



Report - AL2503 - 2021-02-09

Respondents: 1
Answer Count: 1
Answer Frequency: 100.00%

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.

Students have been given the opportunity to give feedback orally in a mid-course evaluation, throughout the course and also through KTH's online course evaluation that is a questionnaire examining the students learning experience in the course, and gives them the opportunity to make comments and suggestions for improvement. It is fully anonymous and is based on 22 statements and 4 general questions. Gender and disability perspectives are brought up here. Since the course was new for this year, we also choose to add a specific question: It was the first time we gave this course in this format, although it is reminiscent of its predecessor AG2803 Ecosystem Support and Environmental Justice. We therefore wonder how you experienced the different parts of the course: SEM1, TEN1 and PRO1? We wonder how you experienced them in general, but especially how they helped you achieve the course's learning objectives.

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.)

The students were given the possibility to give feedback on the course during a mid-course evaluation meeting, and in the beginning of seminars and lectures.



COURSE DESIGN

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

SEM1 is worth 1 credit (out of the course 7.5 credits). In order to pass the examination SEM1, students need to have prepared for and attended all seven (7) seminars according to instructions. However, if they miss ONE of the compulsory seminars, they can catch up by attending an extra seminar. SEM1 is graded with pass/fail (P/F).

TEN1 is worth 3.5 credits. The highest possible grade is A, and F means that the student did not pass the assignment. TEN1 is designed as a home exam which means that students can do it from wherever they want as long as they have internet access. The exam consists of the same questions that was answered in preparation for the seminars, but for the home exam students need to revise the answers in accordance with feedback from the seminar leader plus their own reflections from the seminar.

PRO1 gives the students the possibility to look deeper into a specific case from the course perspectives; environmental justice and social-ecological systems. The idea of the project is to analyse a case from these perspectives and also propose suggestions for how planning and environmental technology can be developed in order to identify, manage and/or prevent injustices with regards to the use of ecological resources. The set-up is designed much by the students, while the teachers act as facilitators and discussants. The work is discussed during project work seminars and supervisions. The project work should result in a popular scientific article. PRO1 also includes an individual reflective text where each student is to reflect on their learning and contribution to the project work. The project work together with the reflective text are worth 3 credits, and are graded on the scale A-Fx.

It was the first time we gave this course even though it reminds a lot of the previous course AG2803 Ecosystem Support and Environmental Justice. The biggest difference in the course design is that SEM1 and TEN1 together now stands for a little bit more than half of the credits in the course.

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?

14 out of 21 students answered the course evaluation. 13 of these answered the question about how many hours/week they worked with the course. 8 of these spent more than 20 hours/week on the course which means that they work load was heavy for them since the course runs on half time. However, the other 5 students spent less time: 2 students spent 18-20 hours/week, 1 12-14 hours/week, 1 9-11 hours/week and 1 6-8 hours/week.

However, in the comments the students agree that the work load was heavy during the seminars.

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?

A: 4 students
B: 14 students
C: 3 students

Last year 26 students passed the AG2803 course with the following grades: B: 6, C: 12, D: 8. Thus, the grades this year were better, hopefully because of the new course design.



STUDENTS' ANSWERS TO OPEN QUESTIONS

What does students say in response to the open questions?

Some examples regarding best part of the course:

"Amount of outputs, instead of just listening to lectures, we were challenged to show our own understanding by essays and it helped me to deepen my learnings. And those were checked by teachers before final submission so we could reflect and receive good feedbacks without being graded."

"The discussions and collaboration between students and teachers in the seminars. It took the concepts to a whole new level. I like that the seminars ended up as the home exam, it gave an opportunity to receive feedback and address your work accordingly. It felt like the grades on the seminars were given in order to force changes from everyone. Even if it is true or not, I feel like it is not necessary, people will still improve their work."

"the subject overall and the course literature. I liked the structure where the home exam was based on the seminar texts, this made me work more on the texts before the seminars instead of working a lot during the exam."

"I liked the seminars (even though they were a little stressful to prepare for and a little too long), because it gave us the chance to really discuss the literature. I also liked the structure of the home exam. I thought it was great to know exactly what grade to expect since it reflected the time I had put into the changes. I didn't expect to like the group project at the end, because I think it started too late, but I was lucky to be with a really good group and it made the project very rewarding."

"The project. This was at least better organized than the first half of the course. The form of writing a popular scientific article was new and felt like a fun challenge."

Some examples regarding suggested improvements:

"Teachers to be more involved in seminars, it was student-led and good exercise for sure, but we sometimes needed more professional advice to deepen our understanding."

"Shorter seminars or perhaps combine multiple seminars, instead of having two in one week etc. The texts are not too many to read, but sometimes the seminars were just too long for the amount of discussion points. The group project should start earlier, or at least have the kick-off earlier where we get to know more information about it - otherwise I liked the structure of it. I think that the course, this time, had a lot of opinionated people that like to affect/improve(?) every course we start, but sometimes it just gets confusing with all the changes. Some of the changes were really good, but I honestly hated the atmosphere in some of the meetings and thought it was absurd that we kept discussing course changes 3 weeks into the course."

