

## Course analysis for BB200X "Degree Project in Biotechnology, Second Cycle, 30.0 credits", 2021

### **Background**

The course is run throughout the year with the large majority of students starting in January. In 2021 the number of students starting in January was 57. The course currently has four course responsible and examiners, Peter Savolainen, Qi Zhou, Yves Hsieh and Patrik Ståhl.

### **Course Analysis 2021**

The course evaluation for 2021 was answered by 28 students. For this round of course analysis the evaluation form was answered in person, non-anonymously, via an online form.

Below is a summary of the course evaluation given to the students. At each section, after summarising the student comments (where applicable), we also give our own comments and conclusions under a red heading "**Our comments:**". Further, at the end of the course evaluation is a section headed "**Our final comments and conclusions, and further plans:**". These comments constitute our course analysis.

## Course evaluation BB200X

The goal of this evaluation is to get information from you to improve the course in the future. Your opinion is especially important for us!

Please note that we want to hear your opinion primarily about the course format, not about the actual project and supervision. At the end of this form there is an open question where you can relate your opinions also about the project and supervision.

**Our comments:**

We have received 28 evaluation forms by implementation of course evaluation online as a task in Canvas.

We present below all the comments offered by the students in their course evaluations together with our comments.

1. To what extent do you think you have achieved the stated course goals?

13 Very large  14 Large  1 Fair  Small  Very small

**Our comments:**

Most of students believed they had reached the course goals to a very large or large extent, 27/28 (96%). Thus, the course has been generally successful. The outcome correlates very well with the evaluations from the supervisors, which are very positive. We examiners also find the theses to have a generally high quality this year, despite the complications created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. How many working hours per week have you spent on the course and your project?

2 <35  5 35-37  9 38-42  6 43-45  6 >45

**Our comments:**

Most students have spent around 40 h per week except for two students who spent less than 35h. This is also reflected by the excellent outcome of the final master thesis reports of the students. Again, some complications were created by Covid-19, but the students seem to have coped well.

3. To what extent do you feel that you understood how the course was organized and what you were expected to do.

18 Very large  5 Large  4 Fair  1 Small  Very small

#### Our comments:

Out of 28 students, 23/28 (82%) think that they understood the course information to a large/very large degree. This is an improved result compared to the previous year 2020. Based on the evaluations from last year which indicated some increased confusion related to the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have put measures in place this year to improve communication and information. In particular we have stressed the importance of frequent student-supervisor interactions despite being more off site than during a normal year, due to the pandemic. This year almost all students were also able to attend the information and startup meetings. We have also published a recording of the startup meeting on the course Canvas page. We are very happy to see this improvement, and we feel that we have picked up and improved on the temporarily increased confusion we saw in part last year.

4. What do you think about the general format of the course, with start-up meeting, half time meeting and oral presentation/opposition? Was this a good format? Could it have been performed in a better way?

#### Summary of replies:

##### Pros:

- Startup and half-time well organized
- Presentations and opposition was fun
- Good format

##### Cons:

- Possibly even more meetings

#### Our comments:

We are very happy that essentially all 28 students liked the course format. The students mentioned the above Pros and Cons regarding the format of the course. We will keep the course format. We have tried to encourage even more meetings between student and supervisor and to keep the format of startup and half-time meetings clear. The clear format of the course have helped the students complete the course with very good results despite the pandemic.

5. Do you have any comments about the project plan?

#### Summary of replies:

##### Pros:

- Good to have structure
- Very good instructions
- A lot of things were learnt

Cons:

- Not so important if project already well organized
- A bit confusing planning number of weeks
- Some parts not so important and a bit extensive

Our comments:

Most students consider the project plan as a valuable tool, however they find it to be too extensive, especially part 2, which they found included some areas, ie SWOT, business case, which felt a bit forced to write about. From last year we also increased the time the students had to create their first version of the project plan. This seems to have been effective, since no students complained about having too short time to finish the first version of the project plan.

We would like to keep the extent of the project plan intact, the main reason being that the students are expected to learn the tools of project and time management as a part of the course, as stated in the Intended learning Outcomes (ILOs) of the course.

