**Course Analysis – DM2601, 2023**

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**1.** **Description of the course evaluation process**

The course evaluation process includes data from two sources:
1. the anonymous course evaluation forms delivered by KTH;
2. the course responsible's own notes and reflections along the course, enriched in conversations with the other teachers.

This year, two students self-proposed as representatives, but did not report any specific feedback to the course responsible during the course. The course responsible introduced the mechanism of the anonymous course evaluations during a lecture, and reminded students about them at the end of the course. The evaluations were filled by 30.34% of the students (27/89). Among these, there are both International master students and Swedish master students (other categories of students are not shown in the polar diagram, so they must have been less than 3 filling in the form, if any). Regarding gender, this 30.34% includes women and men, but the gender distribution is never available in the automatically generated report. Two students commented on gender aspects. One positively remarked:*"I feel it's a gender equal course"*; and the other said that they didn't understand the question (next year, the course responsible will try to ask in class how do students interpret the question, and will moderate a discussion). Only students without disabilities are shown in the polar diagram, and they did not have specific comments related to disability. Some students with disabilities have filled in the form but do not show up in the diagram because they must have been fewer than 3. One of them commented that the course coordinator (who is the course responsible) was *"very understanding"* and that she customized the examination according to their FUNKA support.

At the moment of producing this course analysis, the programme's link meeting has not taken place yet.

**2.** **Description of meetings with students**

The student representatives did not request any meetings with the course responsible. The programme's link meeting where students will be present is scheduled for next semester.

**3**. **Course design**

This P/F course introduces students to design methods and processes for Media Technology and Interaction Design, so that they can independently run successful design processes. The course is delivered through lectures that draw from research and practice, workshops that allow students to get practical experience, reading seminars, group-based supervision meetings to follow their progress, design critique sessions for peer interaction, and a final presentation. Students work in groups (arranged by the teachers, maximising background diversity) towards a prototype that responds to a design brief.

The examination combines group deliverables (a video prototype, final presentation slides, and a workbook) with individual assignments (three written reflections: two associated to reading seminars, and a final meta-reflection about the groups' design process). Students get continuous formative feedback about their project through supervision meetings and design critiques, and about the first two reflections through comments from the teachers in Canvas. The summative evaluation is done on their individual meta-reflection and the final group deliverables. All the class activities are optional, i.e. attendance is not required.

The lectures and the workshops are aligned in such a way that students get to practice the concepts introduced in the lectures, and start applying them to their projects. Supervision and critique sessions are alternated so that students get tailored feedback and assistance from their project supervisor and can later present their progress to the class for peer feedback.

This year, due to lack of access to the previous lecturer's material, the new lecturer (Marianela, course responsible) developed and delivered all the lectures, and coordinated an industry-based guest talk during one of the lectures. The workshops were facilitated by one or more of the three teachers (Beatrice Vincenzi, Kristina Popova, and Marianela). Reading seminars and supervision were conducted by Beatrice and Kristina. Formative feedback tasks along the course were initiated by them, with monitoring and follow up by Marianela. She planned and conducted the final presentations. As a course responsible, Marianela was also in charge of planning, redesigning activities (except the video workshop), creating the course memo, forming the groups, maintaining Canvas, communicating with students (e.g. answering email, mediating group dynamics when needed, sending announcements, etc.), and conducting the course evaluation process. The summative evaluation of the group deliverables was done by Marianela, and the meta-reflections were read by the other teachers, and later verified by her as an examiner, before doing a final follow up and reporting the credits.

The project groups were arranged by the course responsible balancing the number of domestic and international students in each group. One respondent assessed this choice very positively: *"a great way for people to walk out from comfort zone because normally people tend to choose to work with friends. But in the industry, we have to break ice especially if we work cross departments. So I think this move is very practical"*. Interestingly, a Swedish student reflected upon their *"privilege"* of being an *"'established' student"* and declared having *"worked on including the quieter members"* in their group, which can also be seen as a very good outcome in terms of teamworking skills.

With respect to last year, the course responsible implemented the following key changes, mostly based on the last course analysis: Developed the new set of lectures, which were all delivered in person by her and made interactive; added supervision and design critique sessions with project supervisors; removed two workshops that didn't contribute much to the ILOs, and reordered and replanned the remaining workshops (except the video workshop); proposed a new design brief; adapted the selected readings to this new brief; improved the instructions for the project deliverables and the written assignments; offered individual drop-in office hours once a week throughout the course; improved the Canvas structure, content, and navigation; offered students a more comprehensive introduction to KTH teaching and learning platforms, practices, and conventions (given that it is the first semester in Sweden for many); and made sure (with input from Beatrice) that all the content on Canvas was both accessible to screen readers and available in advance. Before continuing, the course responsible would like to thank Madeline Balaam, current course responsible for DH2628, who generously provided her with updated material from that course (which they had co-taught in 2020) to avoid needing to start from scratch, given the similarities between the two courses.