"Less seminars. It was too stressful. I did not have time to learn properly because I was always in a rush. And the grading criteria was too demanding!"

"Less time in seminars with less seminar readings. Also a variety of different groupings would have helped. The fact that everything was online probably caused more damage to the experience than was understood. Perhaps this amount of seminars would have been ok if we were meeting in person, but the long meetings on zoom were really not fun."

Some examples of advice to future participants:

"Don't read the literature word by word, try to understand the bigger, overall, picture in order to write your seminar texts, or else it will be too time consuming. Additional/deeper knowledge likely will be provided during the seminars, or else there's time during home exam."

5-6 students actually write that they could not recommend others to take it (it takes too much time).

Some examples of other things the students would like to add:

"Det har tagits upp mycket klagomål under kursens gång, som jag delvis håller med om. Men det har också varit mycket klagomål/frågor om saker som faktiskt står i instruktionerna, som man förstår om man läser dom. Att nästan en halvtimme vid varje tillfälle har gått åt till klagomål har varit lite tråkigt och onödigt."

"Jag tycker att kursen var bra. Vissa kritiska elever hördes ofta, men deras åsikter speglade inte min uppfattning. Vill säga tack till lärarna för stor flexibilitet och förlåt för att vi inte stod upp för er och ert upplägg."

"Even though there were many complaints on you teachers, I think you really tried to make the best of it and was really responsive on critique, sometimes to much. I think the students have to understand sometimes have to accept how the course structure looks. The course structure were not always that clear, even for you teachers it seemed, which were making us students confused and frustrated."

"I thoroughly enjoyed the course and I think that some course members are too harsh in the way they address critique and university work."

We also had one specific question: It was the first time we gave this course in this format, although it is reminiscent of its predecessor AG2803 Ecosystem Support and Environmental Justice. We therefore wonder how you experienced the different parts of the course: SEM1, TEN1 and PRO1? We wonder how you experienced them in general, but especially how they helped you achieve the course's learning objectives.

Some examples of answers:

"I really liked this format, as mentioned above. There's a lot of advantages having it this way, most notably the way possibility to change your work according to feedback. Objectives 1 and 2 and 3 were fulfilled during SEM1 and TEN1 and objective 3 and 4 by PRO1."

"I recommend completely revising the course format. Too many issues with the current system."

"The only thing I would improve is that the PRO1 should be introduced earlier and not spun upon us right before xmas. I liked the combination of SEM1 and TEN1 especially because it made it easy to aim and achieve a certain grade. It became clear what the teachers wanted and/or expected."

"It was a good idea to do seminars first to get familiarised with all concepts and then apply them to real cases."



SUMMARY OF STUDENTS' OPINIONS

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

A negative mood arose at the beginning of the course among a handful of students and these students complained loudly during the seminars. Other students, in turn, are disappointed that these complaining students were given too much space in a course that was interesting. The students who are dissatisfied with their complaining fellow students point out that what they complained about - that they did not have information about different things - was in fact in course-pm / on the course home page.

However, it also seems like the workload was too heavy in the beginning of the course. All in all, 6 students turned out to be dissatisfied and 8 students seem happy of the ones responding to the evaluation.

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.

The first part of the course was a bit too stressful, especially for some of the students that had problems reading and preparing for the seminars. The fact that we put a lot of effort into providing feedback on the students seminar assignments in relation to the grading criteria for the home exam, was also experienced as stressful by some, while it was experienced as positive by some. During the project work, students seemed happy and they enjoyed applying their knowledge from the earlier part of the course on a case.

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 differences in experience between:

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

Regarding gender and disabilities, no differences can be found in the evaluation. When it comes to international versus Swedish students, Swedish students are, in general, more satisfied with the course. We are not sure why, but it might have to do with the situation created by the Covid-19 pandemic which might have created more isolation for the international students that are far away from relatives and old friends.

PRIORITIZED COURSE DEVELOPMENT

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

Next year we will either have to decrease the number of seminars or spread them out during a longer time period, or decrease the amount of literature. The seminars might also need to be developed or reorganised so that fewer students experience them as stressful. However, many also pointed out the seminars as good learning activities. However, it is not certain that the number of seminars would be experienced as so stressful if it had been an on-campus course as previous years. The pandemic and the zoom meetings made the situation stressful for both teachers and students. The amount of literature was not increased compared to previous years, they were only dispersed over more seminars. Which was one of the main ideas behind the restructuring of the course. The seminars might however, be more dispersed over the weeks so that the student do not have to hand in more than one assignment per week. We might also need to discuss expected work-load with other course leaders within the master programs in order to calibrate, both for online and on campus courses.

OTHER INFORMATION

Is there anything else you would like to add?

A lot of effort was made to give feedback on the students seminar assignment so that they would have the opportunity to learn from the feedback and then rewrite the same text for the home exam. As this was experienced as stressful by some of the students, it should be reflected upon if this is a good structure. It also took too much time for the teachers to give this feedback, in relation to the available hour for teaching. A plus was that the hand-ins improved much in quality from previous years and that the students seemed more engaged in the discussions during the seminars.