



## Applied Population Ecology BI1301, 20016.2021

15 Hp

Pace of study = 100%

Education cycle = Advanced -

Course leader = John P. Ball

### Evaluation report

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**Evaluation period: 2021-01-19 - 2021-02-08**

Answers 16

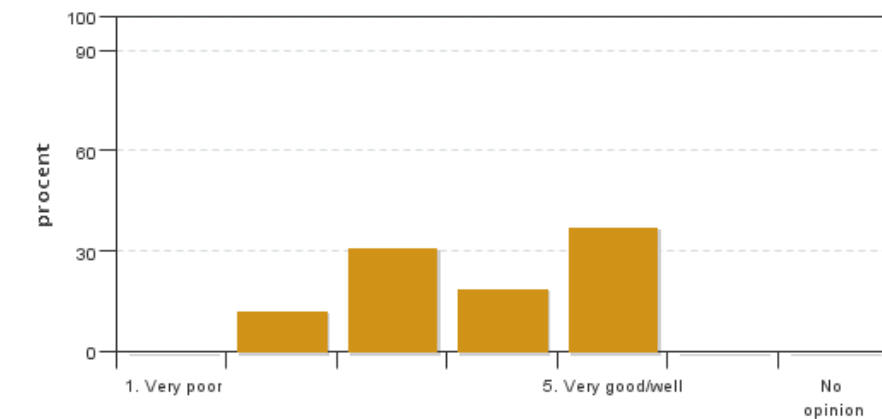
Number of students 19

Answer frequency 84 %

### Mandatory standard questions

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

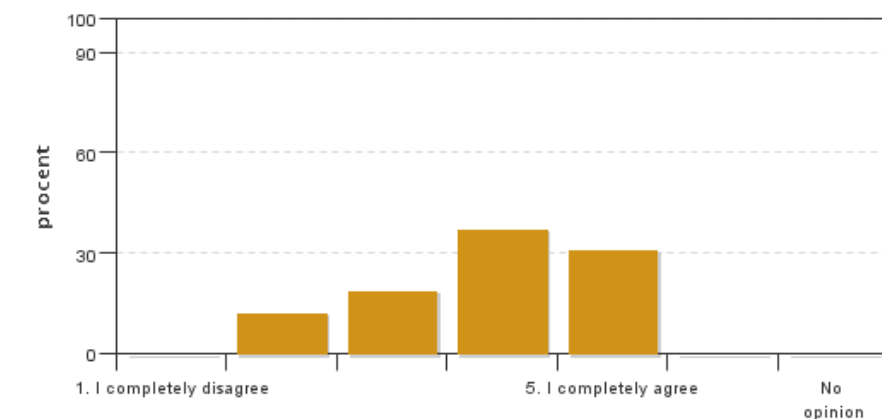


Answers: 16  
Medel: 3,8  
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0

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

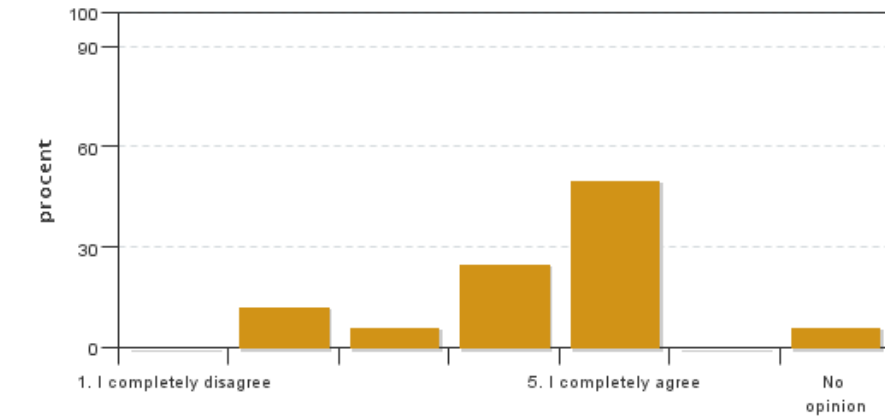


Answers: 16  
Medel: 3,9  
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0

