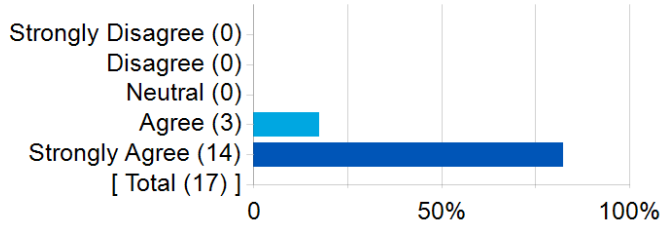
3. The instructor presented the course material in a way that I could understand.



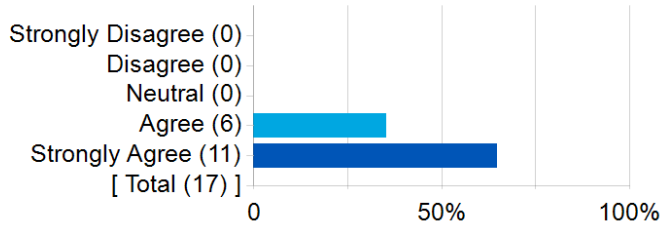
4. Considering the type of class (e.g., large lecture, seminar, studio), the instructor provided useful feedback that helped me understand how my learning progressed during this course.



5. The instructor showed genuine interest in supporting my learning throughout this course.



6. Overall, I learned a great deal from this instructor.



University Module Questions

Question	N	n	SD	D	N	A	SA	N/A	IM	PF	DI
Throughout the term, the instructor explained course requirements so it was clear to me what I was expected to learn.	19	17	0	0	0	5	12	0	4.8	100%	0.2
The instructor conducted this course in such a way that I was motivated to learn.	19	17	0	0	0	5	12	0	4.8	100%	0.2
The instructor presented the course material in a way that I could understand.	19	17	0	0	1	6	10	0	4.7	94%	0.3
Considering the type of class (e.g., large lecture, seminar, studio), the instructor provided useful feedback that helped me understand how my learning progressed during this course.	19	17	0	0	0	6	11	0	4.7	100%	0.2
The instructor showed genuine interest in supporting my learning throughout this course.	19	17	0	0	0	3	14	0	4.9	100%	0.1
Overall, I learned a great deal from this instructor.	19	17	0	0	0	6	11	0	4.7	100%	0.2

Faculty Questions

Course Questions

Question	N	n	SD	D	N	A	SA	IM	DI
This course provided a welcoming and inclusive environment that supported students' learning and encouraged students to participate.	19	16	0	0	0	3	13	4.9	0.2

Question	%Favourable
This course provided a welcoming and inclusive environment that supported students' learning and encouraged students to participate.	100%

Instructor Questions

Question	N	n	SD	D	N	A	SA	IM	DI
The instructor helped me recognize the value of this course in my scholarly, academic, and/or personal growth.	19	17	0	0	0	7	10	4.7	0.2

Question	%Favourable
The instructor helped me recognize the value of this course in my scholarly, academic, and/or personal growth.	100%

Open ended feedback

Please comment on what your instructor did well to support your learning.

Comments
Excellent comments of every exercise and assignment
Really clear slides, clear instructions and teaching. He was also very helpful and patient when I had questions
He is the only professor, who cares about explaining every details in the code
Kevin is always providing detailed and insightful comments on every single assignment/projects/proposal. You can receive a lot of comments and advice from him to help you become a career–ready person instead of only focusing on assignments. He is encouraging, and he leads us with coding one line by one line in class to make sure everyone is on track, which is the first and

