



## National and International Forest Policy SG0234, 30076.1819

15 Hp

Pace of study = 100%

Education cycle = Advanced

Course leader = Vilis Brukas

### Evaluation report

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**Evaluation period: 2019-03-18 - 2019-04-08**

Answers 23

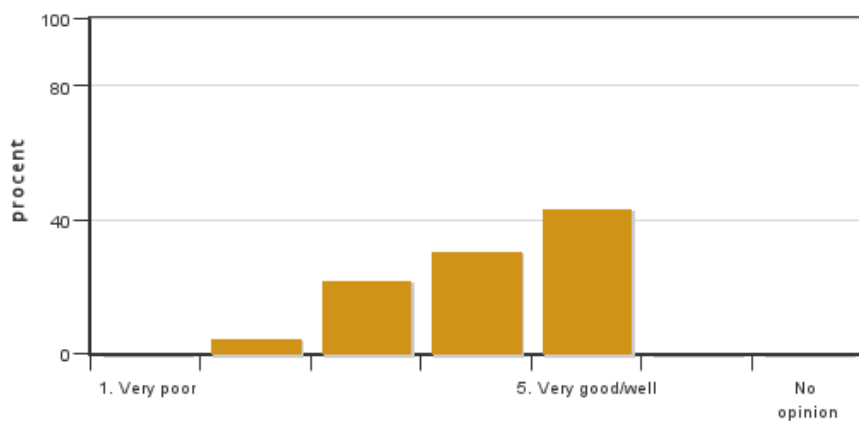
Number of students 23

Answer frequency 100 %

### Mandatory standard questions

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#### 1. My overall impression of the course is:



Answers: 23

Medel: 4,1

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 1

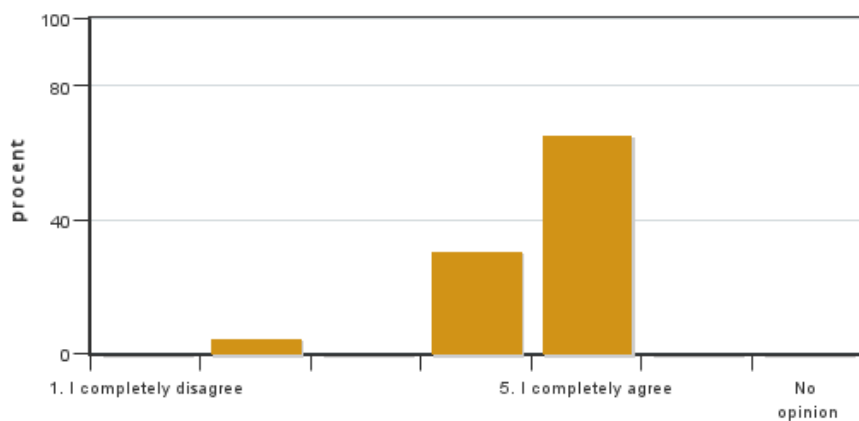
3: 5

4: 7

5: 10

No opinion: 0

#### 2. I found the course content to have clear links to the learning objectives of the course.



Answers: 23

Medel: 4,6

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 1

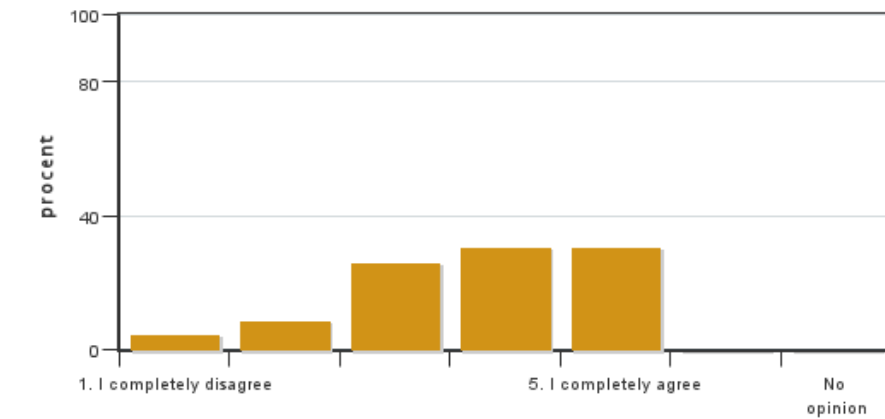
3: 0

4: 7

5: 15

No opinion: 0

**3. My prior knowledge was sufficient for me to benefit from the course.**



Answers: 23

Medel: 3,7

Median: 4

1: 1

2: 2

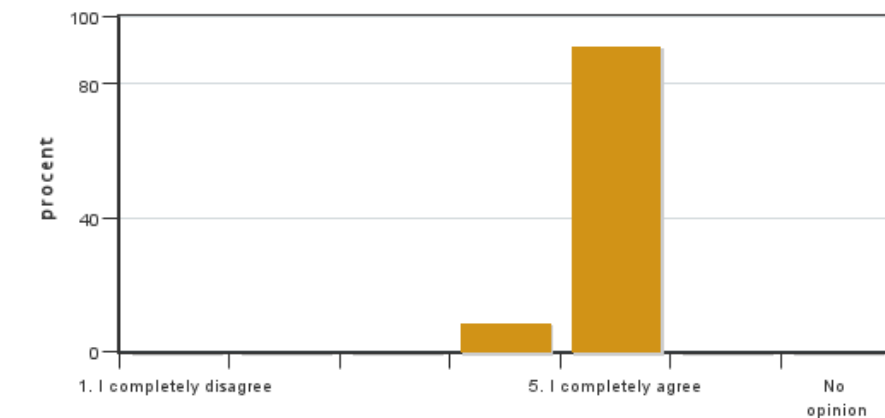
3: 6

4: 7

5: 7

No opinion: 0

**4. The information about the course was easily accessible.**



Answers: 23

Medel: 4,9

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

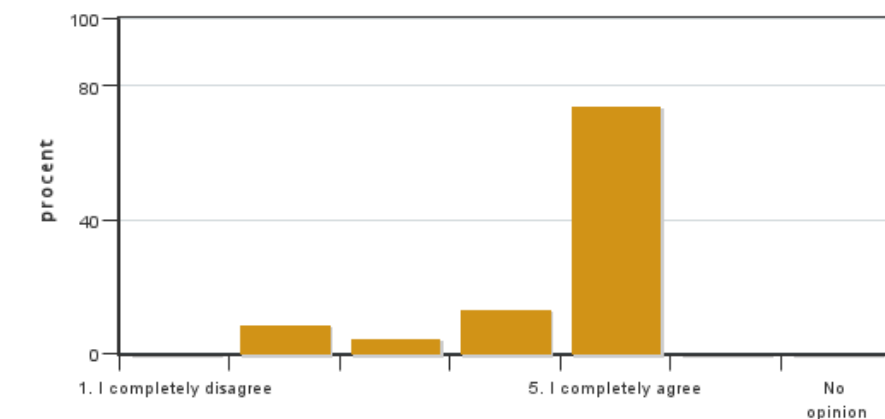
3: 0

4: 2

5: 21

No opinion: 0

**5. The various course components (lectures, course literature, exercises etc.) have supported my learning.**



Answers: 23

Medel: 4,5

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 2

3: 1

4: 3

5: 17

No opinion: 0

**6. The social learning environment has been inclusive, respecting differences of opinion.**



Answers: 23

Medel: 4,6

Median: 5

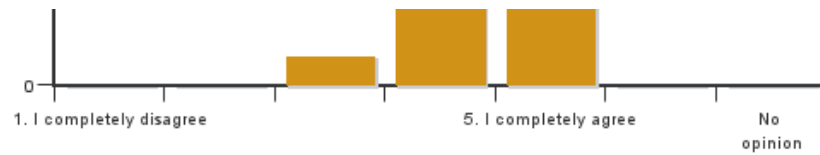
1: 0

2: 0

3: 2

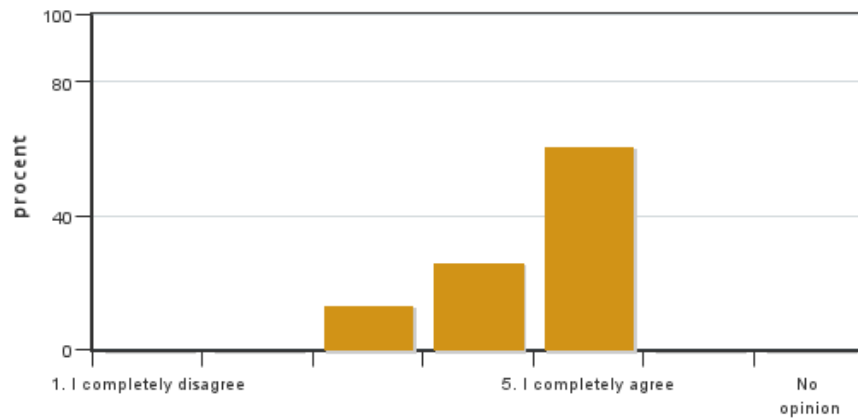
4: 6

5: 15



No opinion: 0

**7. The physical learning environment (facilities, equipment etc.) has been satisfactory.**



Answers: 23

Medel: 4,5

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

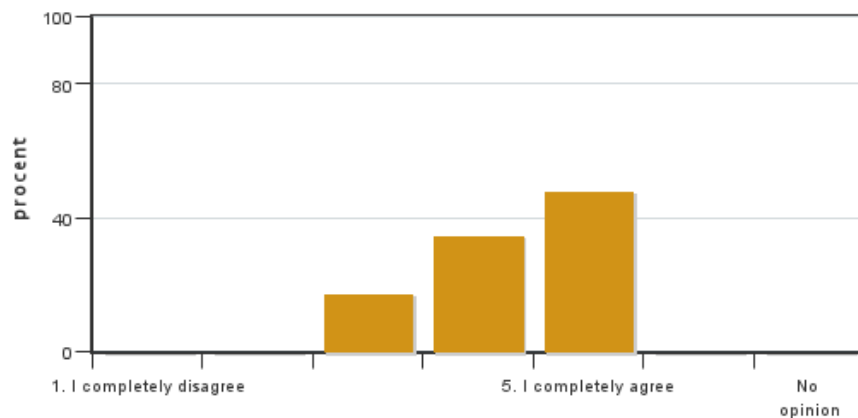
3: 3

4: 6

5: 14

No opinion: 0

**8. The examination(s) provided opportunity to demonstrate what I had learnt during the course (see the learning objectives).**



Answers: 23

Medel: 4,3

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 0

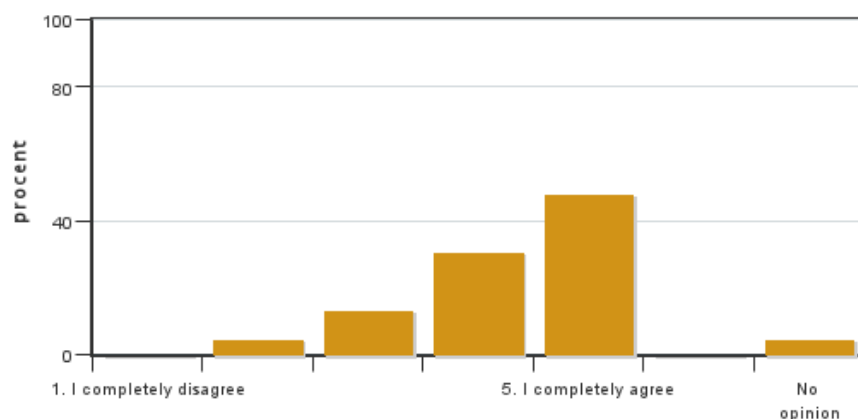
3: 4

4: 8

5: 11

No opinion: 0

**9. The course covered the sustainable development aspect (environmental, social and/or financial sustainability).**



Answers: 23

Medel: 4,3

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 1

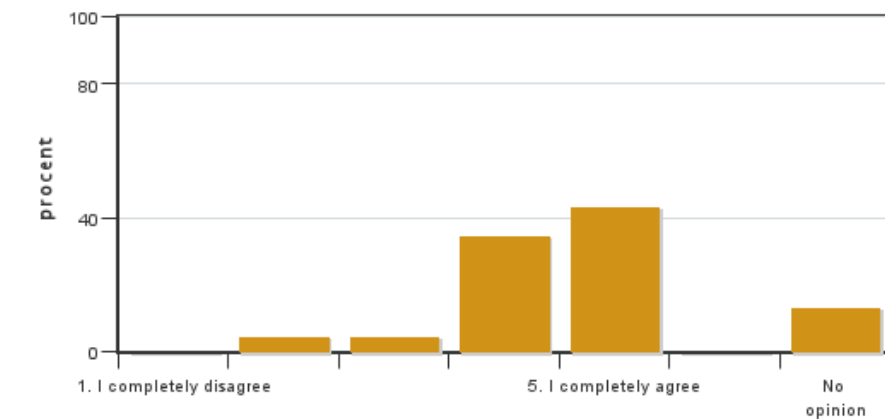
3: 3

4: 7

5: 11

No opinion: 1

**10. I believe the course has included a gender and equality aspect, regarding content as well as teaching practices (e.g. perspective on the subject, reading list, allocation of speaking time and the use of master suppression techniques).**

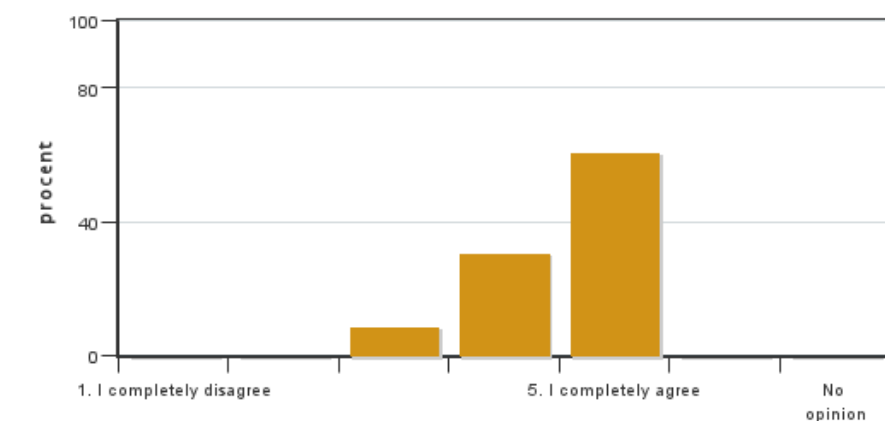


Answers: 23  
 Medel: 4,4  
 Median: 4

1: 0  
 2: 1  
 3: 1  
 4: 8  
 5: 10

No opinion: 3

#### 11. The course covered international perspectives.

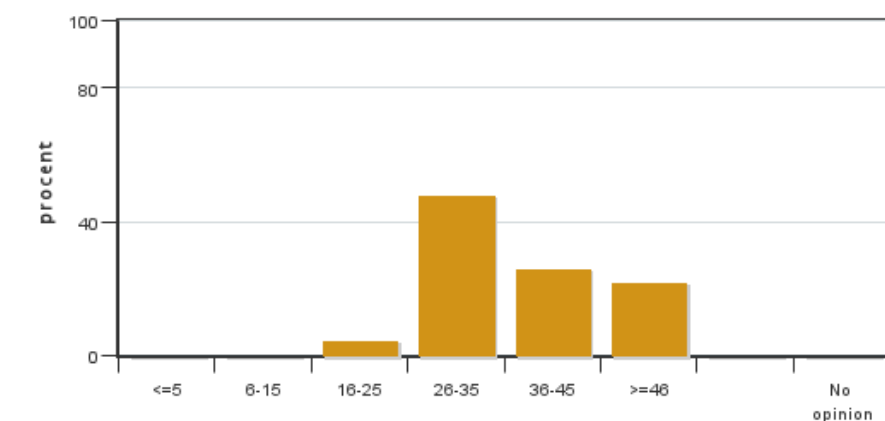


Answers: 23  
 Medel: 4,5  
 Median: 5

1: 0  
 2: 0  
 3: 2  
 4: 7  
 5: 14

No opinion: 0

#### 12. On average, I have spent ... hours/week on the course (including timetabled hours).



Answers: 23  
 Medel: 35,7  
 Median: 26-35

≤5: 0  
 6-15: 0  
 16-25: 1  
 26-35: 11  
 36-45: 6  
 ≥46: 5

No opinion: 0

## Course leaders comments

### National and International Forest Policy 2019

Comments on course evaluation by the course responsible Vilis Brukas, Alnarp, April 10, 2019

#### Student group

As always, our international class consisted from many nationalities. The class was divided by student's country of origin as follows:

Sweden: 4 (1 jägmästare from Umeå, 2 skogsmästare, and 1 Linnaeus University);

Other countries: Belgium 1, Canada 1, Estonia 1, Germany 1, Italy 1, Latvia 1, Lithuania 4, Pakistan 1, Poland 2, Romania 4, Uganda 1, United Kingdom 1.

### Evaluation set up and response rate

The evaluation questions were answered by all 23 students participating in the course i.e. with 86% response rate. We also had a concluding oral discussion that took about 1.5 hour. Each student was given a time slot to share the main impressions and the possible ways to improve the course. When answering on Evald, students were encouraged to write comments, not limiting the answers to quantitative grading; thus providing a lot of additional valuable insights. Besides the final evaluation, students took part in mid-term evaluation on the 5th week of the course, where each was anonymously writing about what was “the best” and “improvable” in the course.

### Compulsory questions on SLUNIK

On 1 to 5 scale, the overall impression is 4.1. This is lower than the annual average but still is rather satisfactory. There is no definite clue for a lower overall score but, judging from qualitative comments some students are put back by high workload and “strong steering”, mostly by demanding compensatory tasks to missing the obligatory course events.

Students scored high on most of the general aspects, such as information availability (4.9) and social learning environment (4.6). Students on average put 36 hours for course work per week, which is rather close to an expected workload (although the variation between students is quite high). This is also much lower than the reported average of 46 hours last year. This could be in part be an outcome with reduction of the load during the first course week and also changed sequencing of the weeks, where the demanding week on international forest policy was moved ahead in the schedule. My impression is that this year's group was highly committed and hard-working which was also reflected by good performance on exams.

### Course-specific evaluation

On 1 to 5 scale, following average scores were obtained for various “course components”:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	5-year average	2019
<b>Essay</b>	4,6	3,9	4,8	4,6	4,3	4,4	<b>4,3</b>
<b>Peer- and self-assessment</b>	4	3	4,5	3,8	4,2	3,9	<b>4,1</b>
<b>Study trips</b>	4,7	4,8	5	4,6	4,1	4,6	<b>4,1</b>
<b>Intermediate quizzes</b>	3,9	4	4,4	4,1	4	4,1	<b>3,9</b>
<b>Reflective journal</b>	3,1	3,3	4,4	3,7	3,8	3,7	<b>3,4</b>
<b>Final open-book exam</b>	4,1	4,1	4,5	4,2	4	4,2	<b>4,0</b>
<b>Overall impression</b>	4,4	4,1	4,9	4,6	4,4	4,5	<b>4,1</b>

In comparison with the previous course rounds, students' scores are somewhat below the annual average, the biggest difference being reported for the study trip. The exact causes behind are difficult to pinpoint, since the set-up and the programme was rather similar as in previous years (and even better in my personal judgement). In the comments some students complained about too long duration and repetition of some information (but this do not seem to reflect the majority's opinion).

I am glad to see that students have highly appreciate the role play, an innovative approach teaching and learning that we introduced 3 years ago. In fact, with 4.6 grade, the role play received the highest evaluation among all course weeks/components (the same as the last year). This excellent achievement is in part thanks to a pedagogic project funded by SLU, that enabled our teacher Ida Wallin, the organiser of the role play, to develop the materials used for the role play.

I do not see a need for radical changes in the course contents and set up. Based on the feedback from students, I will seriously consider:

- To make the reflective journal an optional choice. This would, in principle, increase students' freedom to choose own approaches to learning. Part of the student group every years is quite negative about the journal writing, that they would perceive demanding, timeconsuming and not sufficiently contributing to learning (even

though there are always as large share of students thinking opposite). This could alleviate the course load for those students that are among the most burdened. On the other side, this set-up would give an option for the highly motivated students to pursue deeper learning with higher likelihood to obtain the highest course grade. For this year, the average performance on the course corresponded to 80% and 11 students received the highest course grade (5). If journal is eliminated, the average performance is 71% and only 2 students would get the highest grade. The main drawback is that students would face different demands but our expectation is that this would enable to increase students' motivation and make better use of their capacities. When motivating the set-up with optional journal, it could be possible to refer to the distribution of the time students spent in the course from this year's course evaluation.