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

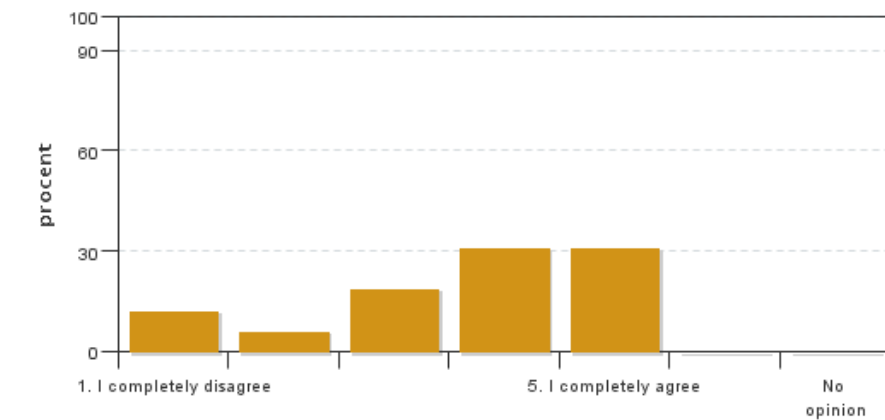


Answers: 16  
 Medel: 4,2  
 Median: 5

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

No opinion: 1

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

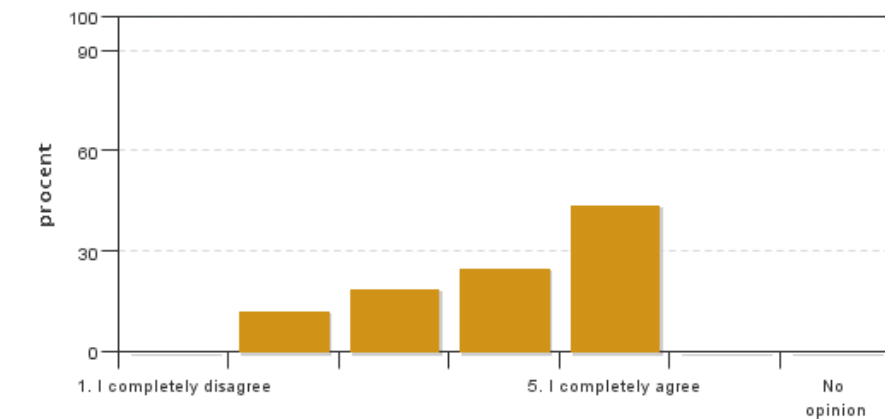


Answers: 16  
 Medel: 3,6  
 Median: 4

1: 2  
 2: 1  
 3: 3  
 4: 5  
 5: 5

No opinion: 0

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

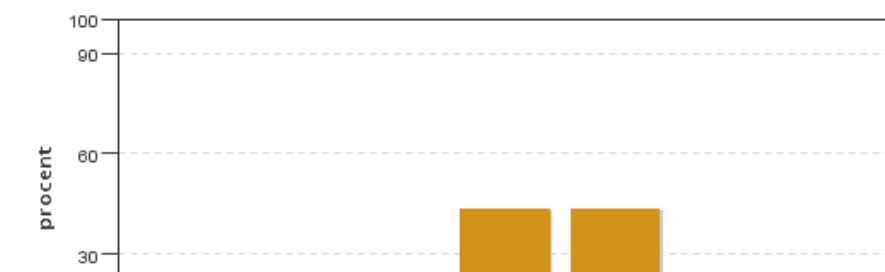


Answers: 16  
 Medel: 4,0  
 Median: 4

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

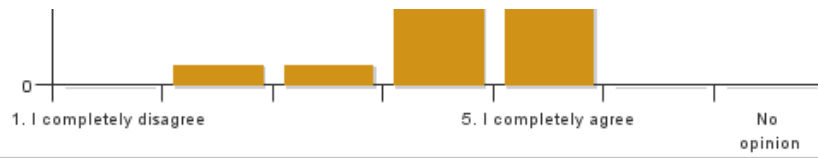
No opinion: 0

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



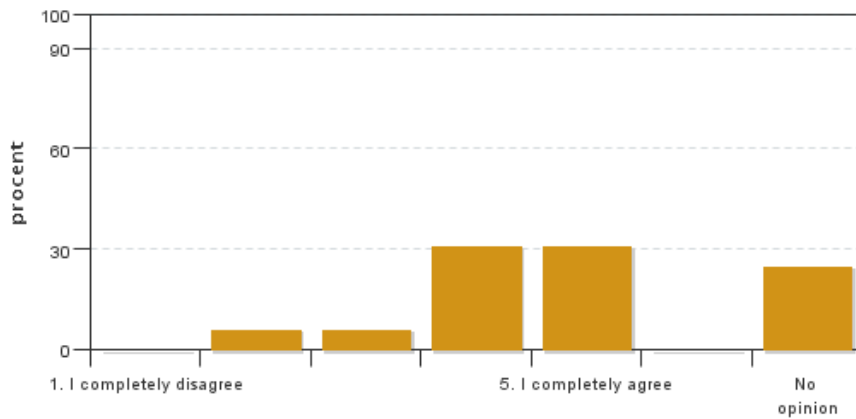
Answers: 16  
 Medel: 4,3  
 Median: 4

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



No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 16

Medel: 4,2

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 1

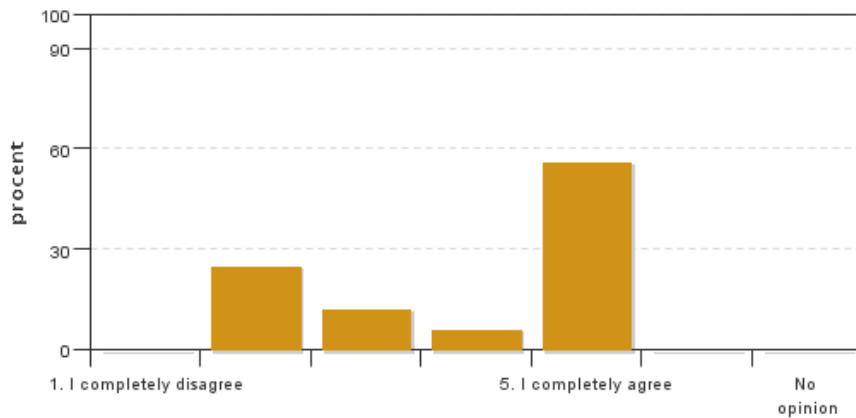
3: 1

4: 5

5: 5

