

ICES TCMSE REPORT 2010

Report of the Training Course: Management Strategy Evaluation (including FLR) (TCMSE)

5- 9 April 2010

Centro Tecnológico del Mar, CETMAR, Bouzas, Vigo, Spain



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International Council for
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International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
Conseil International pour l'Exploration de la Mer

H. C. Andersens Boulevard 44-46

DK-1553 Copenhagen V

Denmark

Telephone (+45) 33 38 67 00

Telefax (+45) 33 93 42 15

www.ices.dk

info@ices.dk

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The document is an ICES Training course report

Contents

1	Summary.....	2
2	Recommendations.....	3
3	Course description.....	4
4	Course Programme.....	5
	Annex 1: List of participants.....	6
	Annex 2: Detailed course programme.....	12



Participants at the Joint ICES-ICCAT training course: "Management Strategy Evaluation, including FLR", 5-9 April 2010, Centro Tecnológico del Mar, CETMAR, Bouzas, Vigo, Spain. The course was given by Laurence Kell, ICCAT Secretariat (www.iccat.int), Spain (instructor) and Iago Mosqueira, CEFAS, UK (instructor).

**Report of the ICES-ICCAT training course:
“Management Strategy Evaluation, including FLR”**

by

Laurence Kell and Iago Mosqueira

1 Summary

The course ‘Management Strategy Evaluation (including FLR)’ was held in CETMAR, Centro Tecnológico del Mar, Bouzas, Vigo, Spain, between 5-9 of April 2010. A total of 23 participants from 12 countries, fulfilling the necessary requirements, attended the course. Participants came from various disciplines involved in fisheries research: i.e stock assessment, management, economics, biology and computational fisheries science.

The course was intense, as the subject, Management Strategy Evaluation, required covering a lot of material in just 5 days. Examples were based on current application of MSE within ICES and ICCAT but also by STECF and the IWC. For example the development of North Sea Cod management plans, the evaluation of generic harvest control rules by STECF, bio-economic evaluation of Mediterranean swordfish recovery plans, evaluation of CITES criteria for Atlantic bluefin and implementation of a management procedure for Bryde’s whales. Data used were from current ICES and ICCAT assessments and participants also worked on their own datasets during the course, e.g. tropical tuna catch and effort data, Iberian sardine, Western waters herring, Southern hake and North Atlantic albacore.

An important area covered by the course was how to consider uncertainty in stock assessment assumptions, data and results and translate such uncertainty into probabilistic statements about management outcomes. This involved both stock assessment but also derivation of reference points and indicators and how to build harvest control rules and then test them. Although participants were able to run and replicate all analyses and examples the ultimate level of success by participants in learning the principles and techniques involved was related to previous experience with the tools employed (i.e. R as a language and Monte Carlo simulation as a general approach). However, student participation was very active, and some students presented relevant bits of their work that connected to the course content.

The instructors generally considered the course a success, although the approach taken was maybe too broad for some participants and too restricted for others. This is reflected in the slight disparity of views gathered through the feedback form. Presenting the technical and conceptual tools of this type of analysis is a challenging exercise that will benefit from a detailed analysis of the experience of this course.

Ultimately the funders of fisheries science judge it on how it translates into management advice. Therefore building capacity in management strategies evaluation will continue to be important objective in the short to medium term.

