Statistics and Data Science in Practice – Interview information

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Introduction

As part of the Statistics and Data Science in Practice course you will be interviewing a researcher working in one of the subfields of the Statistics and Data Science master about their job. Below you'll find some practical information, what to hand in when, and how the questions are graded.

The interview

The interview should get you information on three broad topics: **(i) how a day in the life of a researchers looks, (ii) how they apply statistics in their work** (e.g., what models do they use, what kind of analyses do they perform, what kind of other data-related task do they perform (e.g., quality control, data cleaning, etc.)), and **(iii) what skills from their study do they use most in their day-to-day work.** The interview, and questions, should be aimed towards these themes. In the final presentation you will use this information to tell two other groups (who have interviewed someone from a different field) about your findings. Some practical information:

- The interview will be held as a group (as assigned on Brightspace).
- The person to interview will be assigned to your group, you'll receive and e-mail with contact information.
- Contact this person and set-up an (on-line) meeting. The interview will take **30 minutes max.** Be sure to keep track of the time. The interviewee does this on a voluntary basis and time is precious. **Plan the interview before the Christmas Holiday** (before 24 December) preferably.
- Prepare a set of questions to ask (see section Questions below). Every group member will ask at least one question. You can each think of a set of questions and later divide which person asks which questions, or you can sit together and think of questions.
- As a group you will hand in your questions, and a short summary (max. 2 A4) of the interview in January (before the final presentations).

The questions

Try and aim for open questions (but not too open). For example, when trying to get information on job satisfaction, asking "do you like your work?", might elicit a "yes" or "no" response. Asking "tell me about your job", might not get you the information you want. Asking "what aspects of your job give you the most satisfaction?", will (hopefully) elicit an informative answer that is not too long. Make sure to prepare a set of (possible) follow-up questions and ask them when necessary.

The quality of the questions will be graded using the following rubric:

- Questions evoke an open answer (not "yes"/"no" questions).
- Questions are not too broad ("tell me about your job").
- Questions are tailored to the expertise of the researcher.
- Questions are in line with the 3 main aims of the interview.
- (when applicable): follow-up questions are appropriate and in line with the original question asked.

Some additional tips and tricks

- First and foremost: do some research about the persons to be interviewed (where do they work, what does this company do, etc.). It's not a complete background check, but some context will help greatly.
- Be polite.
- Ask for permission if you want to record the interview.
- Make sure every group member asks at least one question.
- When planning, let one person do the communication (prevent a lengthy e-mail discussion with reply-all about possible meeting times). As a group figure out your availability first and ask the interviewee for their availability. Be flexible.
- And have fun! This is an opportunity to get insight into future working places (and maybe internship places), so make the most of it!