No opinion: 4

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



Answers: 16

Medel: 3,9

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 4

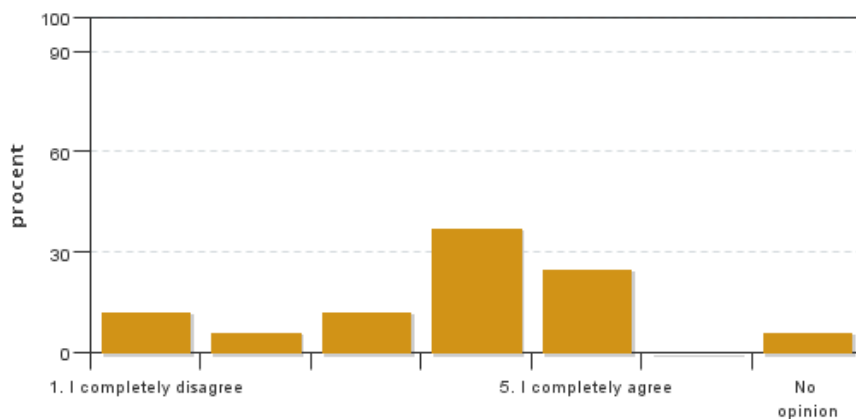
3: 2

4: 1

5: 9

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 16

Medel: 3,6

Median: 4

1: 2

2: 1

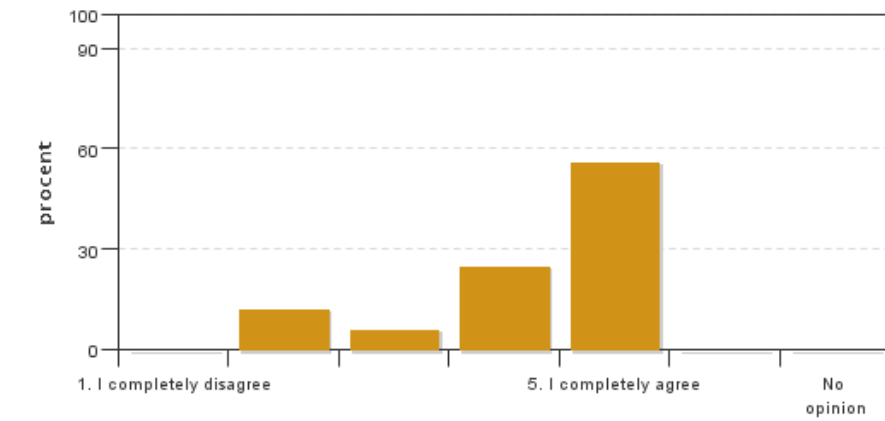
3: 2

4: 6

5: 4

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).**

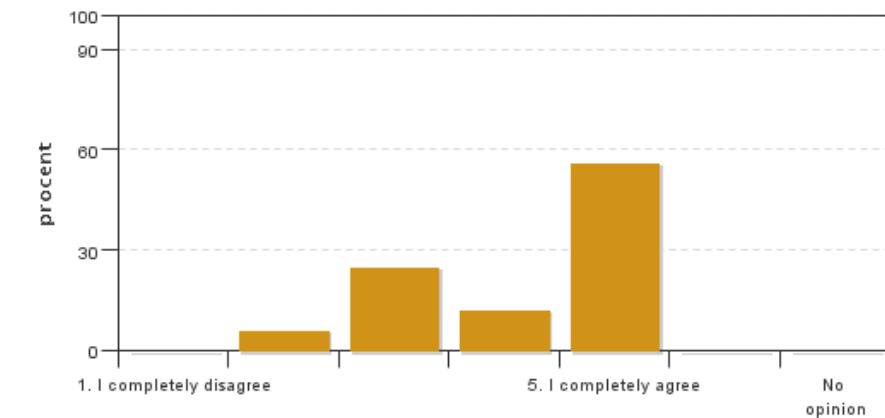


Answers: 16  
 Medel: 4,3  
 Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

**11. The course covered international perspectives.**

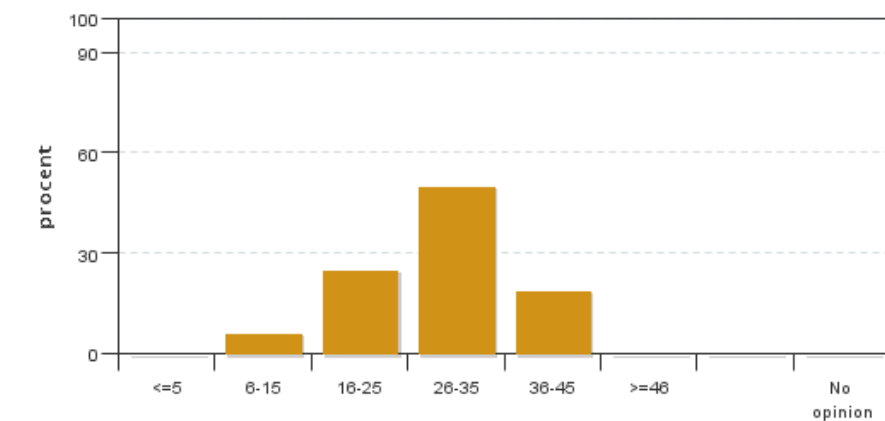


Answers: 16  
 Medel: 4,2  
 Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

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

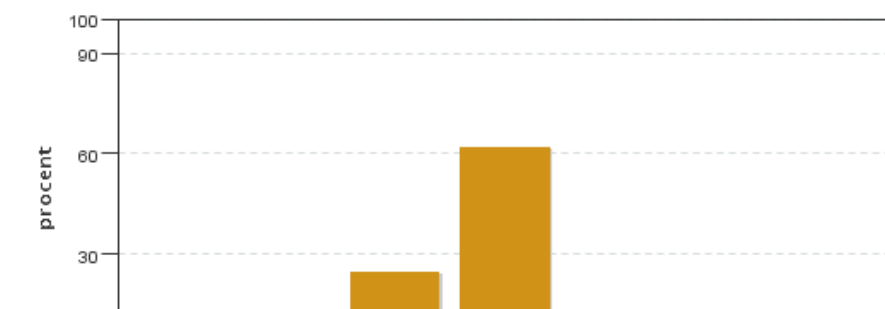


Answers: 16  
 Medel: 28,1  
 Median: 26-35

≤5: 0  
 6-15: 1  
 16-25: 4  
 26-35: 8  
 36-45: 3  
 ≥46: 0

No opinion: 0

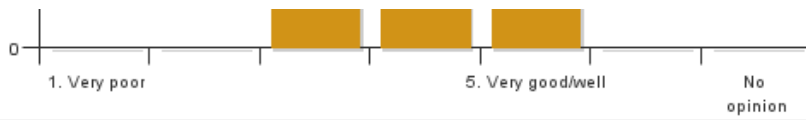
**13. What is your overall experience of participating in all or part of your course online?**



Answers: 16  
 Medel: 3,9  
 Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0



**14. Please share what worked well when participating in teaching on distance**

**15. Please share what worked less well when participating in teaching on distance**

## Course leaders comments

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Course convener comments:

Q1) "Overall impression of the course": The average score was 3.8, with median score of 4.0. While OK, this is below the rating that this course usually gets. This was because of the Covid-19 pandemic: the course started as a normal course with physical lectures and that is how the course was planned. However, we were forced online DURING the course. I am very proud of how the other teachers and myself were able to adapt to the new situation (you can't just give a planned physical lecture on Zoom) but obviously it wasn't perfect. If the course has to be given online again, it will be much better!

