

Dear Colleagues,

a few months ago, we announced a set of new distance-learning courses in statistics and evaluation of the weight of forensic evidence that our University offers in collaboration with Dr. Ian Evett and Professor Colin Aitken.

As the starting date of the courses approaches (February 2012), we would like to give you some additional information. The full course that takes approximately 500 hours leads to a Certificate of Advanced Studies with 20 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) that are also recognized in the US. The course is tailored for forensic practitioners and can be followed from the participant's electronic workplace with flexible timing. The workload of an 18 months course will be approximately 4 hours per week online and 2-4 hours of preparation and other work. The shorter courses on DNA and Bayesian networks lead to 5 ECTS, respectively, and the expected workload will be about 3 hours per week on the electronic platform and 1-2 hours of preparation and personal work.

Demonstration site

We invite you to visit our website where you will find the topics of the courses as well as some examples. Please access our homepage <http://moodle.unil.ch/course/view.php?id=1099> and logon as an "Invité" ("Guest" in French).

Is such a course necessary?

- In the field of DNA (often regarded as a gold standard for statistical and interpretative issues), only half of the ISFG affiliated laboratories performed proficiency tests on interpretation skills. This participation rate suggests that many laboratories do not feel at ease with interpretative issues. This concern is also raised in other working groups, at conferences and in Courts of law.

There is no harmonised or coherent view with regard to interpretation.

- The above-mentioned proficiency tests show that, even when people work on the same data, results vary considerably. This is alarming, as the reported value of the evidence ranged from several billions to zero. This means that a number of laboratories exclude a potential source, while others consider it as helpful for identification.

Can such courses help develop independence and self-confidence in the solution of practical inference problems and contribute to harmonization?

- Interpretation is a difficult task: in order to explain one's reasoning in the Court, there is a need for thorough understanding.
- According to feedback and examination results of students from our first two classes, this type of course helps achieving self confidence and harmonisation, based on acquired knowledge, understanding and competence.

Further information

The course fee can be spread into separate payments on request.

If you need any further information, please email us at sefe@unil.ch.

Best regards,

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