



## Report - AG2150 - 2021-11-04

Respondents: 1  
Answer Count: 1  
Answer Frequency: 100,00 %

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Please note that there is only one respondent to this form: the person that performs the course analysis.

**Course analysis carried out by (name, e-mail):**

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**DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE EVALUATION PROCESS**

**Describe the course evaluation process. Describe how all students have been given the possibility to give their opinions on the course. Describe how aspects regarding gender, and disabled students are investigated.**

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At the beginning of the course, representatives were sought among the students to take part in course meetings. 6 students with different disciplinary backgrounds reported interest. These were then directly consulted at a mid-course meeting and final course meeting.

All students in the course were also invited to an open final course discussion on the last day of the course, where experiences from the different course parts were shared in smaller groups and then discussed together with the teachers present. The final afternoon was then scheduled to give students time to fill in the LEQ course evaluation. Reminders were sent out the week after. The response rate was 61%, which is higher than previous years (2020: 46%)

LEQ questions used include aspects of gender and disabilities - commented below.

**DESCRIPTION OF MEETINGS WITH STUDENTS**

**Describe which meetings that has been arranged with students during the course and after its completion. (The outcomes of these meetings should be reported under 7, below.)**

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In addition to the open course discussion at the end of the course (where all students were welcome to participate and discuss reflections on the course), the student representatives were specifically invited to

- 1) a mid evaluation meeting held approx. midway through the course, and
- 2) a final course meeting 2,5 weeks after the course had finished

At these meetings, core teachers from the different course parts were also invited to take part, along with the course responsible, the examiner and for the final meeting, the program responsible.

It was commented by students and teachers that there are ample occasions for students to provide feedback throughout the course. Having both a course discussion and then a formal course evaluation and final course meeting might be somewhat overwhelming for students who feel like they have already conveyed their feedback, so this could perhaps be arranged in a different way for coming years.



## **COURSE DESIGN**

### **Briefly describe the course design (learning activities, examinations) and any changes that have been implemented since the last course offering.**

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The course has been significantly redone and was 2021 given in a new course version. Major changes include Intended Learning Outcomes, the division and activities of the various course parts, their respective credits and examination forms.

In the new version, the course is divided into four main parts:

Part 1 (ÖVN1) "Transdisciplinary urban planning and design" provides students with an introduction to Stockholm, to one another, and to urban planning and design from a cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspective. The main activities include lectures and seminars, a field trip, and a series of workshops. Emphasis is on learning-by-doing in cross-disciplinary groups and peer-to-peer feedback in short workshops, while lectures and seminars engage with different contexts, knowledge fields and sustainability challenges. Summative examination is based on participation in the workshops.

- This course part was partly revised since previous course version. Previously, Part 1 focused on one, week-long, project targeted on one particular urban area. The revised version, with a series of 1-day workshops, instead provides more opportunities to switch up students in new groups, working with different areas for each workshop, and with different thematic perspectives.

Part 2 (PRO1) "Sustainable urban development project" is a group project assignment that explores local conditions and complex issues in an ongoing urban development area. Through highlighting multiple sustainability aspects and testing different strategies, a proposal for the development of the project area is developed. Students work with different strands of questions, utilizing different tools and formats for exploration. The group work is supported by supervision sessions, as well as input gained from the in-depth explorations in part 3, running in parallel with the project assignment. Summative examination is based on participation in supervision sessions; final oral group presentation; group project submission.

- The project assignment part of the course overall follows a similar logic as previous years, exploring sustainable development goals and the development of a proposal for a particular sustainable urban district in 2060. However, the course part has in the revised version been reduced slightly from 6 to 5 credits, in order to make it more even to the only other graded course part (Part 4, below). Another major change from the previous course version is that the project is no longer divided into Design or Planning projects. Instead, students work cross-disciplinary with Planning AND Design projects, where a number of "formats" to be explored through the project work are part of the deliverables in the final project proposal and presentation.

