



National and International Forest Policy SG0234, 30162.1920

15 Hp

Pace of study = 100%

Education cycle = Advanced -

Course leader = Vilis Brukas

Evaluation report

Evaluation period: 2020-03-19 - 2020-03-24

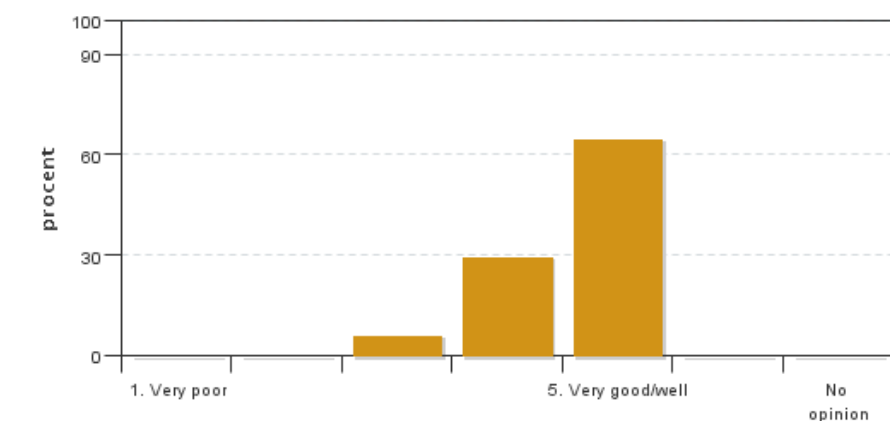
Answers 17

Number of students 23

Answer frequency 73 %

Mandatory standard questions

1. My overall impression of the course is:



Answers: 17

Medel: 4,6

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

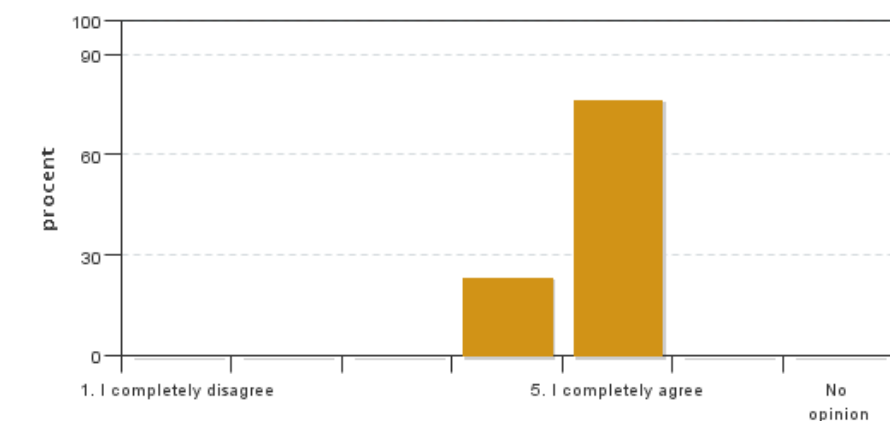
3: 1

4: 5

5: 11

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 17

Medel: 4,8

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

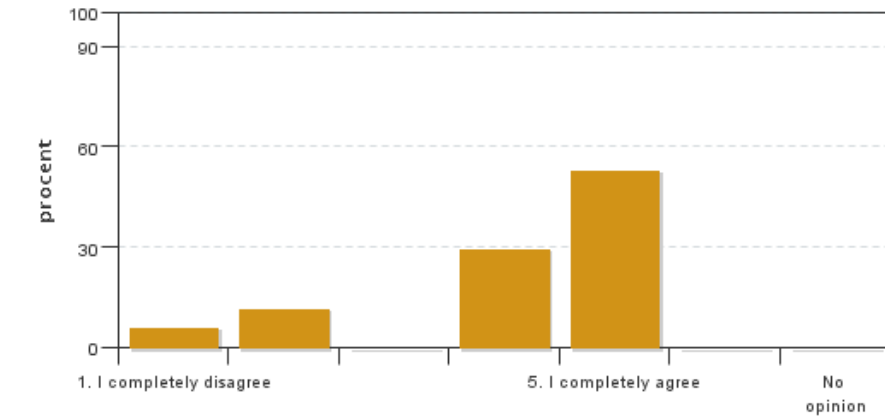
3: 0

4: 4

5: 13

No opinion: 0

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

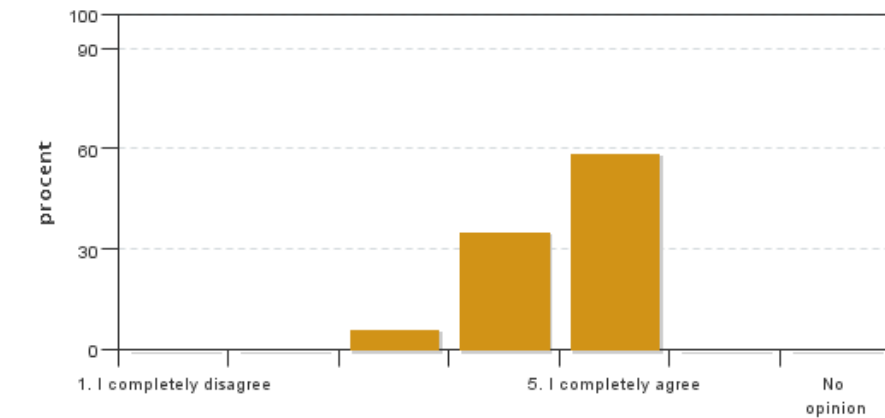


Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,1
 Median: 5

1: 1
 2: 2
 3: 0
 4: 5
 5: 9

No opinion: 0

4. The information about the course was easily accessible.

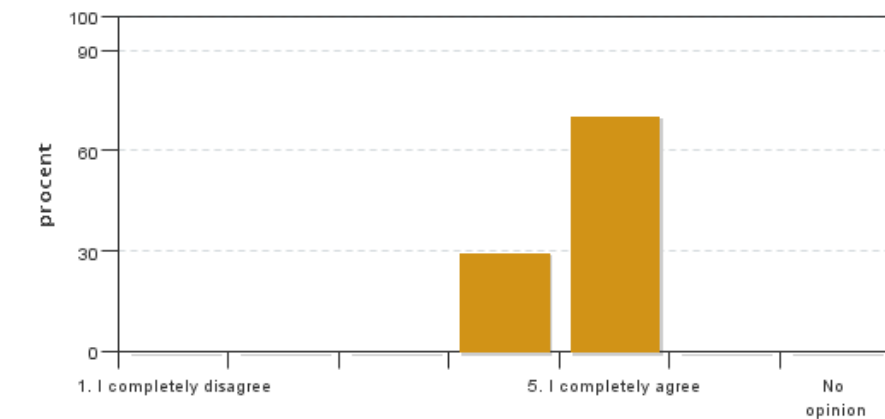


Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,5
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 1
 4: 6
 5: 10

No opinion: 0

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

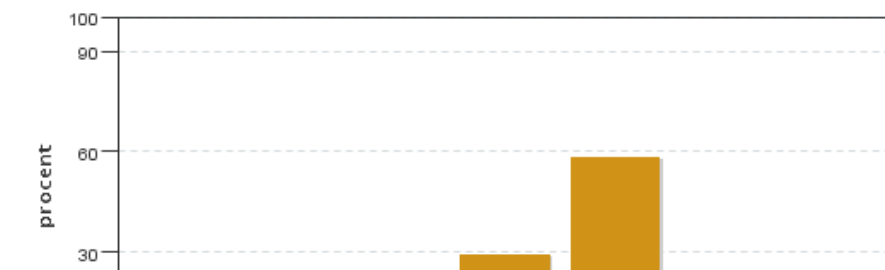


Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,7
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 0
 4: 5
 5: 12

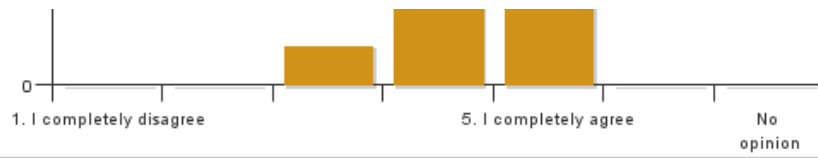
No opinion: 0

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



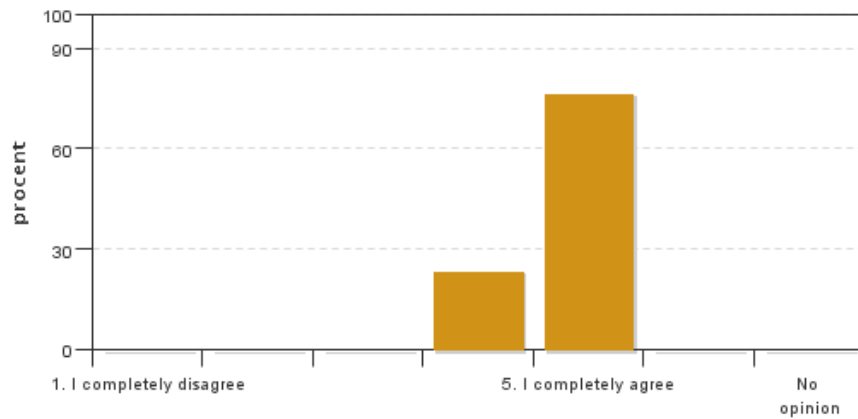
Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,5
 Median: 5

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



No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 17

Medel: 4,8

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

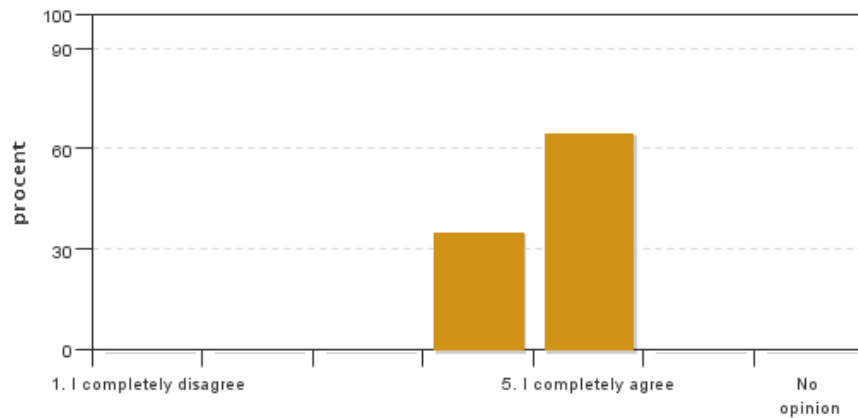
3: 0

4: 4

5: 13

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 17

Medel: 4,6

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

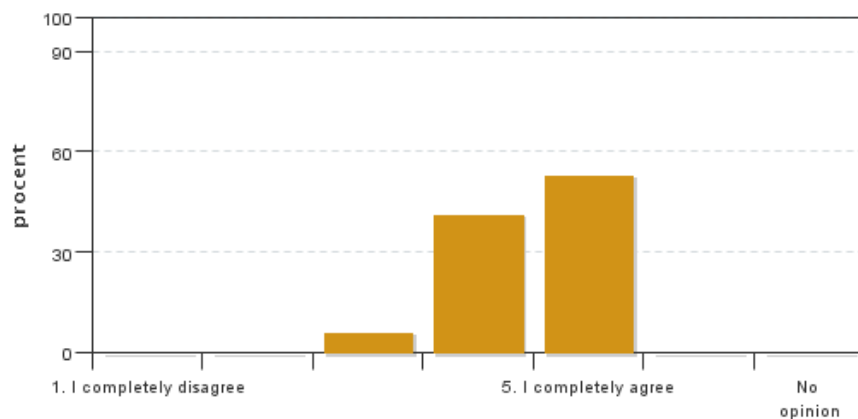
3: 0

4: 6

5: 11

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 17

Medel: 4,5

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

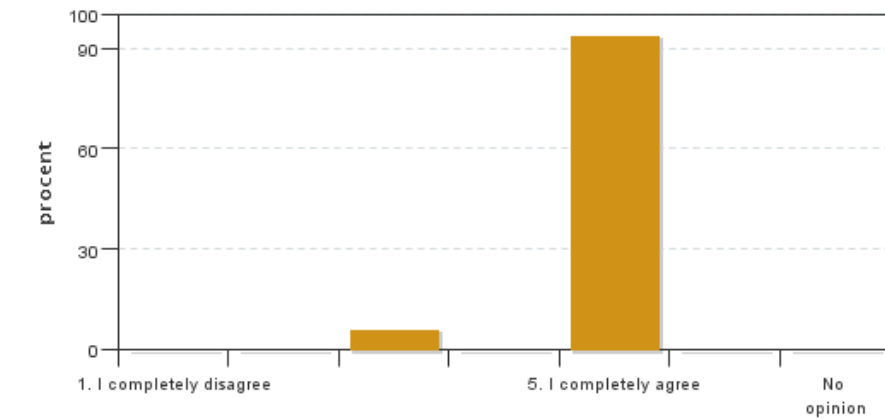
3: 1

4: 7

5: 9

No opinion: 0

10. The course covered international perspectives.

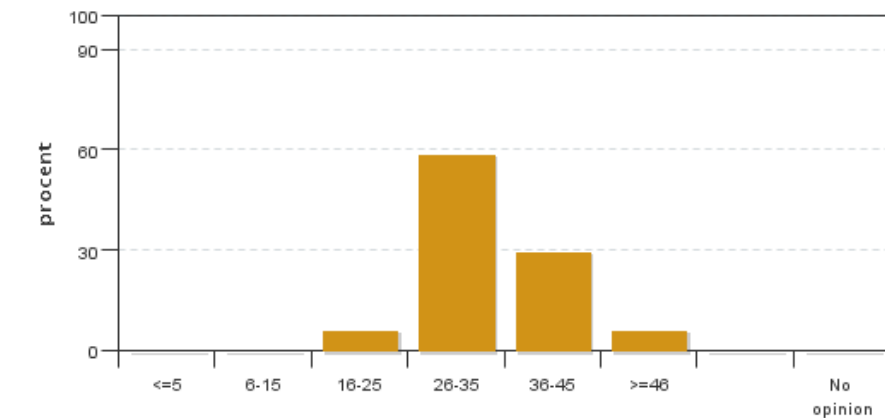


Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,9
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 1
 4: 0
 5: 16

No opinion: 0

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

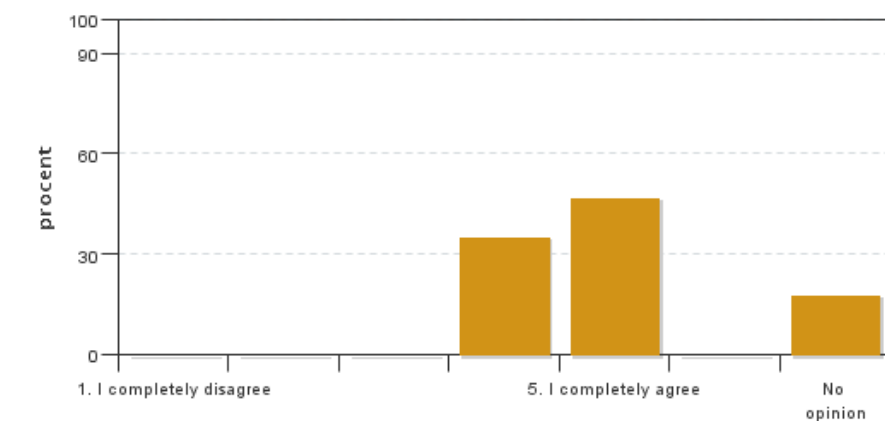


Answers: 17
 Medel: 33,3
 Median: 26-35

<=5: 0
 6-15: 0
 16-25: 1
 26-35: 10
 36-45: 5
 >=46: 1

No opinion: 0

12. 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).



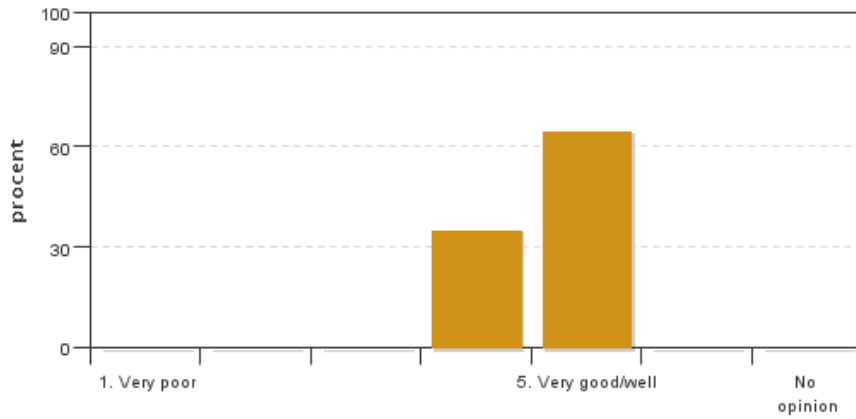
Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,6
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 0
 4: 6
 5: 8

No opinion: 3

Additional own questions

13. What is your opinion about the course Week1, policy analysis by Vilis Brukas?

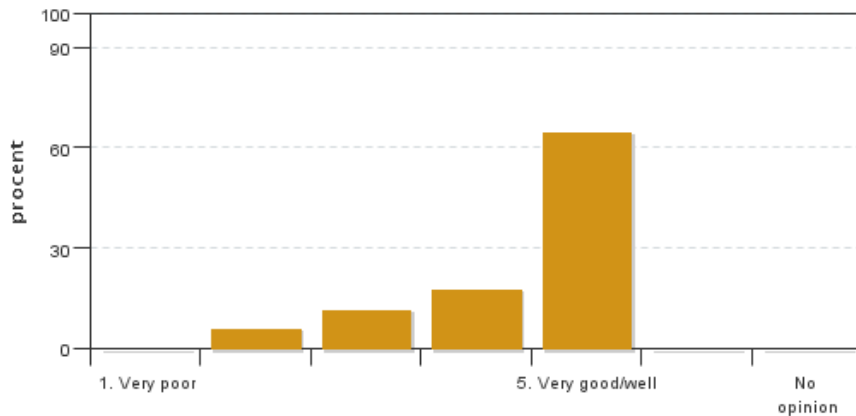


Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,6
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 0
 4: 6
 5: 11

No opinion: 0

14. Week2, forest policy by Max Krott?

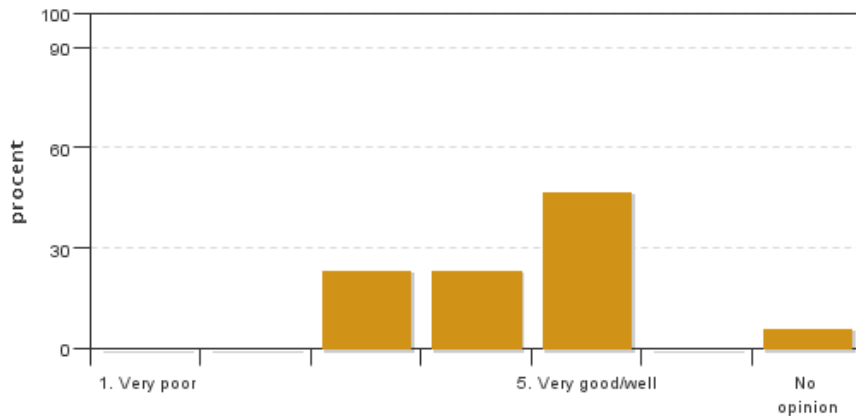


Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,4
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 1
 3: 2
 4: 3
 5: 11

No opinion: 0

15. Week3, International forest policy by Norbert Weber?

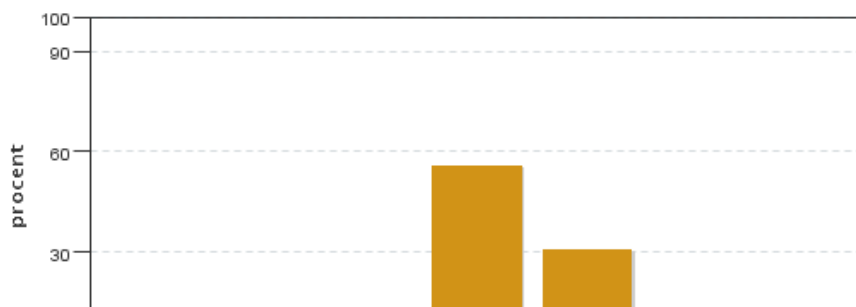


Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,3
 Median: 4.5

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

No opinion: 1

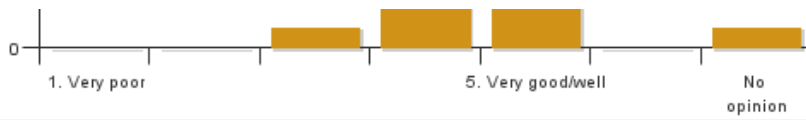
16. Week4, Swedish FP, private forestry by Isak Lodin et al.?



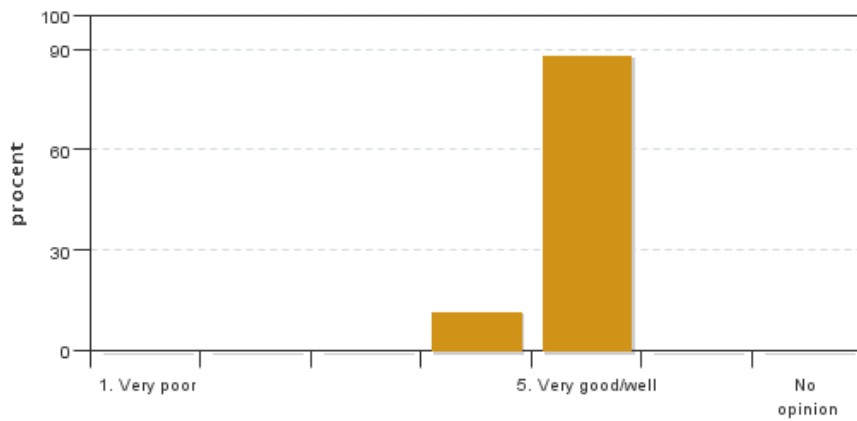
Answers: 16
 Medel: 4,3
 Median: 4

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 1
 4: 9
 5: 5

No opinion: 1



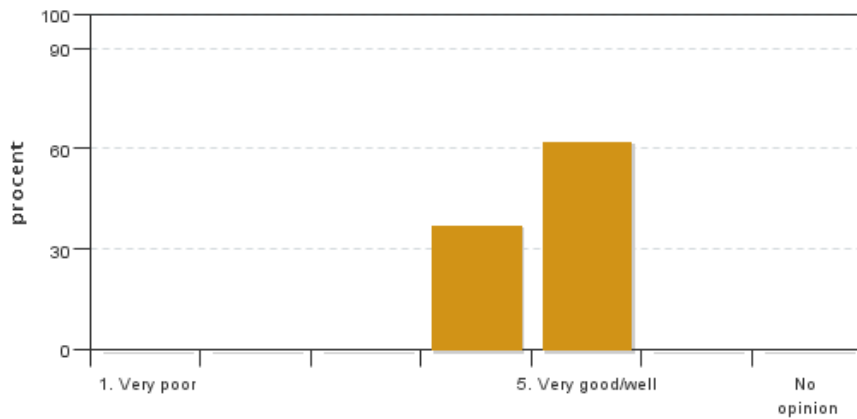
17. Week5, Participatory processes by Ida Wallin et al.?



Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,9
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 0
 4: 2
 5: 15
 No opinion: 0

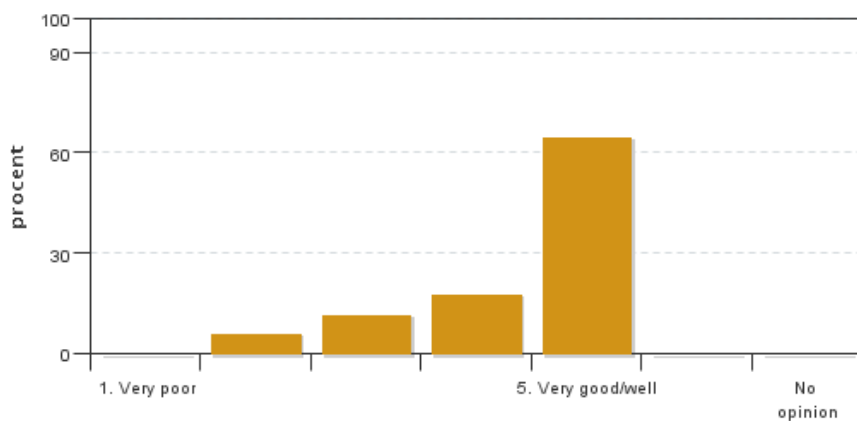
18. Week6, forest certification by Vilis Brukas et al.?



Answers: 16
 Medel: 4,6
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 0
 4: 6
 5: 10
 No opinion: 0

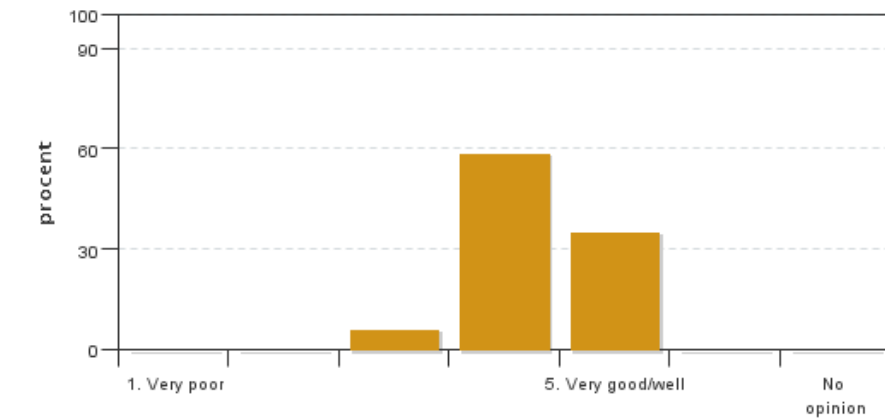
19. Study trip to Lithuania and Latvia



Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,4
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 1
 3: 2
 4: 3
 5: 11
 No opinion: 0

