



Albertus Smit <ajsmit@uwc.ac.za>

Your input to my new BDC334 and BCB743 website

5 messages

AJ Smit <ajsmit@uwc.ac.za>

27 August 2022 at 08:26

To: arajkaran@uwc.ac.za, bryanmaritz@gmail.com, vcouldridge@uwc.ac.za, adengelbrecht@uwc.ac.za, gmaneveltdt@uwc.ac.za, knight.rich@gmail.com, jboatwright@uwc.ac.za, mgibbons@uwc.ac.za, ajsmit@uwc.ac.za, lraitt@gmail.com, rbcedras@gmail.com, isamuels@uwc.ac.za, mhendricks@uwc.ac.za, Linda Van Heerden <lvheerden@uwc.ac.za>

Good morning all,

I am preparing a website in support of my blended learning approach for BDC334 Biogeography and Global Ecology and BCB743 Quantitative Ecology. By the end of the year my BCB744 Biostatistics module (currently at <https://ajsmit.netlify.app/workshops/>) will also have found a home at the new website.

The new website is here: <https://tangledbank.netlify.app/>

It is a work in progress, so some pages may still be a bit rough around the edges. I would like your input so I may improve it.

The reason for my email is four-fold:

1. I would like your thoughts about additional theory concepts that I should consider including in these modules, specifically those that will address interdependencies between your modules and mine (such as building on concepts that you introduced, or providing background content/theory that you can further develop in your teaching).
2. I would like some additional ecological datasets that I may use in my practicals, specifically those that can be analysed using any of the multivariate methods I teach in BCB743. It would be great to have datasets across a range of disciplines, from herpetology, through insects, to small mammals (mine tend to be marine focussed). If these datasets provide some interesting view on ecological concepts or processes it will be an added benefit. These datasets may look to papers you have written, so that the publication can provide the context for the data and analyses.
3. Do you have your own favourite multivariate methods that you'd like me to teach, which I currently don't deal with in BCB743?
4. Do you have examples of useful but difficult to explain concepts/analyses that I might add as 'Walkthroughs'?

Otherwise, I am happy to accept any constructive feedback you might have that might facilitate improving the website.

Thanks,
AJ

Prof. AJ Smit
Department of Biodiversity & Conservation Biology
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
South Africa
Work tel.: +27 (0)21 959 3783
Fax.: +27 (0)21 959 2312
Mobile: +27 (0)78 300 6005

<https://ajsmit.netlify.app/>

Mark Gibbons <mgibbons@uwc.ac.za>

27 August 2022 at 10:10

To: AJ Smit <ajsmit@uwc.ac.za>

Cc: arajkaran@uwc.ac.za, bryanmaritz@gmail.com, vcouldridge@uwc.ac.za, adengelbrecht@uwc.ac.za, gmaneveltdt@uwc.ac.za, knight.rich@gmail.com, jboatwright@uwc.ac.za, lraitt@gmail.com, rbcedras@gmail.com, isamuels@uwc.ac.za, mhendricks@uwc.ac.za, Linda Van Heerden <lvheerden@uwc.ac.za>

AJ

This is brilliant. I have obviously not spent too much time looking at it in any detail, but the approach you have taken shows an immense amount of thought has gone into producing a fantastic resource that will be useful for anyone. It is pertinent, literate and at times witty. Please don't expect us to do similarly!

I sit on quite a few datasets and I'm very happy to share them with you - when I get back.

Congrats AJ - you've done us proud again!!

enjoy the weekend

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Mark John Gibbons
Department of Biodiversity and Conservation Biology
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
RSA
+27 21 959 2475/2301 (W)
+27 21 959 2312 (Fax)
Skype: markgibbons

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Gavin Maneveldt <gmaneveldt@uwc.ac.za>

29 August 2022 at 12:13

To: AJ Smit <ajsmit@uwc.ac.za>

Cc: arajkaran@uwc.ac.za, bryanmaritz@gmail.com, vcouldridge@uwc.ac.za, adengelbrecht@uwc.ac.za, knight.rich@gmail.com, jboatwright@uwc.ac.za, mgibbons@uwc.ac.za, lraitt@gmail.com, rbcdras@gmail.com, isamuels@uwc.ac.za, mhendricks@uwc.ac.za, Linda Van Heerden <lvheerden@uwc.ac.za>

Hi AJ

This looks great, ... I don't know where you get the energy for it. Just trying to keep iKamva populated has been a mission for me. And, I know the students don't really appreciate it. I started a weekly lessons plan in which students had to tick off what they completed (as a way to keep track of their progress), but even the better performing students eventually slipped up on completing the lessons plan. I think they are simply too overwhelmed sometimes.