Part 3 (ÖVN2) "Approaches to sustainable development" is a completely new course part in the revised course. This part focuses more in-depth on critical theory on sustainable development, providing space to discuss with peers and teachers. Students are provided an overview of contemporary critical urban debates, and tasked to - in peer-seminars - relate these critical perspectives to urban practice. The module combines lectures, ample time for reading, and seminars, to gain a critical lens to approach sustainable urban development. Summative examination is based on participation in seminars.

- This part has replaced the previous course module focused on introducing select methods for exploring and assessing sustainable urban development.

Part 4 (INL1) "Individual reflection on planning and design for sustainability". Throughout the course, students are asked to formulate and elaborate an individual reflection on planning and design for sustainable development, based on a knowledge-seeking process that takes its departure in the course content as well as the student's own background. The writing of the individual reflection, in an essay format, is supported by supervision and mid peer-feedback seminar. Summative examination: participation in mid seminar & hand-in of draft essay; final hand-in individual reflection.

- This part, replacing the previous home exam part of the course, has been expanded to encompass 5 credits, same as the project assignment. As the only individually graded course part, this means that the weighing of the final grade is more evenly influenced both by the group project grade and the individual reflection grade.



### **THE STUDENTS' WORKLOAD**

#### **Does the students' workload correspond to the expected level (40 hours/1.5 credits)? If there is a significant deviation from the expected, what can be the reason?**

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Overall, this year the student's reported workload was slightly more in line with the intended 40 hours per week than previous years, which is positive.

70% reported having spent between 30-40 hours per week, whereas approx. 20% reported having spent more than 40 hours/week. (This can be compared to 2020, where also 20% reported having spent >40 h/week, but then with more dispersed reported workload spanning from 5% having spent only 6-8 h/week. And with 2019, when over 24% reported having spent >40h/week).

Following the discussion with student representatives, it appears that the relative improved management of workload can in part be linked to the benefits of scheduling course parts in a manner that makes it clear when students are expected to work on what (although some further improvements in sequencing can be made, see below). An improvement from previous years is also to have time for reading clearly scheduled in, which was appreciated. However, some students (particularly those with FUNKA needs), also indicate a need to get help with how to best structure one's reading in order to make use of the time in the best way.

As in the previous course version, there are indications from the course evaluation and discussion with student representatives that there is a difference in workload between students from different disciplinary backgrounds. This primarily relates to the project work in Part 2, where even though the project assignment has been redone to provide cross-disciplinary groups instead of splitting it up (where previous years Design groups on average perceived to have spent more time on the project), it is still perceived that students with a design background work more due to a perceived focus on design-oriented deliverables and the lack of students with design competencies in the groups - leading to a single or few students doing more intensive work especially in connection with finishing the project proposal.

Adjustments in particularly the project assignment, but also the individual reflection, should be made to increase clarity and specificity regarding the assignment and deliverables. By early on in the course introducing different formats and being explicit about what is expected and making sure all teachers are in agreement, students can avoid feeling like they are unsure of how much work is needed to reach the requirements and different grade levels.

### **THE STUDENTS' RESULTS**

#### **How well have the students succeeded on the course? If there are significant differences compared to previous course offerings, what can be the reason?**

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Considering that this was the first time the course was given in this version, and bearing in mind the limitations that followed from running the course in a hybrid format due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the students' results are in line with what can be expected.

The grades received on the project assignment (PRO1) more or less follow last year's results, with relatively many groups reaching a C and B grade (corresponding to 87% of total project grades, compared to 80% in 2020). But the lack of more groups reaching an A grade (7% compared to 15% in 2020), also indicates that the assignment might need to be adjusted to clarify the main aspects and deliverables in a way that enables students to reach further in the project work to meet the ILOs and grading criterias.