20. Quizzes

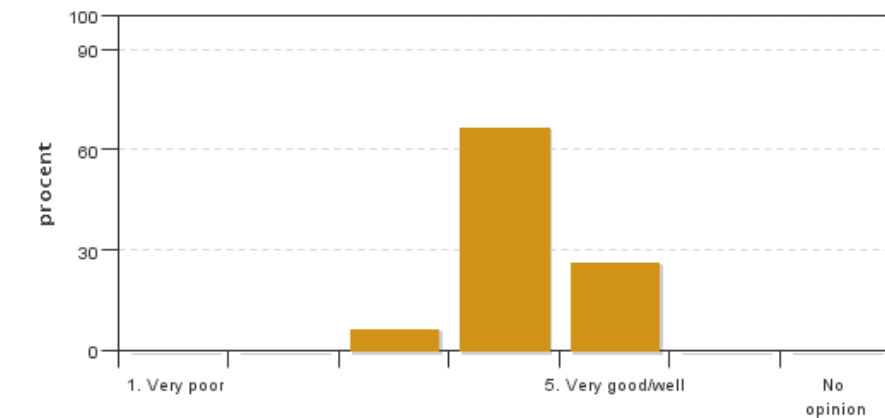


Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,3
 Median: 4

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 1
 4: 10
 5: 6

No opinion: 0

21. Writing ESSAY?

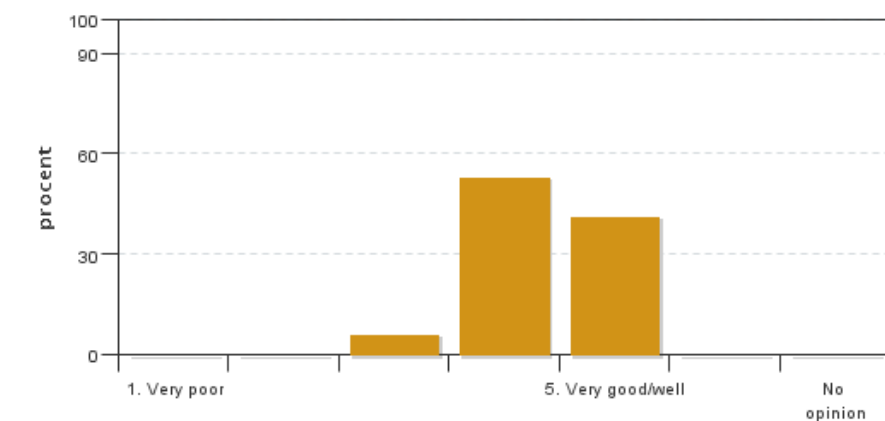


Answers: 15
 Medel: 4,2
 Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0

22. Evaluating ESSAYS? We would appreciate your detailed comments on this question, such as: Was the essay helpful in developing the appropriate writing skills? How do you experience peer and self-assessment? Any added value? Fairness? Was the proportion in the course grade adequate? Etc.

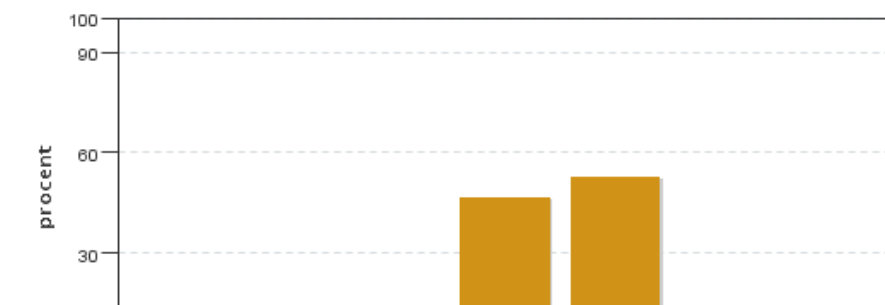


Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,4
 Median: 4

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 1
 4: 9
 5: 7

No opinion: 0

23. Final exam



Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,5
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 0
 4: 8
 5: 9

No opinion: 0



24. What was "the worst" in the course? If possible, provide suggestions for improvement

24. What was "the best" in the course?

Course leaders comments

National and International Forest Policy 2020

Comments on course evaluation by the course responsible Vilis Brukas, Alnarp, March 30, 2020

Student group

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

Sweden: 6 (2 jägmästare from Umeå, 2 horticulture students; and 2 biologists from other universities)

Other countries: Canada 2, Chech Republic 1, Estonia 4, Latvia 1, Lithuania 3, the Netherlands 1, Poland 3, Slovakia 1, Taiwan 1, USA 1

Evaluation set up and response rate

The evaluation questions were answered by 17 out of 23 students participating in the course (one student dropped out at an early stage of the course), thus the response rate was 74%. We also had a concluding oral discussion through an online conference on Canvas that took about 1 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 many 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 4.6. This indeed a good result, especially considering some external "disturbances" that have been outside the control of the teacher team (see below).

Students scored high on most of the general aspects, such as information availability (4.5) and social learning environment (4.5). Students on average put 33 hours for course work per week, only one student reported less than 25 and one reported more one 46 hours. The performance on the exams was, on average, worse than in the last two years, which is probably related to lower working hours as reported by students (the averages were 36 hours in 2019 and 46 hours in 2018).

Course-specific evaluation questions

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

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	6-year average	2019
Essay	4.6	3.9	4.8	4.6	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.2
Peer- and self-assessment	4	3	4.5	3.8	4.2	4.1	3.9	4.4
Study trips	4.7	4.8	5	4.6	4.1	4.1	4.6	4.4
Intermediate quizzes	3.9	4	4.4	4.1	4	3.9	4.1	4.3
Reflective journal	3.1	3.3	4.4	3.7	3.8	3.4	3.6	n.a.
Final open-book exam	4.1	4.1	4.5	4.2	4	4	4.2	4.5

Overall impression	4.4	4.1	4.9	4.6	4.4	4.1	4.4	4.6
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Students' scores 2020 are somewhat higher than in 2019 and the annual average, for most of the key course "components". Talking about specific course weeks, the highest score again was obtained for the participatory processes, featuring an extensive role play event (4.9) followed by the introductory policy analysis week and the forest certification week (4.6 for both). I am glad to see again students' high appreciation of the role play, an innovative approach to teaching and learning that we introduced 4 years ago. 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 set-up and materials.

External challenges in year 2020

This year's round was unusual due to considerable challenges largely outside the control of the teacher team.