- Additional or an alternative option to the above could be to make the first journal grade only for training, not counting in the course grade.
- To reintroduce the joint travelling to and from the Baltic states. We could travel as a joint organised group by ferry instead of each student arrange their travels (mostly by plane) on their own. This enables a fairer sharing of the costs, each student having to contribute with the same amount; and also causes considerably lesser carbon footprint. The downsides are the higher costs for travel, additional time costs for the teacher(s) and less flexibility for students. But benefits seem to outweigh the downsides.
- To provide further explanations about teachers' expectations regarding the course readings, especially noting the difference between the scientific papers and the textbook by Max Krott; and asking tighter coverage of course literature on Norbert Weber's week.

During the essay grading seminar, provide the examples of students evaluation from this

## Student representatives comments

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### Introduction

The course "National and International Forest Policy" was aimed at lifting the focus from forest stand level or estate level to forest policy making at national and international level, with a dedicated international group of teachers and experts. A key aim of the course is to understand the interface between forestry and society. The course addressed global issues and international policy regimes, with an analysis of policy frameworks of countries of origin of the student group, but the overall focus was on Baltic Sea region whose countries have different approaches to forest management.

The overall learning outcomes included: ability to recognize regional, European and global forestry structures, actors, resources, processes; understanding of linkages between forest policy and forest management practices; analysis on national and international forest policy issues and processes; writing of essays in English and ability to promote one's arguments during debates or negotiations.

### Summary of student's perspective on the course

The aspects that made a good impression on the students most included: the diversity, experience, deep knowledge, and professionalism of the teacher team; secondly the course was well structured with weekly topics linked to each other and flowing in a coherent pattern therefore learning and understanding of the subject was much easier; the group works, exercises and the consistent student involvement during lectures enabled continued engagement with the teaching team thus the learning experience was a lot more interesting. The course content was well linked with the overall goals of the course, and the study trip to Lithuania and Latvia enabled a practical interaction with various stakeholders at different levels.

There was a fair extent of prior knowledge of the subject by some individuals in the course, but many concepts were fairly new to the group. However, the continuous engagement with the teaching team and peers in the course provided a better learning experience. The course material such as literature and other information was easily accessible, with printed literature provided to each student in the first lecture and the course portal promptly updated, a detailed program of the course including daily activities was available and any additional material needed could easily be accessed from the library. Furthermore, the teaching team was always available and reachable via Email in case of any inquiries by the student group.

The components of the course greatly supported learning with the different approaches complementing each other very well. However, there were some challenges with a few articles being difficult to understand and needed closer interpretation by the lecturers. Overall, the course components promoted teamwork, critical thinking, creativity, and improved professional skills. The social learning environment was unique, with students coming from thirteen different nationalities on four continents, this provided a chance for a mix of cultures and provided good dynamics for expression of views. Opinions were heard especially during debates and seminars, and there was active participation of all individuals.

The physical learning environment was okay with good internet and library facilities, as well as a non-congested classroom environment. The overall opinion on the final exam was that questions that required reflection to home countries provided an opportunity to display what was learnt. The exam questions required that one had understood the concepts well and had made good interface with course literature, as well as reflecting on classroom discussions and exercises. However, a key concern in the course components was the reflective journal, where students requested for a review in aspects such as its frequency, contribution to final grade among others, these were extensively discussed with the lecturer and students were able to voice their opinions.

The sustainable development aspect was covered well and was a back-bone of many aspects of the course. The coverage of international perspectives was well attained, with country presentations on national forest policies conducted early in the course. In addition, a specific week was dedicated to the international forest regime, although the general opinion was that more time could be allocated for this topic to provide a better learning experience. Finally, an average of 35.7 hours a week was dedicated by the students towards efforts to understand various course components. Time was spent on activities like attending lectures, reading course literature, studying for quizzes and exams as well as working on assignments.

### **Opinions about each week**

#### **Week one, Policy analysis by Vilis Brukas**

This week provided an introduction to policy analysis, country presentations on national forest policies were carried out. It was informative, well structured with immediate student involvement.

#### **Week two, Forest policy by Max Krott**

This week covered aspects of analytical forest policy science and was conducted by the very knowledgeable and experienced Professor Max Krott, who some refer to as a 'legend of forest policy.' The week covered topics such as different interests of forest users as well as the relationship between different stakeholders and how they influence each other. This week however had plenty of literature that some students may have had difficulty keeping up with. Overall the aspects were well delivered.

#### **Week three, International forest policy by Nobert Weber**

This week covered aspects on international forest regime, multi-level politics and European forest policy. There was plenty of information to be covered but it was delivered well, with continuous engagement of students through exercises and interesting discussions. The recommendation from the class was that a few more days could be dedicated to this topic to fully deliver the content in further detail.

#### **Week four, Swedish Forest Policy by Isak Lodin**

This week provided a good understanding of Swedish forest policy and the overall Swedish forestry model, especially in the presentations by a representative from Swedish Forestry Association. Forest owner types were covered in detail and an understanding of owner diversity as well as a comparison between qualitative and quantitative analytical lenses. This week also involved a visit to a private forest owner to understand how forest policy issues relate to decisions at estate level.

#### **Week five, Participatory processes by Ida Walin**

The introduction of role play was very beneficial to the learning process as well as improvement in negotiation skills. Learning by doing was appreciated and overall, the week covered the importance of participation of various stakeholders in forest policy making as well as decision making.

#### **Week six, Forest certification by Vilis Brukas**

The certification week involved a task of writing an essay about certification in the Baltic region and this provided the students with a means to express their opinion on the subject. Furthermore, in addition to lectures, a seminar was conducted in which an expert from NEPCon as well as a private forester who had different opinions on the subject. This was appreciated by the class as students were able to obtain perspectives from both sides thus a better learning of certification as a policy process.

### **Study trip**

The study trip to Lithuania and Latvia enabled the students obtain a practical view of the aspects of forest policy. There were presentations from officials from ministries, forest associations, private forest owners. Students were assigned various roles and tasked to prepare presentations in line with various topics at the end of the trip. This enabled close follow up of the various activities. Overall, the trip was highly rated by the students, although some viewed it as quite long, and a few aspects of changes in the organization were discussed with the teaching team during the trip review.

### **What could be done better?**

Reading material. Students requested for more time to examine readings, fewer readings per day, obtain much easier to understand journals, but above all there is a desire for the lecturers to go through the readings a bit more to enable students understand better. This issue was raised by more than half the class each with a different opinion.

Reflective journal. Comments included: some students did not understand the importance of writing the journal and found it a bit difficult to write on a weekly basis, there were also requests to reduce its contribution to the overall grade, and a need to assess journal effectiveness to see if its beneficial to learning and building knowledge.

Time for the certification essay could be increased from one week because it came at a busy time, when people were committed to role play, so there was a request to issue the essay assignment two weeks earlier for better preparation. Furthermore, there were comments about the course being a little demanding because of numerous tasks that usually came at the same time. Workload such as assignments could be spread to the weekends as well as changes to the number of articles.

Finally, regarding the study trip, the suggestions were mainly that flight information regarding dates of the trip could be provided as early to enable purchase of cheaper plane tickets as well as other means of transport. In addition, the cost of the trip was quite high, exceeding the original cost estimate, especially since students had to meet additional costs for some meals. Other suggestions included that the time could be adjusted, and that there could be better organization in presentations by the different stakeholders.

### **Summary of most liked aspects**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Number</b>
Study trip	10
Role play	9
International forest policy week	8
Diversity in students and teacher	5
Visit to private forest owners	4
Reflection on home countries	4
Exercises during lectures	3
Certification essay	3
Journals reflecting own understanding	1

### **Summary of suggestions for improvement**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Number</b>
Improvement to reflective journal	12
Review of readings/course literature	10
More time for certification essay	7
Early information regarding study trip	5

In conclusion, the overall learning objectives of the course were attained because of the dedication of the student group and commitment and dedication of the students to learning, although with a few challenges, but this didn't hinder the overall sequence of the course. The knowledge obtained provides a better insight of the forest policy situation in Sweden, Baltic region, Europe and globally. Therefore the 'National and International Forest Policy' course is a good choice for students taking the Euroforester program.