Q2) "The course content had clear links to the learning objectives": Mean score was 3.9, with the medial 4.0. Even though some parts of the course had to be changed somewhat to fit online teaching, we still covered all of the learning objectives.

Q3) "My prior knowledge was sufficient for me to benefit from the course": The average score was a good 4.2 and the median score was 5.0. Had we been able to have physical teaching rather than online, I think this score would have been even higher because the (physical) computer labs really help students master many important topics and are usually very highly rated, but these labs are more difficult to do through the internet.

Q4) "Info about the course was easily accessible": Mean score was an OK 3.6 with the median score 4.0. Information was on Canvas organized in various modules for each subject, but one document did not show on Canvas: when a student let me know, I reloaded the document and it showed that day. Furthermore, when I had to make a change on less than a week's notice (again because of Covid-19) I also sent emails to every student.

Q5) "The various course components have supported my learning": The average score was quite good (4.0) and the median too (4.0). Again, I have little doubt that had we been able to have a physical course (particularly the computer labs) this would have been even higher because the computer labs are so highly-rated, at least when they are physical labs. :-9.

Q6) "The social learning environment has been inclusive, respecting differences of opinion": Another good average score of 4.3 (median 4).

Q7) "The physical learning environment has been satisfactory": The average score was a bit low (3.6) median 4 but remember that we only had a few weeks of physical meetings, the rest of the course was online so there was no "physical environment" for most of the course. For those first weeks, we used the same normal rooms that are available every year and which do not generate any particular criticism. That a couple of students answered this question very negatively this year and drew the score down is rather inexplicable. I booked the best teaching rooms in Umeå when there was physical teaching, so there is nothing that I could change in the future.

Q8) "The examination(s) provided opportunity to demonstrate what I had learnt": The average score was an acceptable 3.9 (median 5.0). For this home exam, I had told the students to answer the questions that they could, and come back to the questions that they found difficult later and look at the PowerPoints & assigned readings if they needed. I think that many students might have felt a little bit insecure (which I think might be a result of the online lectures). I think many students took the time to go back to the assigned readings or PowerPoints for nearly every question and found the time a bit too short. Regardless that students wanted more time, the average on the exam was slightly above normal, and so was the distribution of grades.

Q9) "The course covered the sustainable development aspects (environmental, social and/or financial sustainability)": The score was 3.6 (median 4.0). Nearly everything in this course revolves around environmental sustainability and (for species of commercial importance), this is the same as financial sustainability. How can we harvest a population and do so year after year? How can we conserve small populations to ensure their continued existence in the long term? The environmental and financial aspects (e.g. the harvest of economically-important animals) were thus certainly covered. However, no course can do everything and "Social sustainability" isn't a part of this course, but the next course (Human Dimensions of Fish and Wildlife Management") does focus on this and the courses are designed to be complimentary in our program.

Q10) "The course covered international perspectives": The average score was a good 4.2 (median 5.0). Most of the topics apply to the same kinds of animal populations all over the world, so I and the other teachers in the course tried to use a diversity of examples. It was also good that the course had teachers from 6 different nations.

Q11) "Average hours spent per week on the course" 29 hours, median 26-35. We are supposed to aim for a course that has about 40 hours per week, but it is widely recognized that learning by distance is more tiring than physical lectures so I didn't want to increase the demands on student this year. Also, it was apparent that many students didn't read all the readings they should have. However, as noted above, it is nearly universally reported by students everywhere that they find lectures in Zoom rather tiring so I can understand that some didn't to all the readings that they should have. Everybody read enough of the important readings to be approved in the course though!

Q12) "Gender and equality aspect": The average score was a very good 4.3 with the median being an even better 5.0 out of 5.0. If there were two equally pedagogic papers, I chose ones written by women make this aspect more equal, and I made sure that we had female teachers (there would have been even more, but many were forced to decline because they were writing grant applications at this time). Another aspect of equality and having a variety of role models was easy to achieve - we had teachers from SIX countries!