1. Particularities of attending students

Group included several students with special behavioural profile. One student of Eastern European origin disappeared at an early stage of the course, without notifying the teacher team. According to "rumours" from student dormitory, s/he obtained a job in Norway and decided to leave university studies for good. Next, we had a student of a non-European origin with considerable health problems and rather low motivation to study (s/he mostly considered the time in Europe as a curious adventure, without need for additional study credits). The health issues were remedied with help SLU Student Health Services, however, it is unlikely that the student will complete all due tasks and finalise the course. Third, we had a student from the Central Europe with very significant problems of mental health. S/he has been definitely not able to properly follow studies at university level. What's much worse, s/he continuously disrupted the learning environment by putting numerous (often irrelevant) questions and commentaries, often of offending character, coming with unjustified demands for different sorts of support, disrupting presentations of guest lecturers and fellow students, etc. I turned to SLU Student Health Services for support, however, no help was possible (explaining that they can only provide support when a student willingly asks for it). Thus, basically, teachers and fellow students were made pawns of this situation. I am definitely not blaming the student, who is made her/his best to study, without having proper prerequisites. However, I would like to make a plea for the necessity to provide support to teachers in this kind of situation (hopefully educational administration of the faculty and student organisations could take this up at higher levels of SLU organisation) :

- Admission officers should make careful assessments of the applicants, and in case of any doubts, turn to respective departments. People at our department (including PSR Euroforester) well knew about the student in question, who had already harassing colleagues at the department for about a year (welcome to contact me for additional details)
- Educational administration at SLU should establish a routine for supporting responsible teachers and PSR in such difficult situations (predictably, the number of such cases will increase, given increasing issues of mental health in young societal cohorts).

1. Outbreak of Covid 19

Both of the course's study trips suffered losses this year. 1-day study trip to private forest estate in Sweden was cancelled due to illness of the owners. The 10-days study trip in Lithuania and Latvia was stopped midway, due to the Covid 19 outbreak. This was an unfortunate outcome for students who apparently were very satisfied with the first half of the Baltic study trip. I was glad to see a mature stance by students who understood that this was inevitable outcome due circumstances outside the control of teachers. As all remaining teaching had to be conducted online, we held the study trip seminar using the online conferencing system in Canvas. While it did not reach the quality of an in-class event, it went ok, given the circumstances

Changes to consider for the next year

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:

- The new strategy not to grade the first week's submission of the journal seemed to have worked well. Several students noted that journal worked very well initially, helping to structure reflections in beneficial ways. But that the benefits decreased with the time passed. **One option could be to remove the journal for e.g. the participatory week that already includes other types of reflection.** The handling of the journal will to a higher degree depend on whom can take on this task, after the expected departure of Isak Lodin.
- To additionally stress teachers' expectations regarding the course readings, especially noting the difference between the scientific papers and the textbook by Max Krott; and explain Max'es pedagogical modes before his weeks.
- Guest lectures during the participatory week were not very well regarded by several students

- Round table discussion during the study trip worked very well. To be implemented in continuation in both, Lithuania and Latvia
- The FC debate worked fairly well. I could think further, how to enhance the students' preparations for the debate.
- **Several students have put forward the suggestion to have the debate or at least some of the lectures, at the beginning of the essay writing task. On possibility could be to give my overview lecture on Friday, prior to the main FC week**
- Perhaps the attendance policy could be softened, e.g. by allowing to miss one obligatory event without a compensatory task, however, with due notice in advance.
- **Consider abstracts of scientific papers being copied at larger font size**

Student representatives comments

Comments by the student representative Lukáš Vaníček, in Semily, Czech Republic, April 5, 2020

Introduction

The course National and international Forest Policy, taking place 20.1.2020 – 24.3.2020 in SLU, Alnarp was the third milestone course of Euroforester master program. This course was open for full-time Euroforester master students, students from different faculties in Sweden obtaining for master diploma and exchange students. In total, 24 participants coming from different European and non-European countries, including 6 Swedish students took part in the course.

As mentioned in course leader's comments, this year of forest policy course was bit specific, facing certain peculiarities. We can conclude not all of the students are always fully interested in their studies (as it correlates to the Gause curve of Normal division and study results). Minority of students understand the studies in abroad as a one-time life chance, however more in favor of other than study aspects – such as travelling, discovering the world, and in one specific case during this year job applying and quitting the studies. As for the covid-19 outbreak, none would expect such global restrictions and bans as are happening right now. Coronavirus has particularly influenced the course but students managed to complete the course and get back home.

The course was structured into weekly blocks, each of them was organized under responsibilities of local teachers/Phd University students or international professors and experts coming from Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and finally last two weeks of Baltic study trip under the responsibilities of highly educated experts, teachers, forest owners, state enterprise workers and others from Lithuania and Latvia. Students and teacher team followed syllabus described in the SLU webpages. Just minor changes had to be done due to unexpected illness of private forest owner in Sweden, which students finally couldn't visit and difficulties we had to face during the study trip in Baltics which had been solved spontaneously and we can agree that correctly.

Detailed reflections and week by week comments by students are available in Course Evaluation, where students under particular questions answered a questionnaire in the end of the course. Their comments also closely correlate with the mid-term evaluation and online discussion in the end of the course. The best part of the course was definitely study trip and role play with Ida Walin.

Study trip

For easier organization of the study trip and since not all people use the easiest (fastest) way of travelling by plane – due to environmental or other considerations, students were allowed to decide their preferable way of travel to reach the meeting point in Kaunas. Groups of students had already flew to the Baltics after the final exam on Friday March 6th, spending some extra time for sightseeing in their home- or firstly visited- country of Lithuania. 7 participants including students and members of teacher team decided for longer, but the more interesting and environmentally friendly travel by train and night ferry between Karlshamn and Klaipeda.

Since the situation with the covid-19 was not anyhow positive, it was decided to finish the Lithuanian part and not to continue to Latvia due to border closing of most of the European countries, including Latvia later during the time of expected duration of our Baltic trip and government restrictions day by day. Lecture team provided us exhausting endurance, help and courage to deal with the situation in the best available way. Students rebooked their ticket for earlier departure back to Sweden, most of the Baltic students decided to prolong their stay in their home countries after the official (reestablished) end of the trip on Saturday 14th. Pity but due to the restrictions these students got stuck home and have no more chance to come back to Sweden so far, having all their stuff in half-empty dormitory in Alnarp.