For the other graded course part, the individual reflection (INL1), the results also more or less correspond to the results on the home exam in previous course offerings. 82% of students reached an A, B or C grade, which is exactly the same percentage as in the home exam in 2020. 23% reached an A grade (compared to 12% 2020), 23% a B grade (25% in 2020) and 36% a C grade (35% 2020). Regarding lower grades (D and E, as well as incompletes), this was almost identical to the previous year. As previously, the results show the broad variation between students. Some are more used to academic writing while others might not have that much experience from their previous studies. As this is the first course of the Master's program, the introduction of a written academic assignment fills an important role and combined with improved formative assessment opportunities, can continue to be developed to provide students with a good basis for learning and succeeding in meeting the assignment requirements.



## **STUDENTS' ANSWERS TO OPEN QUESTIONS**

### **What does students say in response to the open questions?**

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The students' questionnaire comments are quite mixed, with some having very positive experiences of the course and teachers, while there are some students who have significant critique regarding the course content as well as structure.

Among the positive comments, the variation in activities and perspectives was particularly appreciated. Being able to collaborate with peers from different backgrounds is also highlighted by several respondents. Furthermore, the combination of theory and practice was perceived as well balanced.

Among the comments from students who had given a lower score on LEQ statements, a few students with a background from the civil engineering bachelor program at KTH particularly raise significant concern regarding the appropriateness of the course in relation to their degree and what they perceive as understimulating tasks, unclear instructions and lacking coordination between teachers. More details regarding which parts or activities in particular, or whether this relates to the entire course, were harder to read from these comments. The need to improve time-keeping with regards to breaks was also stressed in several comments. (see analysis below)

## **SUMMARY OF STUDENTS' OPINIONS**

### **Summarize the outcome of the questionnaire, as well as opinions emerging at meetings with students.**

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The overall average responses to the LEQ statements were similarly to last year positive (which in turn was an improvement from previous years). No statement scored on average below 4,9 (meaning slightly more in agreement than neutral). The two statements that did score a bit lower than others were linked to ILOs and assessment, which can be related to the revised course plan and need to further streamline and simplify, as well as make clear to students regarding how learning activities link to ILOs and in turn, how this is linked to the examination and the grading criteria.

From the questionnaire, different issues were raised, concerning the content as well as structure and management of the course. Suggestions for improvement point to aspects that should be developed and discussed further, including how design and planning approaches are integrated and how the assignments are described in order to ensure more cohesive, clear and simple instructions for students. Some comments (mentioned above) raise more significant concern regarding the course, but since these aspects were not raised more deeply at the course discussion, or by the course student representatives at the specific course meetings (even though these represented students from different background), it is not evident exactly in what ways the course was e.g. found to be understimulating. This should be followed up in the course development as well as at program level.

From the meetings with students, the overall opinions gathered were constructive regarding how the revised course could be fine-tuned to achieve the aims. Several suggestions for improvements emerged, that have been incorporated in the suggested course development below. The main themes related to need for clarification and simplification of assignments, but also the overall positive impression of the course, the teachers, and the learning environment, and the ways in which this could be strengthened. Particularly regarding teachers being explicit about requirements, and the need for better coordination between different teachers e.g. in supervision, were main points raised. The question of uneven workload between different students (addressed above) was also raised at all course meetings. Overall impressions from students shared at the final course discussion included that the course did capture the essence in sustainable development in an interesting way, with some experiencing it as more theoretical, while others found it more radical than expected - showing again the width in student perspectives, expectations and experiences that need to be navigated in this first course.

## **OVERALL IMPRESSION**

### **Summarize the teachers' overall impressions of the course offering in relation to students' results and their evaluation of the course, as well as in relation to the changes implemented since last course offering.**

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The revised course has been perceived overall positively by both students and teachers. In particular, the students appear to appreciate the teachers' engagement with and the varying perspectives on sustainability in urban development given throughout the course, which is an important part of the course aim and purposeful course development from the previous course version. While the new course version will need further improvements and fine-tuning, the overall structure seems successful in providing a learning environment and variation in activities that introduces students to an explorative, critical approach to sustainable urban planning and design. However, as noted in the analysis below, questions regarding how this approach is perceived by different groups of students needs to be addressed (also on a program level), discussed and made clear to students at the start of the course. To be more explicit about expectations from and on students, specifically in a cross-disciplinary course and program, will be an important part of the course. The pedagogical challenge of such a course is also reflected in the teachers' workload and need for planning the teaching work for each course moment in a manner that enables more cross-department collaboration and easy coordination between teachers.



