Course analysis for BB200X "Degree Project in Biotechnology, Second Cycle, 30.0 credits", 2022

Background

The course is run throughout the year with the large majority of students starting in January. In 2022 the number of students starting in January was 59. The course currently has four course responsible and examiners, Peter Savolainen, Qi Zhou, Yves Hsieh and Patrik Ståhl.

Course Analysis 2022

The course evaluation for 2022 was answered by 39 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 39 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?

21 Very large   14 Large   4 Fair   Small   Very small
☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Our comments:

Most of students believed they had reached the course goals to a very large or large extent, 35/39 (90%). 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.

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

1<35   3 35-37   17 38-42   8 43-45   10 >45
☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Our comments:

Most students have spent around 40 h per week except for one student who spent less than 35h. This is also reflected by the excellent outcome of the final master thesis reports of the students.

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

17 Very large   17 Large   5 Fair   Small   Very small
☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Our comments:

Out of 39 students, 34/39 (87%) think that they understood the course information to a large/very large degree. This is an improved result compared to previous years. Based on the evaluations from two years ago 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 ordinary 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 two years ago.

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 halftime meetings good
– Good format of the course

Cons:
– Possibly even more meetings
– Wanted more time for experiments

Our comments:

We are very happy that essentially all 39 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 halftime meetings clear. The clear format of the course have helped the students complete the course with very good results.

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

Summary of replies:

Pros:

-Good way to plan the project

-Fun to do

-Help to understand and plan the project

Cons:

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. Two years ago 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:
-Startup and halftime meeting
-Good structure of course and meetings
-Find the project yourself
-The real feeling, and the belief in the student
-Good supervisors
-Real responsibility
-A lot of independency
-Practical work experience
-Put the skills learnt to the test
-Examiners showing interest
-Freedom but still help to stay on track

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:
-No particular weakness
-All projects differ
-Different information from different examiner
-Would be nice with reserved time for writing at the end

<span style="color:red">

-Limited time 20 weeks
-Bit confusion information at times

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 an updated video of course info meeting, course PM and PM supplement, together with other important information. We will also discuss among the examiners how we can make sure that all students get exactly the same experience from the halftime meeting, and the same information at all times.

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

Summary of replies:

Suggestions:
-Same info and expectations from all examiners
-Flexibility
-Clearer Course PM
-Few more days between report submission and presentation
-Reminder email during the autumn to all students probably attending the course
-Maybe hand in the first project plan earlier
-More contact and information towards the end
-No deadlines on red days
-Guidelines on what help the students can expect from supervisors
-Clarify that you can make adjustments to the thesis after presentation
-More scheduled meetings student-examiner-supervisor

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?

☐

Our comments:

39 out of 39 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:
-Had a really good time
-Great supervisor and examiner
-Supervisor and project were great
-All OK
-Course was very good

Cons:
-More support from external supervisor needed
-Limit amount of students per supervisor
-Supervisor communication sometimes tricky

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. 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 also discuss among the examiners how we can make sure that all students get exactly the same experience from the halftime meeting, and the same information at all times.

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.

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.