## 3. Students' workload

This year, the course had 7 lectures, 2 reading seminars, 4 workshops, 3 project supervision slots, 3 design critique slots, and the final presentations. The course is 7.5 credits, which is around 200 hours, from which 41 are scheduled activities and the rest is for students to work on their assignments (readings, written reflections, and project work). One term is supposed to last 10 weeks and thus it is expected that students spend 20 hours per week in average (although in practice, the course runs for 9 weeks, so 22 hours is closer to the expected workload).

The average weekly workload reported by students presents some variation. Around a quarter (7/27) of the respondents estimated having worked between 15-26 hours a week in the course, not too far from the expected number. A similar proportion (7/27) reported working slightly less, between 12 and 17. Only four reported having spent less than 12 hours (6-11), but it is likely that they are under-reporting, given that groups attended the scheduled activities and students did the work associated to their individual assignments. Finally, around 18% (5/27) of the respondents declared spending more than 26 hours a week (one student, up to 41).

Around half of the respondents (14/27) commented on the workload (the course responsible emphasised in class that their comments provide valuable qualitative data that complements the quantitative answers). In the comments, respondents recognise that the workload varies, getting more intense as the deadline for the project gets closer. One respondent clarifies that in spite of this growing intensity *"I never felt much stress at all"*. Some respondents praise the *"well balanced"* and *"very manageable"* workload, the clear structure and guidance (e.g., *"instructions were very clear and detailed so everyone knew what to do that particular week"),* and one highlights that the course was *"not he[c]tic at all"*. Some, in fact, choose to explain why they enjoyed the time they spent in the course:*"Good experiences with group work (...)"; "(...)I think the project is really interesting so I am willing to spend time on it"; "I really like to spend time on this class especially on the team project with my teammates, we learned a lot through discussions and practices"*. One respondent comments that the critique sessions are too long, which will be considered for next year.

## 4. Students' results on the course

At the moment, 97.75% (87/89) students have passed the course successfully. The other 2 registered students did not attend the course at all.

## 5. Students' answers to open questions

As the best aspect of the course, respondents mentioned a wide variety of aspects, including: Working towards a group design project (9) as well as working collaboratively across groups (1); learning about and practically applying new interaction design methods (6); the lectures (4) (e.g. structure and pace); the freedom of choosing methods (3) and that creativity was encouraged (2); the timely help and feedback from the teachers (3); that stress was kept low and enough time was dedicated to the project in order to achieve high quality (2); the course responsible's teaching style (who according to them*"makes the classes engaging and easy to understand"*, *"has a great ability to bring in inclusivity in the material being taught as well as the classroom in general",* and *"walked us through each step (...) pedagogically"*) (2); hearing from an industry-based guest speaker (2); creating potentially useful prototypes and with industry-relevant tools such as Figma (2); that the teachers formed the groups (1); the design brief (1); the reading seminars (1); and the clarity of the course outline (1).

Regarding areas for improvement, respondents suggested: more and deeper design discussions during supervision meetings (3; this can be seen as a sign of motivation); more content on UI and "artistic advice" (2; not really actionable: slightly out of scope); shortening the critique sessions and the final presentation to 2 hours (2); *"more industry examples"* (2; unclear if they mean incorporating them to lectures or having more guest speakers); adding more structure to the reading seminars to make the most out of them (1); having the workshops earlier in the day (1; not actionable: not in the teachers' hands); changing the data analysis workshop into an exercise where the data doesn't relate to the project (1, but doesn't say what is the problem of working with project data); rethinking the pace of the video workshop (1); having the prototyping workshop one week later (1); more lectures (1, but doesn't clarify on which topics or why); encourage students with less experience to explore more the landscape (1); having the teachers testing the prototypes to get a better feeling of how they work (1); offering a different examination method for groups that choose to divide (1; not actionable as it

contradicts the ethical approach and the grading criteria); passing from P/F to a graded approach (1; not actionable: not in the teachers' power). Finally, four respondents wrote that nothing is to be improved.

The advice they would give to future participants mostly centres on group work, including: planning (3), starting early (2) and making sure their progress aligns with the lectures (1), thoroughly documenting the process (1) and concentrating especially on problem definition (2), as well as adopting attitudes towards being a good group member (5; e.g. making sure *"everyone in the group is heard"*, keeping good communication, and not fearing disagreement as it can spark innovation). Respondents also recommend: making use of the freedom granted, in order to explore many methods, to have fun, and to not be afraid of making mistakes (6); being active (1), furthering their engagement with Interactive Media Technology topics (1) and *"nurture or kickstart their design skills, knowledge and passion for design"*(1).