## ANALYSIS

**Is it possible to identify stronger and weaker areas in the learning environment based on the information you have gathered during the evaluation and analysis process? What can the reason for these be? Are there significant difference in experience between:**

- students identifying as female and male?
- international and national students?
- students with or without disabilities?

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No significant differences in experience between male or female students were reported.

Regarding students with disabilities, an important thing to consider in future course development is how to provide ample support and clarity regarding e.g. how to best read academic texts, possibilities for extension in hand-in of individual written assignment etc. This should be established with the respective students early on in the course, and communicated between all the teachers responsible for the different course parts.

International/national students:

The questionnaire raise issues that some students with a KTH background found the course to be understimulating, uneven in regards to level of generality vs specificity, and not up to their expectations given their previous disciplinary background. This was brought up at the final course meeting, but the student representatives present (which included students from different backgrounds, but with a majority of international background) could not offer any deeper insights into what specific parts of the course these KTH students might feel understimulated by. Hence, it is hard to draw any more detailed conclusions, since there were also students with a KTH background that did not experience this, and found the course interesting and stimulating. Additional discussion on a program level reveal an impression that the skills acquired in the planning bachelor at KTH were not as clearly reflected in the tasks in the course, and that more practical planning tools were desired.

Generally, the difference in experience with educational environments stemming from whether you are a national or international student were raised. Several international students report being pleasantly surprised by the openness, engagement and critical challenge of the course. Swedish students, on the other hand, to a higher degree expressed comments regarding administrative practices (such as time keeping, using TimeEdit and updating documents in one place) that can improve in the course.

While some students commented that they did not feel like they had the theoretical background needed, others found the literature and concepts raised in the course to be very similar to what they have studied previously and yet others found that the course did not add anything new. Some moments were seen to be on a very basic level, whereas other parts and activities assumed that everyone knew the foundations and instead went deeper. Again, this indicates the diversity in student backgrounds and the difficulty in the course to keep a level that can meet everyone's previous knowledge and skills. A key is to be clear about what is expected from students.

As a general, echoing comments from previous years, several students express a wish that they had more design competencies. Seeing that the course is the first within the cross-disciplinary master's program, the expectations for what Sustainable Planning and Design entails need to be addressed early on. While students request more introduction to design skills, this is not within the scope of the course. However, by further revising Part 1 and the group project assignment in Part 2, to emphasize the explorative approach and the use of different formats to investigate and work with urban environments, the role of design can also be made clearer and "less theoretical" as expressed by some students, while not expecting all students to be designers or to acquire design skills during the course.

Similar to last year, there were also some comments regarding feedback from guest teachers as being harsh, which calls attention to the need for greater communication between teachers and invited guests, and to students, outlining the pedagogical approach and the role and form of constructive feedback on e.g. project proposals. This was also commented at the course meeting, where it was raised that students with different educational backgrounds have very different experiences with receiving feedback (particularly the Swedish engineering students perhaps not being as used to such situations as international design students). Seeking a good and safe environment for all teachers and students, this should also be prioritized for next year, to create a constructive culture of discussion where students are challenged, but do not feel undermined or degraded.



## **PRIORITIZED COURSE DEVELOPMENT**

### **What aspects of the course should be developed primarily? How can these aspects be developed in short and long term?**

Responding to students' comments, an overarching key prioritized development is to clarify (and simplify) instructions throughout the course (in all course parts), and develop a cohesive understanding among teachers to avoid misinterpretations or mixed messages regarding what the assignments are about and what students should focus on.

