Working with Student data: What to Consider

Anastasia Papadopoulou

University of Bristol

#EconTEAching, CTaLE

Primary data

- ▶ Student surveys

- ▶ In class: larger sample, but possibly high attrition and difficulty to collect a full repeated sample, useful to think on the timing of the survey(s)
  - ▶ Example: Mainly close-ended questions on attitudes about interactive exercises, towards economics, etc.

- ▶ In a separate pedagogic innovation (workshop, etc.): potentially smaller (and selected) sample, but low attrition
  - ▶ Example: Open- and close-ended questions on attitudes about the workshop, social atmosphere, use of pair programming, etc.

- ▶ Other methods, like student focus groups or interviews

Secondary data

- Complete dataset of students on grades (performance), some demographic characteristics, etc.

- Extreme care to anonymize the data and no individual being identifiable - aggregate analysis
  - Example: Module level grade data per component and overall for two academic years of all UG courses

- Some variables needed for a specific research question might be missing

- Likely, there are no alternative datasets and no proxies

- Also, the data might exist but in different fragments/places - not always easy to combine

Secondary data

- ▶ Replicability? Likely, not open access data, but codes

- ▶ Generalizability? Different institutional framework

- ▶ Combining data from different sources?

- ▶ Time to read, compare, and understand the different curricula

- ▶ Sanity checks and balance tests