In the final open question about additional thoughts, respondents highlighted the lectures as *"really solid"* (1), the course as *"inspiring"* and enjoyable (2), the ILOs as *"clear"* and the workshops as the one thing to adjust (1). Interestingly, one respondent did not get much out of reading seminars in terms of content, but found them a good way of meeting other people in class -which was an unexpected positive point.

## 6. Summary of students' opinions

The course evaluations show that students appreciated the course, as documented above in point 5. Moreover, respondents praised the course as *"well-organised"*, *"very valuable"* and *"fun"*. One respondent declared that this was their *"favourite course"*, one stated: *"I absolutely loved the entire process of the design process"*, and another enthusiastically summarised: *"The course was in general amazing. For me the best aspect was a mix of practical work with more academic research. More than just the tool, we learn the reason behind the tool"*. Similarly, another respondent synthesised: *"I feel like I've learned a lot about the work ethics and environment surrounding interaction design and got to try out a lot of different methods and strategies"*. Several students declared having learned *"a lot"*.

Almost all the respondents (26/27) said they worked with interesting issues (with a majority strongly agreeing with the statement), whereas one was neutral. Around 81% (22/27) found the course challenging in a stimulating way; 4 were neutral and 1 slightly disagreed with the statement, but they did not comment on the reasons. Regarding being able to practice and get feedback without being graded, 85% (23/27) indicated that this was the case (with a majority strongly agreeing with the statement); 2 were neutral (perhaps because they had not been graded?), and 1 found the question not applicable (probably for the same reason). The same proportion (85%, 23/27) found the assessment fair and honest, with a majority strongly agreeing with the statement; 1 was neutral and 3 found the question not applicable (commenting explicitly that the assessment had not happened yet, and that it is a P/F course with no letter grades). About learning by collaborating and discussing with others, around 89% (24/27) of the respondents declared being in agreement with the statement (with a vast majority strongly agreeing, and one highlighting the *"great collaboration"* and *"learn[ing] a lot from others"*); 2 were neutral and 1 slightly disagreed (but did not comment on the reasons). Finally, when it comes to getting support when needed, 85% (23/27) recognised getting such support (with a vast majority strongly agreeing with the statement, and one of them clarifying they meant support from teachers but not from their group), 3 were neutral and 1 disagreed with the statement (but unfortunately did not comment on the reasons).

## 7. Overall impression

My overall impression is that the course was very well received, taking into account not just the course evaluations (and in particular points 5 and 6 of this document) but also the high levels of attendance throughout the whole course, in spite of all activities being optional, as well as the high levels of participation in class activities (especially lectures) and on Canvas. A new approach to the lectures that included more interactivity as well as more structure and guidance week by week, was crucial in helping students focus on key parts of the design project as well as in methods and the process itself. Adapting the readings to the new brief and being clear about expectations and scope of written assignments improved the quality of the submissions, as well as resulting in designs and/or design processes more informed and inspired by relevant literature. Assigning students to groups ourselves worked well this year again, with several students highlighting good experiences of group work (and some explicitly talking about the teacher-made groups as a plus) and with only one group (out of 18) with collaboration problems, which could have happened also in student-made teams.

## 8. Analysis

The course responsible has not detected significant differences across categories of students in the polar diagrams. Several respondents highlight the inclusive approach taken in this course (as seen above). The fact that students point out to a wide variety of activities as the best aspect of the course indicates that the course caters to a diversity of learning activities and of learning styles. The suggested areas for improvement are rather low level, most are straightforward to address, or are not under the teachers' control, and do not point to any higher level pattern or problem with the course. The amount of concrete detail suggests active engagement from respondents, which is also a good sign in itself.

## 9. Prioritised course development

In response to student and teacher feedback and to the course responsible's notes along the course (especially after examination), a set of improvements will be prioritised as development for next round:

- design critiques and final presentations will be done in blocks of 2 hours (as well as supervision blocks for teachers)
- reading seminars will be more structured, will have 2 teachers at the same time, to follow and facilitate discussions more closely, and might get shorter if needed
- the course responsible will contemplate the replacement of the slides and video deliverables (and as a consequence, the removal of the video workshop), with a prototype deliverable and/or an exhibition where both peers and teachers would test the prototypes. This would save planning and shooting time while deepening the engagement with early testing and with the exploration of prototyping tools and methods; at the same time, it would allow for the other workshops to come in later and be more synchronized with project progress
- groups will be asked to agree on their own "group collaboration terms", that they can commit to follow throughout the course and that will support group discussions
- more guidance will be given towards the workbook deliverable, especially to document the results from testing with real users
- the workshop on data analysis might be adjusted to provide the beginning of a step-by-step example
- the teaching staff will consider how to improve the experience of supervision (e.g. with a list of points to cover in each session).