

Course evaluation DM2624 VT23

In 2023, there were 34 registered students, compared to 33 in 2022, 19 in 2021 and 20 in 2020. From conversations with the students, it appears that the course is now well-known among students at or coming to KTH. Some report that this course was central to choosing KTH as such a course is not offered elsewhere.

29 students passed the course, and 2 have examining elements that have not yet been completed.

There were no big changes done to the course from 2022 to 2023. The main changes, based on previous feedback were to:

- Involve a collaborator with a disability
- More time for the project
- Earlier introduction and more time at the Tekniska Museet
- Even closer connection between assignments and the project
- More hands-on knowledge and practical exercises

These improvements were successfully applied, except for the last where some lectures still need to be more connected to real world situations:

"At several times during the entire course, while I understood the need for talking about accessibility and inclusion and how they factor into the big picture : it was insanely frustrating for me to realise that a lot of these conversations we were having in class did not have enough of a context or an organic grounding, and I found it to be a bit airy."

I believe this is the area where the course needs most continued improvement, and one example that has worked very well is the lecture on accessible musical instruments that is given in another course:

"the best lecture during the entire term for me was the one that Kjetil conducted in combination with DT2300 where he talked about how sound, music and therapy all come together, and how accessibility and inclusion are key ideas to factor while working in that domain. To me - that lecture served a lot more meaning than talking about inclusive design and accessibility in hypotheticals because there was a basis to everything being discussed, and I could see how the dots were connected much more effectively."

The project work and presentations at Tekniska Museet are important to the course structure. However, half of the students did not wish for the presentations to be public. Only very few wanted the presentations open to all, while almost half of the class would prefer to have invited guests from the museum staff and from peers.

The course's literature was again a collection of available papers (and a provided chapter), but I also tried to introduce Lars Ostreicher's new book which he kindly let us use. This is work in progress, and future course rounds may consider to use this even more.

Assignments are constructed so they together help the project work. They seem to be appreciated as they are, but the Zotero element of Assignment 1 is a bit cumbersome. The assignments need to be very well described, otherwise there is a risk of misinterpretation.

The course got a lot of praise from the students, and the general impression was that it was a successful course round ("this course felt fantastic, so thank you for having us", "I really enjoyed the course and the attitude in which Kjetil approached it and us students.").

Hybrid vs on-site

The course was often in hybrid mode, which was largely appreciated. A couple of comments that illustrate the problem of individual preferences:

"As for possible course improvements, please don't change the hybrid mode. As a student who cannot afford to live in Stockholm anymore, it has been a tremendous help and opportunity."

"As for possible course improvements, the format with remote and hybrid seminars felt a bit weird and ineffective at times (especially in an "intimate" course like this one), so maybe it would be better to have them on-site in the future."

Seminars vs lectures

The seminars were intended to be more practical, but that might not have been the case always. This is reflected from the evaluations.

"I found myself in a state where I was losing focus and finding it difficult to be interested when the discussions strayed too far away from a context, and wasn't grounded. Perhaps, I would have soaked in everything much better and much more enthusiastically if we had several case-study related discussions or something of the sort mixed along with the theoretical classes as well."

"I definitely think the seminars were not as engaging as they were meant to be."

"When it comes to possible improvements that could be done I believe the lectures had very similar content. Many subjects were discussed multiple times during different lectures (probably since it was mostly guest lectures, so they did not know the same subject was discussed the lecture before theirs)."

"During a couple of seminars, it was difficult to find something to talk about and there were no fruitful discussions and it hardly felt like you were learning or getting anything out of the seminar."

Involving persons with lived experiences

Many students ask for more involvement of persons with lived experiences of disability.

"I would have also loved going to some place where a lot of people of disabilities meet up and have a general conversation with them."

"I also feel that a lack of access to a more diverse group of individuals with lived experiences relevant to the project hindered confidence levels, particularly considering the emphasis placed in lectures on involving target groups in all stages of the project."

"Also, as evaluation and iteration are one of the most important parts of the design process, it would help the projects to improve more if it was easier to access the number of users with disabilities that we could design together and test on."

"Possible course improvements would be to maybe cooperate with a school or organization to provide testers from the specific group that the projects are aiming for (this round would be deaf

people or people with hearing impairments). I think it would be a fun cooperation, both for them to be included and for us to have the right target group as testers.”

Working in a real environment

To do the project in the museum environment was generally appreciated.

”It was amazing to be able to do a project like this in a “real” environment such as Tekniska Museet that is not just theoretical but can evolve into something more.”

” The project was interesting and I found it very rewarding to be able to do the project for an actual real case, the accessibility for those with hearing impairments at Tekniska museet. I believe it was the first course I have had at KTH that didn’t use made up scenarios and I feel like I was able to use both creativity and knowledge I’ve learned from this and previous courses to come up with a solution with my group that I believe could actually be used.”

”The project component, and the fact that the integration with Tekniska made it into something tangible and real instead of working on hypotheticals.”

Some other feedback:

” Prior to taking this course, I didn't pay much attention to these details, but now I notice inaccessibility everywhere.”

”I learnt a lot about accessibility, inclusion, and thinking from this perspective. I think its instilling the thinking along these lines that was the biggest takeaway for me in this course, and it was why I signed up in the first place as well, so this expectation was met.”

”my expectation was that we would learn more concrete methods to apply within design to make it more accessible, which was missing in this course. To learn even more in this course, one solution would be to have a disability as a theme for each seminar. The preparations could then be to read about the disability and then at the seminar get a scenario and thereafter create a design solution for the specific scenario and disability. It would also make the seminar more engaging compared to the seminar this semester.”

” The only possible course improvements I have is to update the course site as the course was quite far from what I expected, (a positive surprise!)”

” I would also recommend you to mention MIDLA more, or earlier in the course. I had never been there before and didn’t know what it was, neither had most people in my group. It’s such a fun place with so many materials to use to build prototypes. We could have used it to make our project work even better if we had known about it sooner. Maybe you can take the students there on a visit after or during a lecture.”

” I have enjoyed this course! The seminars were interesting and I looked forward to attending them (I believe the other students taking the course being social was a large contributing factor.)”

” Something I and several other students have already discussed is how the course comes off as slightly detached from the user group (disabled people), which caused a lot of the discussions during the seminars (and the project proposals) to feel very speculative.”

" It oftentimes felt like two different courses, one research course and one project course and I felt like I couldn't use the knowledge gathered from the research assignments for the project. An exception was the first assignment where we looked up interesting articles relating to hearing impairments. This helped our group find relevant material for the project and provided a good understanding of hearing impairments. An alternative could be having the third assignment relating to the project, for example by finding another aspect to tackle or how we could continue the project."

"while I liked the freeform aspect of the course, I believe it could have been more structured, especially in terms of instructions and formal requirements. For example, providing some kind of template or sample paper to showcase how the report should be structured would have eliminated a lot of uncertainty that took place when writing it, especially with regards to the content of each section and how detailed and in depth it needed to be."