UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Evaluation of Public Policies

2627-1-F6303M036

Learning objectives

In different contexts of work and education students may be asked to examine, understand, describe and evaluate the impact of public interventions and identify best practices for policy design. Several qualitative and quantitative methods are usually adopted to provide policy makers and stackeholders with consistent information on policy outcomes and the course aims at making participants able to understand and use such methods.

This course is part of a broader training path (96 hours) organized in two separate courses. The first **Policy Analysis** (48 hours, 6 CFU) aims at introducing students to policy analysis and to the critical analysis of the implementation of public policies, while the second, **Policy Evaluation** (48 hours, 6 CFU), is devoted to quantitative approaches to policy evaluations (experimental and quasi-experimental techniques). Thus, the whole path integrates qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse and evaluate projects and programs and explores both theoretical and empirical issues by alternating formal lectures, case studies discussions and training sessions.

The training path is included among the elective courses and it is offered to all students interested in acquiring a specific competence in all aspects related to policy evaluation. Although not compulsory, participation in all three courses is recommended.

At the end of the course student will be able to:

- Understand the theoretical foundations and objectives of counterfactual impact evaluation in the context of public policies (KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING).
- Describe and distinguish between key evaluation methods, including randomized controlled trials, instrumental variables, difference-in-differences, and regression discontinuity designs (KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING).
- Apply appropriate experimental and quasi-experimental methods to assess the causal impact of public policy interventions using real or simulated data (APPLYING KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING).
- Analyze and interpret evaluation case studies from regional (e.g., Lombardy) and European contexts to assess policy effectiveness (APPLYING KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING).
- Critically evaluate the validity of causal claims in empirical policy assessments, identifying potential biases

and methodological limitations (MAKING JUDGEMENTS).
- Assess the policy relevance and implications of evaluation results, considering both statistical evidence and contextual appropriateness (MAKING JUDGEMENTS).
- Communicate evaluation findings clearly using quantitative evidence, visualizations, and accessible language tailored to policy and non-technical audiences (COMMUNICATION SKILLS).
- Translate complex statistical results into meaningful insights to answer the question: "Does the policy work, and how?" (COMMUNICATION SKILLS)
- Develop the ability to autonomously explore advanced methods and recent applications in the field of policy evaluation (LEARNING SKILLS).
- Strengthen the capacity to critically read and interpret evaluation reports and empirical research from academic and institutional sources (LEARNING SKILLS).

Contents

The course introduces students to the main tools of counterfactual evaluation used to study the impact of public policy. Both quantitative (experimental and quasi-experimental).

At the end of the course students will also learn how to effectively communicate the quantitative results of a policy evaluation.

The application of the main evaluation tools to some regional policies (welfare, transport, education and environment) will also be presented.

Detailed program

Evaluating the effects of public policies.

Counterfactual evaluation: experimental methods.

Randomized Controlled Trials: design and examples.

Counterfactual evaluation: quasi-experimental methods (Instrumental variables, differences-in-differences and *Regression Discontinuity Design*).

Case studies: counterfactual policy evaluation in Lombardy and the EU.

How to communicate policy quantitative evaluation

Prerequisites

Attendance of the whole educational path (two courses) is strongly recommended, though not compulsory.

Teaching methods

Face to face lessons (24 hours) that will cover the theory of impact evaluation, and intercatvie activities (24 hours) such as case discussion, training and interactive sessions with selected guest speakers. Up to a 30% (13 hours) of the lessons will be held online.

Assessment methods

Online test made of open questions, take-home assignments and group project-works.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

They are indicated in class.

Semester

Second Semester

Teaching language

Italian

Sustainable Development Goals

NO POVERTY | QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH