

Course analysis – FLH3000 vt23-1, vt23-2

Course responsible

Elizabeth Keller, ekeller@kth.se

Course teachers

Elizabeth Keller, Ernest Ampadu, Emma Riese, Marcus Lithander, Anders Rosén, Panagiotis Pantzos

Examiner

Ernest Ampadu ernesta@kth.se

Courses given (approximately 8 weeks)

2023-01-17 to 2023-03-17 (period 3, 42 students registered)

2023-03-20 to 2023-06-05 (period 4, 40 students registered)

Course material

What the best college teachers do (Ken Bain, 2004)

The Torch and the Firehouse (Mattuck 2009)

Articles related to higher education teaching and learning

Course structure

FLH3000 consists of six meetings and has carried out a mix of face-to-face, online and hybrid meetings since period 2, autumn 2021. The blended approach has worked well for doctoral students, allowing wider participation. Following students' suggestions for improvement, from period 3 2023, meeting 4 shifted back to a presential meeting.

Continuous assessment is achieved through classroom participation in group discussions, individual written reflections, design and delivery of a teaching activity, and written peer feedback tasks. The course offers students an opportunity to meet a team of teachers with varied backgrounds, and to work with doctoral students from different departments.

Participants engage in discussions with regards to teaching and learning in higher education (with emphasis on metacognition in learning), sustainability integrated in teaching, feedback, supervision, and topics covered in the literature used in the course. Preparation tasks prior to the meetings include reading chapters in the main course literature, articles, watching videos, and reflecting upon those to ensure successful discussions.

The main concepts related to teaching and learning in higher education are illustrated in the course material (Bain) and Mattuck's booklet as well as articles used in the course. The course has been designed with a student-centred approach that requires students to actively work in groups and share experiences while practicing giving and receiving feedback.

The students are provided with tools and given responsibility to explore self-learning. It is, therefore, anticipated that learning occurs through discussions and reflections on teaching-related tasks. As we read the students' reflections upon completion of the course, we realise the course provides them with opportunities to rethink how people learn and how they could apply this knowledge to design activities with focus on learning.

During the course, students are presented with different concepts and strategies, which they are expected to show in their individual reflections, interview assignment, teaching practicum/recording and group discussions. Participants are encouraged to share with peers and teachers how they intend to apply some of the concepts learned throughout the course in their own teaching.

LEQ course evaluation (survey)

Period 3 = 25 respondents out of 42 (59% answer frequency)

Period 4 = 22 respondents out of 40 (55% answer frequency)

We continue to send the 12-question LEQ.

Students' workload

Students seem to perceive the course's workload differently. For example, in period 3, 35% of the student indicated that they spent 6-8 hours a week on the course, and 30% spent 3-5 hours. On the other hand, during period 4, 40% said they spent 6-8 hours, while 27% said they spent 9-11 hours. We can then conclude that despite the variation in percentages, a critical look on the results shows that the majority (75%) of the students from both courses spend between 6-8 hours weekly.

Many expressed the workload was fine but a few of the students felt the workload was heavier than the credits awarded for the course. The course requires 80% attendance, which implies that students can miss only one out of the six compulsory meetings. The attendance record shows that only few students have 100% attendance.

Overall results¹

Period 3 = 38 students completed the course, 42 were admitted (95%)

Period 4 = 35 students completed the course, 40 were admitted (87%)

Overall impression of the learning environment

The polar diagram with the average response to the LEQ statements for different groups of respondents shows a very positive learning environment. Most students perceive that the activities in the course are well aligned with the learning objectives. The atmosphere in the course was described as open and inclusive, and the learners felt they were given autonomy to try their own ideas.

Statement number 4 'The course was challenging in a stimulating way' shows the lowest score. As the course has been designed for those with little experience in teaching, it could be that it may not be challenging for those with teaching experience.

Analysis of the learning environment

Elements of the Natural Critical Learning Environment (Bain 2004) play a central role in the course. The course has been designed with the goal of supporting student learning, as opposed to covering content.

Meeting 1 (Concepts of Learning): Students are asked to prepare for this meeting by reflecting on education and learning, watching videos related to metacognition of learning and rethink the way we teach. Groups meet for the first time and spend some time getting to know each other. The field of teaching and learning in higher education is briefly introduced and discussed, followed by general information about the course. In the second half of this meeting, students have a workshop on sustainable development and are introduced to education for sustainable development, CDIO, and the concept of an integrated curriculum. Short videos are also used as preparation for this session. This workshop also provides insights for the interview assignment in which students investigate how teachers at KTH work with, among other questions, the integration of sustainability in their courses.

Meeting 2 (Natural Learning Environment): Flipped classroom. Bain's natural critical learning environment is thoroughly discussed during the meeting and a Padlet is used for group discussions. The concept of what we mean by curriculum in higher education has been introduced in period 4. In the second half of the class, groups discuss how a teaching activity can be improved with focus on learning. The first group assignment (interviews) is introduced.

Meeting 3 (Teaching in Engineering Sciences): Students are briefly introduced to the importance of communication in teaching. Mentimeter presentations with embedded questions is introduced for meeting 3. A discussion on Mazur's video concerning peer instruction is carried out and much appreciated by participants. This meeting introduces concepts of how to design a teaching activity. A revised form/template has been introduced successfully in period 4, minimising frustration expressed in previous students' feedback. A brainstorm on designing a teaching activity is carried out in class, which is the first step towards the design and recording of a teaching activity.

Meeting 4 (Feedback and Supervision): Feedback according to Hattie's article (model) is discussed. As some engineers are not used to texts written for social sciences, students may point out that the literature is hard to digest. Nevertheless, the outcome of the discussions is very positive, and this is reflected in their last assignment (self-reflection 2). Students practice giving and receiving feedback (on their design of teaching activity). Supervision is discussed based on the students' initial research on what supervision is and the different types or forms of supervision which students discussed in their groups during class meeting 4.

¹ It may be relevant to point out that students have had the opportunity to complete the course when another course is offered.

Group meeting 5 (What Makes a Good Teacher): This is a student-led meeting in which students meet at their own time. The group work, together with the video recording are by far the two most appreciated elements of the course. The groups feel they have the freedom to choose whom to interview and areas to investigate. A number of students mention they feel they get concrete examples of how to handle specific topics that novice teachers may not be confident to deal with. They also like the fact that they talk to more experienced teachers on how they plan their courses taking into consideration elements of the natural critical learning environment.

Meeting 6 (Your Teaching Developing Steps): The final meeting is a wrap-up of the contents in the course with focus on revising the main concepts presented in the course, the design of a teaching activity with the video recording, feedback and possible next steps. The article Principles of Instruction (Rosenshine) gathers many of the main concepts discussed throughout the course. Some students would have preferred to either have a meeting F2F or online but we continue to offer the possibility for participants to choose.

Answers to general (open) questions

According to overall answers,

1. The interview assignment and the group work are the strengths.
2. Less appreciated are the 3-hour sessions.
3. Some perceive interactivity as excessive.
4. More concrete example and practical advice for TA-roles rather than lecturers would be better.
5. Participants would like to have clearer motivation for why certain tools are used.

Course development

Improvements suggestions for the autumn term 2023:

- 1) Be mindful of group division and avoid minorities (putting one female student along in a group of men);
- 2) Marcus will bring in the concept of motivation in the last session;
- 3) Link better discussion in meeting 2 to competences and methods in meeting 3;
- 4) Sustainability issue: make stronger links to teaching practice (rather than research) and focus on how integration take place. Consider fewer goals and deeper discussions?
- 5) Try to tune learners expectations by highlighting expected workload and study techniques, as well as the concept of self-regulation in HE;
- 6) Revise meeting 4, supervision – scale it down and put the focus on working with concrete examples.

General comments

Overall view of how students perceive their learning is positive. Group work has worked well in the course. Feedback has a central focus in the course and its importance is evident in the students' reflections. Students point out they understand feedback better, including how they would like to work with feedback in their teaching.

The mix of face-to-face, online and hybrid meetings will be maintained. Interaction with students online still remains a challenge but perhaps this should also be highlighted.

From the interview assignments, students painted a rather negative picture of how integration of sustainability is perceived. During the course evaluation meeting, the teaching team discussed whether it would be a good idea to prepare students for the interviews in a different way. Consider how do we want the students to do the interviews, how could they approach it from a critical perspective and ask different questions, poke some teachers and make them reflect, ask them why they are not implementing active learning and why have they chosen not to integrate sustainability in their course.