only professor to do so in MFRE.
Kevin's slides and the structure of the course are the most clear we have had for MFRE, especially given the 6–week duration. He assigns readings that are extremely helpful in supporting learning and takes the time to review key aspects of these in class, on top of presenting the information in a different way that is more interactive. The in–class coding is also extremely helpful and really makes you understand the mechanics of the machine learning methods we are learning in class, and see how they can be applied to different datasets and situations. Kevin also provides very detailed and thought–out feedback for assignments, which is extremely appreciated, since it is clear that he has spent time reading and assessing our deliverables. He also makes himself available after class and during office hours for questions, even accommodating the fact that some people had another class directly after his class. In general, Kevin is also approachable and he makes his classes entertaining by engaging with us and cracking related funny jokes.
Kevin was an excellent professor all around. The live coding sessions in class were extremely helpful with my learning, and the consistent exercises that we were required to do solidified my understanding of both code and theory. The feedback given and his willingness to make time to chat outside of class was instrumental in my learning. He did a great job in clearly explaining complex topics and relating them to real–world applications.
I loved the live–coding with Kevin and many probably underestimates how difficult it is to code live. Kevin did great balancing helping out individuals while focusing on the greater class. I enjoyed his energy as well, jumping form lecture to code and back to lecture which keeps me engaged.
Kevin was hands down the best instructor during my time in the MFRE program in a multitude of manners. The course material (for a topic that was completely foreign to me) was delivered I a way such that is was easy to comprehend the concepts and understand the utility and real–world applications of the tools/models. His humour also made for enjoyable lectures. Moreover, Kevin made live in–class coding a cornerstone of his lectures which helped with understanding concepts and feeling confident in coding models myself for class exercises and assignments. While other courses in MFRE had labs for coding, Kevin delivered it in such a way that allowed me to implement my newfound coding knowledge immediately. Despite it being the most complex course in terms of coding, I found myself using least about of AI in supporting my coding for exercises and assignments – a testament to the effectiveness of Kevin's instructor abilities. Lastly, Kevin was incredibly accessible and approachable during office hours. Having his office hours in 366 allowed for students to work on their exercises and assignments, and easily ask him questions while working. His support during office hours was genuine often led to further conversations about the real–world implementations of machine learning. Kevin's approach to this course motivated myself and other students to challenge ourselves in the course.
I appreciated the in class coding
He explained well what is machine learning how it's different from econometrics
I like the live coding part so much that Kevin explains every single line of code and provides comments. Really help me understand the course.
The instructor did an excellent job of connecting theoretical concepts to practical applications. The lectures were well–structured and focused on helping students understand not only how to implement machine learning models, but also how to interpret and communicate the results. This emphasis on real–world relevance was particularly helpful.
feedback is clear
I liked the daily assignments/exercises although it added work it did contribute to my learning and make me think about the subject each day after class.

Do you have any suggestions for what the instructor could have done differently to further support your learning?

Comments
Nah
A small online quiz, maybe 5% in total, will be helpful before class as it will motivate students to read the readings.
Honestly, none. I loved this course and how it was structured. I felt like it was one of the classes I was able to take the most away from, especially in such a short time period.
None, it was an excellent class and my favorite within the MFRE program!
I can't think of much – I was very engaged and supported. Perhaps more challenge with actual rewards? I enjoyed assignment 1 because we got to compete on who had the best model.
None. Kevin's approach to instructing a class should be analyzed and brought into other courses offered in the MFRE program. His teaching approach is impeccable and encourages learning in a way I have experienced few other times in my academic career.
more emphasis on the theory behind the models would be useful
Maybe give a bit more time on the assignment? I feel like we only have one night for the first 2 assignments (probably because our field trip is the next day for FRE 515)
I really liked it, maybe some practice questions for the midterm would have been nice.

Please identify what you consider to be the strengths of this course.

Comments
Best coding course I have taken this year. I would take any courses he teaches.
Interesting and useful coding
Coding by hand.

This is the only course of its kind within MFRE. If it weren't for this course, I would never have been introduced to machine learning and it would have stayed a black hole type subject for me. It made machine learning feel accessible to me. It's also a great course that ties nicely into related econometrics courses, and Kevin structures it in a way that it is clear how it differs from standard econometric assumptions and how machine learning achieves different goals (i.e., prediction over causal interpretation). In general, as mentioned previously, Kevin is also a very pedagogical professor, who cares that his students are understanding the material and engaging.
Covered many models in a short period of time, but did not feel rushed. Very relevant course, emphasized economic interpretation and making actionable insights with models as opposed to strictly focusing on coding.
Great introduction to Machine Learning that is not elementary – we ended up learning a great deal about the topic.
The machine learning course provided a strong supplement/alternative to traditional econometric approaches that are taught in the MFRE program. Kevin's ability to communicate the strengths and weaknesses of both machine learning and traditional econometric approaches made it clear that this should be a core course in the MFRE portfolio, and it is a tool that students should not go without in the future. It has provided me with a new toolkit in terms of econometric analysis and has grossly changed the way I view and approach econometric and financial problems.
good introduction to prediction.
This course helped me to improve my coding skills
The class exercise and the combination of theory and live coding.
A strength is the clear structure of the course. Each week builds logically on previous material, which helps reinforce learning and reduces confusion when new topics are introduced. The progression from simpler models to more complex ones was particularly effective.
Interactive and clear real world applications.