2 Recommendations

From the feedback obtained during the course and through the form, and the observations and discussion of the experience, the instructors feel some improvements could be made to the course along the following lines:

- Ensuring attendants are sufficiently proficient in R, especially with the tools used. Some general recommendations along the lines of required R skills were given, however, attendees varied from those who had very little experience of R to those who had published their own packages on CRAN. There are three options either i) only accepting students with enough experience of the R language, ii) by engaging with them in advance and providing material to help them mastering the language before the course or iii) providing introductory courses in R related to stock assessment. This would of course have consequences for courses and budgets.
- Some participants thought that the programme was too ambitious for 5 days. However, during the course it was apparent that to achieve the main course objective of demonstrating how to conduct an MSE none of the earlier material could be omitted, particularly given the varied backgrounds of the participants. This mean that a wide array of fields had to be covered in the course, i.e. from basic computational statistics, to R programming, stock assessment, fisheries biology, presentation of advice.
- A possible division for this course could be established along the lines of the stock assessment ones. A first course would cover R and stochastic simulation, while a second one would concentrate on harvest control rules, management objectives and their evaluation together with issues of presentation of advice to stakeholders.
- Visually engaging ways of presenting what is in essence computer source code are not easy to find, i.e. use of GUIs verses programming on the command line. Renewed effort could be made to find better ways of showing source code, its structure and the results obtained at the same time. On the other hand, the current format, based around providing and explaining commented source code, enables re-use of material for individual applications. Many attendants managed to use most of the code on their own data, which should help understanding and encourage future use.
- The link to other ICES courses was also raised by some comments. Aside from the use of R in different ways, other courses do not directly link to what was presented in this one, except for the relatively small section on stock assessment. This could be related to the necessary focus on stock assessment of the other quantitative courses, which leave less room for questions on biology and modelling of stock dynamics that are of relevance in MSE.
- The use of R by working groups, and its presence in some, if not all, of the quantitative course in ICES training programme, might call for some support for basic teaching on R by ICES. This could be achieved through the training programme itself, or by use of web-based technologies as a way of providing

tailored training in R for the needs of participants in ICES training programme and working groups.

- The instructors intend to maintain contact with attendants in the near future, in order to help them with possible applications of the ideas discussed, but also to provide them with some extra teaching material that was requested during the course, covering mostly particular elements of the R language extensively used in the FLR libraries and for which available tutorials and examples are few or difficult to follow.
- Finally, the instructors are in the process of assembling a new set of material, informed by the valuable feedback and experience of this course that will hopefully make any future training in this area much simpler and even more successful.

3 Course description

The adoption of the precautionary approach for fisheries management requires a formal consideration of uncertainty. Therefore, since 1998 ICES advice on fisheries management has consisted of a dual system of limit and “precautionary approach” reference points, the latter providing a buffer to safeguard against natural variability and uncertainty in the assessment, and ensuring that limit reference points are avoided with high probability. Traditional stock assessment mainly considers uncertainty in observations and processes (e.g. recruitment), whereas uncertainty about the actual dynamics (i.e. model uncertainty) has a larger impact on achieving management objectives.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg 2002) commits signatories to maintain or restore stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) by 2015. A main management objective e.g. for ICCAT stocks, is to maintain stocks at levels which will permit the maximum sustainable catch. There is therefore a pressing need to develop new precautionary management advice based on targets rather than limits. This training course demonstrated how to conduct Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) using FLR (<http://flr-project.org/>) to develop long term management plans that were robust to uncertainty.

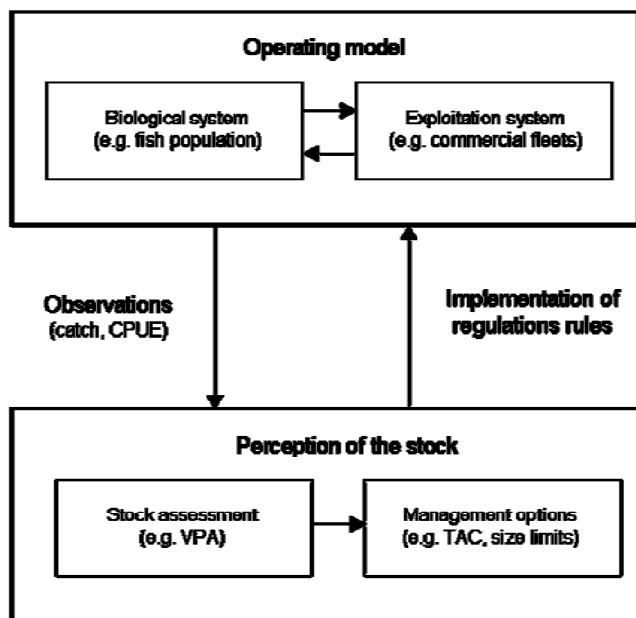
It was assumed that participants had knowledge of stock assessment, including estimation of stock status and biological reference points. The course were conducted using R (www.r-project.org/) and experience in using R or similar modelling languages were assumed.