Despite the fact of considerable curtailment of the study trip, we were able to merge knowledge gained during the lectures at school with practical application in a field, in a country which has undergone significant socio-economic

changes after the end of Soviet Union period time three decades ago. We are able to discuss and compare these changes (not only on the field of forest policy) with surrounding countries, and see the differences and similarities in respective countries. We can (should be able to) assume and summarize impact of the historical development of past decades on national and international forest policy in Baltic Sea region.

Student's feedback for the study trip and others

Most of the students enjoyed the study trip even though it was half cancelled because of government restrictions. What should be improved though? It would be nice if the representatives, which we have met would be more specific in their field of interest and wouldn't repeat the basics about forestry and forest policy in Lithuania. To use the time even more „fulfilled“ by visits and lectures deeply specified in the topics by shortening the free time in the evenings and prolonging the stay in the field. Also, it comes to consider, if there might had been an opportunity to have online lectures during the cancelled Latvian study trip week, or any other compensation instead of power point presentations to be found in Canvas portal. However, I understand it would be hard to organize it from scratch and the main approach of students during this week was to get back to their home country (if they were restricted to do so by Ministry of Foreign Affairs or if they decided themselves based on the cancellation of flights and most kind of international transportation within Europe and between Europe and other continents coming).

Many students decided also to freely answer the question of what was the worst of the Forest policy course with unambiguous evidence. As seen from the answers in Evaluation report, most of them noted we had to face certain difficulties with one of students, whose behavior used to be impolite and caused disturbances in the classroom (proper focusing on the lectures was harder for both students and the lecturer). For example by disrupting the lecture by multiple questions to prove his/her truth based on previous international experiences, different opinions and „range of broad knowledge most people don't have“. I would like to say here that as a student representative I will only mention the case briefly based on the student reflections, oral and written feedback and I am NOT going to suspect any troubles this person face. I believe the situation might get better with a possible contribution of help of the rest of the classroom, which was lacking. Most of the students were complaining about him/her but didn't talk to him/her, trying to focus on themselves than to help the person living outside of Alnarp campus which was seen as „outsider“ to socialize with the collective. I believe I provided him/her my friendly presence and tried to get on with him/her well.

Course evaluation

In the end of the course, students participated online conference, where each of students said their opinion about the course, usually including what might be improved for the future and what succeeded. Another way of course evaluation was a voluntary questionnaire, including ranking satisfaction of students with various tasks (study weeks, structure of the course, assignments and others). The questionnaire participated 17 of 24 students, results are available under the SLU Forest policy website. The questionnaire should give a feedback to the lecturer team about our general impressions of the course and suggestions for enhancement. Two important questions are highlighted here and are sorted bellow. Since the questionnaire was not only consisted of multiple-choice questions (but it was kind of “qualitative research”), answers were unique, some of them were clear, and most of them was possible to gather under one relevant phrase. Some students mentioned just one most important thing, whereas others wrote many that they enjoyed most or which might be improved. Number in brackets refer to the number of answering students.

- What was the best?

Study trip (7)

Role play with Ida Walin (5)

Guest lectures (3)

Class participation (2), group dynamics (2)

Clear structure and organization (1), broad perspective (1)

Gained knowledge based on previous experience from home country (1)

“Most interesting course so far” (1)

Open minded and friendly atmosphere (1), discussions (1)

- What was the worst?

One student disturbing lectures and affecting schoolmates and lecturer to focus properly (7)

Reflective journals (2)

Afternoon schedule times didn't always correspond to the reality (1)

Extra assignment for missing mandatory attendance (1)

Format of articles (small font of letters) (1)

Norbert Weber´ week (too much new information) (1)

Study trip cancellation in a mid-way (1)

Study trip schedule (busier schedule and less free evenings expected by one student) (1)

Too much reading (1)

Discussion

Reflective journals were seen both in positive and negative way. As a way of improving student´ ability to summarize weekly highlights, strengthening self-learning skills, working with scientific papers as a preparation for writing master thesis, and formulating their own ideas which are proved by knowledge gained during lectures and home readings. Reflective journals also faced dislike, since it was graded part of assignments, which might have negative impact since it is "compulsory", some students reflected that in journals written in the second part of the course the main ideas were already repeated and didn´t deepen student´s knowledge.

Reading materials had also been discussed with different approaches. Was the amount of literature and printed format accurate? Students with different English skills and students highly connected with computer usage concluded differently. But suggested from the mean amount of 33 study hours spent by students per week this year there is still a reserve up to 40 hours/week "to read more", which is equal to 15 ETCS credit points for the course.

Afternoon schedule. Ends of lectures didn´t often correspond to the strict end at 4 o´clock PM, real end of classes varied (was usually earlier) depending on the group dynamics and willingness for enlarging discussions by students and leadership of lectures by teachers from abroad, which "made afternoon time planning harder"

As for essay writing, it would be beneficial to have one extra lecture about how to write an essay since students are coming from different background, instead to have a lecture about essay grading and evaluating after the essay had already been written. Anyway, per-reviews and self-evaluation helped us to improve our assignment and was beneficial since most of the students didn´t have an opportunity to do it so far.

It would be nice to have a chance to participate the Latvian part of the study trip next year for students who are really into the policy topics.

Conclusions

Students were really enthusiastic by the course, appreciating the approach of learning and fairly contributing by their presence – the international study group and field of study was unique (therefore we understand, why for example interest rates in USA are incomparably higher compared to some of the Baltic sea region countries). Learning objectives were fulfilled and even though we had to face certain difficulties and challenges, students and teacher´ team had successfully overcome them. The course was ranged pretty well and therefore is one of the best choices within Euroforester master program in SLU.