Please provide suggestions on how this course might be improved.

Comments
I wish the courses were not so rushed
Nah
No improvements to suggest. I think the course delivered exactly as I expected it to and I learnt a great deal. If anything, I think other 6–week courses within MFRE should take note of how organised his content was and how he managed to maximise such little time and teach so much.
Make it a full term course, I want to learn more Machine Learning from Kevin!
I think the concepts can be tied back together a bit more but just coming up with improvements for the sake of it.
This course should be offered earlier in the MFRE program as the content would significantly benefit students through the program, and may even allow them to use machine learning approaches in some of the other courses in the program.
more depth, less breadth in terms of the topics covered. (less models)
It is the best coding course I've ever had!
sometimes i ignored the explanation when we type the code together. I wondering if we can have more time one the explanation for code instead of a rush coding time.
More practice questions and maybe bigger font for live coding.

Reflecting on everything you did in this course, what had the greatest impact on your learning?

Comments
Interesting lectures. Clear learning outlines
Kevin's passion
How machine learning is working and how to report code–generated information to business people.
Overall, Kevin and his teaching style and organisation is what had the greatest impact. It is really hard to imagine the organisation that goes into preparing a 6–week course like this one, but he managed to make such a dense topic feel extremely accessible and help us see the value of the concepts and how to readily apply them. This was one of the best courses I took within MFRE.
Engaging with the professor had the greatest impact on my learning. The office hours I spent discussing class topics more in depth and learning from Kevin were invaluable. This is the 6–week course which I feel Ive learned the most from and most of that is down to Kevin's teaching.
Live coding!
It largely changed my perspective of approaching econometric and other quantitative problem solving and modelling. It made me realize that traditional and machine learning econometric models can be used in tandem to allow for better modelling, forecasting, and predictions. This is a strong toolkit, and I was not aware about this until taking this course.
Before this course I don't have any knowledge regarding machine learning and this course really showed how the machine learning is more important in economic forcusting
I would say I am confident in machine learning, even though this is my first ML course. The class is encouraging, and I hope it could be longer.
The assignments had the greatest impact on my learning, as they required me to apply the models step by step and really understand

how they work. In particular, implementing and comparing different models helped me better grasp their strengths and limitations. The hands–on coding experience made the concepts much clearer than lectures alone.

The most impactful part of this course was the step–by–step teaching approach. As someone new to coding, I found Kevin's explanations very clear and approachable. He helped me build both my coding skills and my confidence. I really appreciate his support and teaching style.

I actually like the quiz part. It helps me with understanding and explanation.

The exercises after each class.

Explanatory Note

The reported metrics are as follows:

1. Percent Favourable Rating

This is the percentage of respondents who responded with a 4 or 5 (Agree or Strongly Agree) on a scale of 1 to 5.

2. Interpolated Median

The data collected for Student Experience of Instruction (SEI) are ordinal in nature, with a natural order (from 1 to 5). The usual measure of central tendency for ordinal data is the median (50% percentile). The Interpolated Median (IM) is an adjusted median that considers the number of responses less than the median, greater than the median and equal to the median. As such, IM reflects the distribution of students' responses.

Consider the following example:

Frequency Distribution

Response for University Module Item	Section 1	Section 2
5 = Strongly agree	5	5
4 = Agree	3	5
3 = Neither agree nor disagree	6	0
2 = Disagree	1	2
1 = Strongly disagree	0	1
Mean	3.8	3.8
Median	4.0	4.0
Interpolated Median	3.7	4.2
Percent favourable rating	53%	77%

3. Dispersion Index

The dispersion Index is a measure of variability suitable for ordinal data (Rampichini, Grilli & Petrucci 2004). This dispersion index has values between zero and 1. A zero dispersion index indicates that all students in the section gave the same rating. An index value of 1.0 is obtained when the class splits evenly between the two extreme values (Strongly Disagree & Strongly Agree), a very rare occurrence. In SEI data at UBC, the index rarely exceeds 0.85, and mostly for evaluations not meeting the recommended minimum response rate.