## 6. What were the strengths of the course?

Summary of replies:

Pros:

- A lot of independency
- Use previous knowledge and apply in this course
- The organization and structure is clear
- Lab work experience
- Getting feedback from both examiner and supervisor
- Opposition and real scientific discussion felt very engaging
- Good resources provided
- Well planned by examiners
- It was clear what was expected of us
- To be able to have my own project
- The report and opposition are an excellent way to assess students

Our comments:

We are very happy to see that the students appreciated their ability to shape and manage their project, and that they liked the course structure. We are also very happy that the students appreciated the interaction with the supervisors and examiners.

## 7. What were the weaknesses of the course?

Summary of replies:

Cons:

- Late information, could have been provided earlier
- Additional information regarding expectations for half-time meetings needed

- Maybe another meeting needed at around 75% time mark
- Some information from examiners reached students quite late, ie date of opposition and presentation
- Limited time, 20 weeks a bit short
- Purpose of the project plan not highlighted enough

Our comments:

The thesis is conducted as a course which is defined by time constraints equal to 30hp. We have an information meeting during the spring the year before the students start their master's thesis projects. This is to provide ample time for students to start looking for thesis projects. The information regarding date for opposition and presentation are provided at the startup meeting, and a recording is provided on the Canvas page. We will try to clarify what is expected for the half-time meeting, usually the students are asked to provide a short presentation giving an overview of their project and progress so far. The course has a public course syllabus page <https://canvas.kth.se/courses/3299>. Students can find updated video of course info meeting, course PM and PM supplement, together with other important information.

8. Do you have any suggestions for how to improve the course?

Summary of replies:

Suggestions:

- Clearer information earlier
- Maybe a short QA session before thesis handin
- Perhaps adding another meeting
- A bit more information during autumn, ie access to the Canvas page or course PM.
- Clearer purpose for project plan and half time meeting would be good
- Increase number of opponent students

Our comments:

The course has a public course syllabus page <https://canvas.kth.se/courses/3299>. Students can find updated video of course info meeting, course PM and PM supplement, together with other important information. We will try improve the flow of information before the course starts. Notably for students to have access to the course PM is very useful. We will also clarify the expectations for the half-time meeting. We will discuss having a QA session with all students towards the end of the course.

9. How was the overall quality of the course?

20 Very good   7 Good   1 Acceptable   Fairly poor   Poor

Our comments:

27 out of 28 students felt the overall quality of the course was good or very good. We will continue to clarify the requirements of the course, and to reach out to the students well in time for their application deadline. The course page is publicly available and all information is made available there.

10. Other comments, regarding your project and supervision?

Summary of replies:

Pros:

- Very good supervisors
- Very happy with the supervision
- Interesting project

Cons:

- Clearer timeline at the very end of the course, ie revising the thesis
- Possibly adding a logbook on Canvas for students and supervisors to fill in

Our comment:

Students in general are happy with their projects and supervisions. We will also update the course PM and have updated the publicly available course web to make all requirements regarding application as well as thesis writing as clear as possible.

**Thanks a lot for your help!**

**Our final comments and conclusions, and further plans:**

The students were generally very happy about the course. The supervisors and examiners were also generally very pleased with the students' performances. The course in summary has been very successful. Considering the ongoing pandemic the course progress and results have been above expectations, we are very happy for this.

We will continue to make changes to improve information related to the application process on the course page, as well as information related to the thesis, project plan and opposition report in the course PM. It is important that the information is as clear and updated as possible, and not least that all students are reached by this information. The course has a public course syllabus page. <https://canvas.kth.se/courses/3299>. Students can find updated video of course info meeting, course PM and PM supplement, together with other important information.

We will continue to stress during the start-up and halftime meetings the role of the examiners and that the students should contact us immediately regarding problems, such as communication with their supervisor. In particular for students with one KTH main supervisor and one external supervisor, it is also important that the KTH main

supervisors know that their responsibility and role is to make sure that the student is in a functioning environment at the external site. The KTH main supervisor should be updated with the project plan and progress regularly.

We will look into adding another QA meeting for all students towards the end of the course

Some students find the limited time during the thesis work problematic, and we will continue to stress the need for active time management, since the format of the course requires a fixed 20 weeks, 30hp of work. We will also continue to explain that project and time management, including formulating a project plan, are explicit parts of the course's ILOs.