Case studies were based upon ICES and ICCAT stocks. Course participants were welcomed to bring their own data.

By the end of the course, the participants were able to:

Run a stock assessment in R/FLR.

Develop Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) that generates the management outcomes based upon stock assessment outputs and biological reference points.



Evaluate the performance of alternative sampling and assessment procedures and HCRs given uncertainty.

Evaluate the trade-offs between risk to the stock and benefits to fishers of alternative scientific advice and management plans.

4 Course Programme

The five-day course were organised as a series of morning and afternoon sessions. Hands-on exercises were linked to each topic and scheduled throughout the course. Assignments were conducted in the open-source programming language R and the FLR sets of packages. For a detailed programme see Annex 2.

Day	Lecture	Topic
Monday	1	Using R
	2	Using FLR with case study data sets
Tuesday		Management Procedures I
	3	VPA based stock assessment
	4	Biological reference points
Wednesday	5	Non-linear modelling of stock recruitment data
		Management Procedures II
	6	Stock projection
Thursday	7	Harvest control rules
		Operating models:
	8	Data rich examples
Friday	9	Data poor examples
		Evaluation
	10	Translating models into advice
	11	Bio-economics

Annex 1: List of participants

ICES/ ICCAT Training Course on Management Strategy Evaluation (including FLR), Vigo, Spain from 5–9 April 2010

Name	Address	Telephone	E-mail
Laurence Kell (Instructor)	ICCAT Secretariat Corazón de María, 8 28002 Madrid Spain		Laurie.Kell@iccat.int
Iago Mosqueira (Instructor)	Cefas Fisheries Laboratory Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 0HT UK		iago.mosqueira@cefas.co.uk
Irene Mantzouni	DTU Aqua National Institute of Aquatic Resources Section for Population- and Ecosystem Dynamics Charlottenlund Slot Jægersborg Allé 1 DK-2920 Charlottenlund Denmark	+45 33963377	ima@aqua.dtu.dk
Christopher Lynam	Cefas Fisheries Pakefield Road Lowestoft Suffolk NR34 0HT UK	+44 1502 524514	chris.lynam@cefas.co.uk
Haritz Arrizabalaga	AZTI Marine Research Unit Herrera Kaia Portualdea z/g 20110 Pasaia (Gipuzkoa) Spain	+34 943004800	harri@azti.es

Name	Address	Telephone	E-mail
Diana Maria Gonzalez Troncoso	Centro Ocenografico de Vigo (Instituto Español de Oceanografía) Pequeras Lejanas (Far Fisheries) Cabo Estai-Canido, Ap. 1552, 36200 Vigo Spain	+34986492111	diana.gonzalez@vi.ieo.es
Afra Egan	Marine Institute Section: Pelagic Division: Fisheries Science Services Rinvilla, Oranmore, Co. Galway, Ireland	+44 91 387299	afra.egan@marine.ie
Francesc Maynou	Institut de Ciències del Mar (CSIC) Marine Renewable Resources Psg Maritim de la Barceloneta 37-39 08003-Barcelona Spain	+34932309559	maynouf@icm.csic.es
Maite Pons	Dirección Nacional de Recursos Acuáticos (DINARA) Departamento de Recursos Pelágicos Constituyente 1497, CP 11200, Montevideo Uruguay	+598 2 4004689	pons.maite@gmail.com