I will send comments if I have any.

Best regards
Gavin

Prof. Gavin W. Maneveldt (PhD)
Professor of Marine Biology and Biodiversity Studies
Faculty of Natural Sciences
Department of Biodiversity & Conservation Biology
Landline: +27(0)21 959 2342/2301
Cellphone: +27(0)82 372 7459

Virus-free.www.avast.com

On Sat, Aug 27, 2022 at 8:26 AM AJ Smit <ajsmit@uwc.ac.za> wrote:

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AJ Smit <ajsmit@uwc.ac.za>

29 August 2022 at 13:15

To: Gavin Maneveldt <gmaneveldt@uwc.ac.za>

Cc: arajkaran@uwc.ac.za, bryanmaritz@gmail.com, vcouldridge@uwc.ac.za, adengelbrecht@uwc.ac.za, knight.rich@gmail.com, jboatwright@uwc.ac.za, mgibbons@uwc.ac.za, lraitt@gmail.com, rbcdras@gmail.com, isamuels@uwc.ac.za, mhendricks@uwc.ac.za, Linda Van Heerden <lvheerden@uwc.ac.za>

Thanks Mark and Gavin,

Yeah, it is a lot of work, but it covers all the bases. Students now have access to three modes of module content delivery:

- traditional lecture slides that provide a digestible breakdown of key theory content;
- videos of me presenting old-fashioned lectures that flesh out the key points in the slides;
- long-form writing and instruction that cover many topics in more detail — our students do not read enough, and reading only bullet points does not compensate for the lack of textbooks.

All this redundancy means there's no excuse for missing lecture theory because they skipped a class. Then I follow up once a week with in-person meetings — not lectures, but to discuss ideas and concepts (of their choice) and to deal with issues as they arise.

The three modes of delivery overlap in theory content, but each detail differs. If students work systematically through the material, they should have all they need to successfully complete the module. Maybe an added benefit is that I can simultaneously cater to students who learn best by reading and those who prefer verbal instruction. But to do well, the entire course content is only available if they use the slides, videos, and writing together. Maybe this makes the difference between those students who pass with 60% vs those who pass with 80%?

I think having access to all the material places a lot more emphasis on learning as a process. Maybe this instils taking more personal responsibility for their own success. I don't know. I have become a bit disheartened by the expectation of students that the only way they can come to know facts and arrive at understanding is through them being taught something. Learning has to be on equal footing with teaching.

Another reason I am doing this (particularly with the R instruction) is that I have learned a lot of tricks in my research over the years that will never be captured unless I put them down in words somewhere. These things have escaped the typical Methods sections in most journals unless submitted as Supplementary Material. This also makes research more reproducible, spilling over successfully into teaching.

Mark, some datasets will be greatly appreciated!

Cheers,
AJ

Prof. AJ Smit
Department of Biodiversity & Conservation Biology
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
South Africa
Work tel.: +27 (0)21 959 3783
Fax.: +27 (0)21 959 2312
Mobile: +27 (0)78 300 6005

<https://ajsmit.netlify.app/>

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Anusha Rajkaran <arajkaran@uwc.ac.za>

30 August 2022 at 11:31

To: AJ Smit <ajsmit@uwc.ac.za>

Cc: Gavin Maneveldt <gmaneveldt@uwc.ac.za>, Bryan Maritz <bryanmaritz@gmail.com>, "Couldridge, Vanessa" <vcouldridge@uwc.ac.za>, "Engelbrecht, Adriaan" <adengelbrecht@uwc.ac.za>, Richard Knight <knight.rich@gmail.com>, James Boatwright <jboatwright@uwc.ac.za>, Mark Gibbons <mgibbons@uwc.ac.za>, Lincoln Raitt <lrait@gmail.com>, Riaan Cedras <rbcedras@gmail.com>, Igshaan Samuels <isamuels@uwc.ac.za>, "Hendricks, Martin" <mhendricks@uwc.ac.za>, Linda Van Heerden <lvheerden@uwc.ac.za>

Hi AJ

really amazing site and will be useful for staff and students alike.

no comments for now.

Thanks

Anusha

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Prof. Anusha Rajkaran
Associate Professor
Faculty of Natural Sciences
Department of Biodiversity and Conservation Biology
Phone: +27 21 959 9731

www.uwc.ac.za



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