Q13) "Your overall experience of participating in all or part of your course online?" A good score of 3.9 (median 4.0). We have four obligatory courses in our program, and because of their different learning objectives and content, they range in how easily they can transition to online teaching. This particular course is one of the more challenging because nobody really learns the mathematics involved in population ecology / sustainable harvest / conservation of endangered populations / population genetics by WATCHING a lecture (in Zoom or otherwise). Students have to DO exercises before they really understand – and the online exercises were much more difficult to manage than the physical computer labs which are normal in this course (and which get stellar ratings from students when the course was physical). I do have some good ideas for the future if this course has to be given online again however, thanks to chatting with quite a number of students!

For some reason, the course representative didn't clearly focus on & summarize the most common & important comments, but (judging from a comparison of the comments against the overall scores) seems to have reported a number of comments made by only one or two individual students. Unfortunately, it is perhaps inevitable that a student or two will miss a few things, or misunderstand, so some of the specific comments are factually incorrect. I won't go into these in detail, but I will mention just two such factual errors. First, no statistical tests were required although students could do so if they wanted. Second, there was a complaint that somebody else got longer to do the exam, but with the proper medical certificate, students are indeed entitled to additional time! This is extremely confidential so I understand this criticism -- other students could simply not know if there were students who were entitled to such an adapted exam, or who they were.

Overall, it was quite a challenge to transition from a physical course to an online one DURING the course but I'm rather proud of the job that the other teachers and I did in this difficult situation (even in a course which was rather challenging to take online teaching because it involves some mathematics). Most importantly, in addition to this online course evaluation, I also chatted with quite a number of students after the course (an "exit interview") and I

have a written down some specific improvements that I will implement if the course is ever taught online again!

## Student representatives comments

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The course evaluation for the course *Applied Population Ecology* in the autumn semester 2020 was filled in by 16 out of 19 students of the class. In the following text, the results of the evaluation will be summarized by the elected student representative with a focus on the main issues that were mentioned in the comments.

For most of the class, the course had very interesting topics but lacked a clear structure and organization. The constantly and often very spontaneously changing schedule made it difficult for the students to plan ahead. Teaching half of the class online and half on campus is a difficult challenge that caused some problems. During that time, it was emphasized to come to the lectures if the students don't have symptoms which some students didn't feel comfortable with, especially if they were part of a risk group. Due to the delay of some students and some technical problems, the lectures often started late which was wished to be improved. Additionally, repeated interruptions from John during the lectures as well as long talks about the difficulties with Covid took additional time which was defined as unnecessary by several students. Consequently, there was less time for the lectures and therefore not enough breaks which made the students less concentrated and could be improved. The minimalistic design of some lectures made it difficult for the students to understand so that more explanations on the slides are highly appreciated. Furthermore, there were very interesting discussions in the breakout rooms which were unfortunately not used often. The majority thinks that the most interesting lectures were the ones with the most interactions. The literature was accessible through Canvas but more structure would help the students to find relevant information. In case of any questions, most lecturers were easy to contact and quick to respond in a very helpful way. Nevertheless, the students experienced rather slow responses when asking for more information like grading criteria or about the major task. The information about the major task were given out very late which caused a very unequal time distribution throughout the period of the course. Because of the high time pressure in the end, John provided the survival analysis for the major task which could have been avoided by a better time management. Furthermore, the intention of the task was questioned because it only deals with one of the learned skills and includes statistical tests that were not part of the course. The computer labs and group tasks were very interesting and helpful in understanding the different topics even though they were also more challenging online than meeting in person. More explanations about why we click what could further improve the learning experience. Choosing the groups randomly was a good experience for some students to interact with many different classmates but a frustrating experience for others who were marginalized and had trouble finding partners for the tasks. The suggested book helped several students to understand different topics of the lectures. Additional literature was on the other hand said not to be well integrated in the lectures. There was a variety of topics in the lectures but there seemed to be more slots for lectures than actually given which left space for more lectures. Those are suggested to be more related to statistics since several students didn't have the prior knowledge that was needed for varying tasks. Related to that, the students were supposed to use different statistical software that was not accessible for them. The majority agrees that the number of questions in the exam exceeded the possible effort at the given time by far. Most questions of the exam were fair but too high in numbers. Nevertheless, there were several questions that didn't seem related to the knowledge gained in previous lectures of the course. Additionally, there was a very unfair time planning in the exam where some students had one hour more time to write the exam than others.

Throughout the course, the students are very understanding about problems and are aware that they can always occur. With giving feedback, it is hoped to improve the situation.