Name	Address	Telephone	E-mail
Björn Stockhausen	European Commission - Joint Research Center Institute for the Protection and Security of the Citizen (IPSC) Maritime Affairs Unit European Commission - Joint Research Center Maritime Affairs Unit Building 5A, TP 051 Via E. Fermi I-21027 Ispra (VA) Italy	+39 0332 78 9683	bjorn.stockhausen@jrc.ec.europa.eu
Alexandra Silva	INRB/IPIMAR - Institute of Fisheries and Sea Research UREMS-Unit of Marine Resources and Sustainability Av. Brasília, 1449-006 Lisbon, Portugal	+351 21 302 7000	asilva@ipimar.pt
Alberto Murta	IPIMAR Marine Resources Unit Avenida Brasilia 1449-006 Lisbon Portugal	213027120	amurta@ipimar.pt
Jose Maria Da Rocha	Universidade de Vigo Economic Facultad CC Economicas Campus Universitario Lagoas Marcosende Vigo 36200 Spain	+34986812400	jmrocha@uvigo.es
Luis Ridao	Faroe Marine Research Institute Fisheries Department FO-110 Torshavn Faroe Islands	+298 353900	luis@hav.fo

Name	Address	Telephone	E-mail
Cesar Meiners	Universidad Veracruzana (University of Veracruz) Av. Hidalgo 617 Col. Río Jamapa Boca del Río, Veracruz México 94290I		cmeiners@uv.mx
Sylvia Ayivi	Ministry of Food and Agriculture Marine Fisheries Research Department P. O. Box BT 32 Tema Ghana West Africa		asmasus@yahoo.com
Jose Ortiz de Urbina	Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO) Tuna Fisheries Department Puerto Pesquero s/n 29640 Fuengirola (Málaga) Spain	+34952471907	urbina@ma.ieo.es
Inés Naya	Universidade da Coruña Research Group in Marine Resources and Fisheries Departament of Animal Biology, Plant Biology and Ecology Facultade de Ciencias Alejandro de la Sota, s/n C.P. 15008 - A Coruña Spain	+34 981167000 Ext. 2204	inaya@udc.es
Carmen Fernandez	Instituto Español de Oceanografía Centro Oceanografico de Vigo Cabo Estai Canido Apdo. 1552 36200 Vigo Spain	+3496492111	carmen.fernandez@vi.ieo.es

Name	Address	Telephone	E-mail
Daniele Bevacqua	University of Parma (Italy) Dipartimento Scienze Ambientali Scienze Ambientali, Viale G.P. Usberti 11/A 43124 Parma Italy	+39 3024438	daniele.bevacqua@gmail.com
Santiago Cerviño	Instituto Español de Oceanografía Fisheries Area ICES program Centro Oceanográfico de Vigo Subida a Radio Faro, 50-52 36090 Vigo Spain	+34 986492111	santiago.cervino@vi.ieo.es
Fernando Gonzalez-Costas	Instituto Español de Oceanografía Far Fisheries Cabo Estay - Canido Apartado 1552 36200 Vigo Spain	+34 986 46 22 39	fernando.gonzalez@vi.ieo.es
Arni Magnusson	Marine Research Institute Fisheries Advisory Section Skulagata 4 PO Box 1390 121 Reykjavik Iceland	+354 822 0874	arnima@hafro.is
Sebastian Villasante	University Santiago de Compostela. a acoruña av burgo das naciones s/n Santiago de compostela Spain	+34981563100 extension 11671	sebastian.villasante@usc.es

Name	Address	Telephone	E-mail
Kelle Moreau	Institute of Agricultural and Fisheries Research Research Group on Fisheries Biology Ankerstraat 1 B-8400 Oostende Belgium	+32 59 56 98 30	kelle.moreau@ilvo.vlaan deren.be
Søren Anker Pedersen <i>(Coordinator for Training)</i>	ICES H.C. Andersens Blv. 44-46 DK-1553 Copenhagen V Denmark	+45 33 38 67 00	sorenap@ices.dk