More detailed for the different course parts:

The group work component, especially in Part 2, should be further developed regarding collaboration and strategies for dealing with conflicts, as well as how groups can delegate tasks while making integrated decisions together. This follows on suggestions from previous years, in that the dynamics of group work could be more clearly introduced, inviting students to reflect upon different knowledges and skills - already in Part 1. It also points to making clearer from the beginning of the course what the components of design and planning are, and how students are asked to work with different formats for exploration. The comments from the course evaluation once again raise the issue that non-design students feel like they want more elements to train design skills. Additional comments also point to the need to more clearly integrate practical planning aspects. This needs to be addressed in the beginning of the course, where the intention is not to provide everyone with the same skills, but rather emphasize that both design and planning entail certain approaches and ways of working and knowing, where students will engage in collaborative work to jointly explore the opportunities and limits of urban planning and design in relation to sustainable development.

While an already implemented improvement was the use of short workshops in Part 1 to allow students to familiarize themselves with design and planning approaches and ways of working with others, this should be developed to already in the beginning start introducing formats that then are part of the deliverables in the project assignment in Part 2. Also making sure the projects challenge students in different ways is important to develop further. To avoid having some students pulling more weight in project work, the balance between number of design and planning students should be considered, and the framing of the assignment (the number of and focus of "strands", subquestions and formats) should be revised to also more clearly include practical planning tasks/tools. In general, using this course as an opportunity to reflect upon group project work and various roles, responsibilities and opportunities for collaboration in urban development processes could be further emphasized and picked up throughout all course parts.

The literature selection in Part 3 can be developed, to offer different tiers and a broader diversity of texts. A suggestion discussed at the final course meeting was to have: one foundational text outlining key concepts; one more critically challenging text providing the frontline of the topic; and finally suggesting practice-oriented resources (academic and non-academic) for students to engage with in order to start to clearly link the theoretical perspectives to possible applications in practice. In addition, being explicit at the beginning of Part 3 regarding the "meta level" of how different concepts and approaches relate to each other can provide a better framing for students to orient and also discuss what perspectives are included in the different lectures and seminars (and which are of interest for students to explore further outside of the scope of Part 3 and the specific course). This is also a discussion for more long-term development regarding what perspectives are brought up in this course with respect to other courses in the program as whole.

The synergies between Part 3 and Part 4 also need to be developed more. Part 4 individual reflection assignment needs to be developed and clarified in order for students to better grasp what they are expected to do, and how the literature and discussions in the seminars in Part 3 can be used to develop their approach and investigation of topics elaborated in the essay. (Linking also to the application of theories into practice and how to use theory to elaborate individual reflections on the role of urban planning and design for sustainable development). Scheduling of draft hand-ins and supervision on the essay could, after suggestions from students and reflections among teachers, be focused more towards the end of the course part, in order to maximize the use of teacher feedback once the drafts have developed a bit more. The first few weeks could then instead be used to link more closely to the seminars in Part 3, and to bounce ideas among peers before going into writing. The feedback and grading process should also be streamlined further, to ensure teachers are coordinated in providing students with similar answers and sharing an understanding of the criteria for grading. Generally, the teacher's workload should also be planned better for the next course session, across as well as within the various course parts, where the intention is that Part 4 should emphasize a cross-disciplinary assessment (and grading teacher group) similar as was done for Part 2.

In terms of scheduling, a suggested adjustment would be to change the sequencing of days allotted for each part, so that Part 4 would run on Wednesdays (instead of Fridays), in order to help clarify the connection between Part 3 (running Mondays and Tuesdays) and Part 4 in deepening students' individual reflections after having read and discussed various concepts. While then allocating Thursdays and Fridays for Part 2 project work, where students can explore the implications for urban development even further in their groups.

Finally, the use of Canvas has improved greatly over the years and can continue to be developed in order to provide students with clear instructions, organized in one or a few key documents and a gathered updated schedule, as well as provide a tool for more cohesive communication between teachers and between teachers and students.