Annex 2: Detailed course programme

Time	Event	
Monday, 5 April 2010		
Introduction		
9.00 – 9.30	Welcome: (SAP, LK, IM) ICES Training and What is ICES? (SAP) About this course: (LK, IM) Introduction of participants and lecturers	
9.30 – 10.00	Introduction to MSE, FLR and some other acronyms (LK)	
10.00 – 10:30	The R language: installation and some advanced features (IM)	
10.30 – 11:00	Tea/Coffee	
11:30-13:00	Tutorial - Installation and FLCore (IM)	
13:00-14:00	Lunch	
14.30 – 15.30	<i>Tutorial - Installation and FLCore(cont.)</i>	
15.30 – 16.00	Assignment – Loading data, plotting, building objects	
16.00 – 16.30	Tea/Coffee	
16.30 – 18.00	Assignment – Loading data, plotting, building objects (cont.)	
18.00 – 20.00	<i>Icebreaker</i>	
Tuesday, 6 April 2010		
Modeling biological populations		

9.00 – 10.00	Modeling biological populations (LK)	
10.00 – 11.00	<i>Non-linear modeling of stock recruitment data using FLSR (IM)</i>	
11.00 – 11.30	<i>Tea/Coffee</i>	
11.30 – 13.00	Tutorial - Fitting SR models using FLSR (IM)	
13.00 – 14.30	<i>Lunch</i>	
14.30 – 15.00	Tutorial – Modeling growth and maturity (IM)	
15.00 – 16.00	Tutorial – Simulating a population (LK)	
16:00 – 16:30	Tea/Coffee	
16:30 – 18:00	Tutorial – Indicators (LK)	
Wednesday, 7 April 2010		
Stock status, Harvest Control Rules and Management Procedures		
9.00 – 10:00	Biological productivity and limits to exploitation (LK)	
10:00 – 11:00	Tutorial - Biological, and economic, reference points from FLBRP (LK)	
11.00– 11.30	Tea/Coffee	
11.30 – 13.00	<i>Tutorial - Stock assessment using FLXSA and FLSP (IM)</i>	
13:00-14:30	<i>Lunch</i>	
14.30 – 16.00	Tutorial - Harvest control rules (LK,IM)	
16.30 – 16.30	Tea/Coffee	
16.30 – 18.00	Tutorial – Management procedures (LK, IM)	

Thursday, 8 April 2010

Building operating models

9.00 – 10.00	Conditioning, OMs (IM)	
10:00 – 11:00	Tutorial - MSE for a data-poor situation (IM)	
11.00 – 11.30	Tea/Coffee	
11.30 – 13.00	<i>Tutorial - MSE for a data-poor situation (cont.)</i>	
13.00 – 14.30	Lunch & Group photo	
14.30 – 16.00	Tutorial - MSE for a data-rich situation (LK)	
16.00 – 16.30	Tea/Coffee	
16.30- 17.00	Tutorial - MSE for a data-rich situation (cont.)	
17.00 – 18.00	Assignment - Putting together a simple MSE for your own data	
20.00 – late	Course dinner (optional, expenses to be covered by participants)	

Friday, 9 April 2010

Translating models into advice

9.00 – 10.00	Advice from MSE, communication (LK,IM)	
10:00 – 11:00	Tutorial - Bio-economics (LK)	
11.00 – 11.30	Tea/Coffee	
10.45 – 13.00	Tutorial - Bio-economics (cont.)	
13.00 – 14.30	Lunch	
14.30 – 15.00	Demonstration - Extending classes, new packages (IM)	

15.00 – 15.30	Demonstration - ADMB (LK)	
15:30 – 16:00	Tea/Coffee	
16.00 – 17.00	Final discussion, Q&A and closing	