



Silviculture of Temperate Forests SG0232, 10019.2021

15 Hp

Pace of study = 100%

Education cycle = Advanced

Course leader = Jens Peter Skovsgaard

Evaluation report

Evaluation period: 2020-10-21 - 2020-11-04

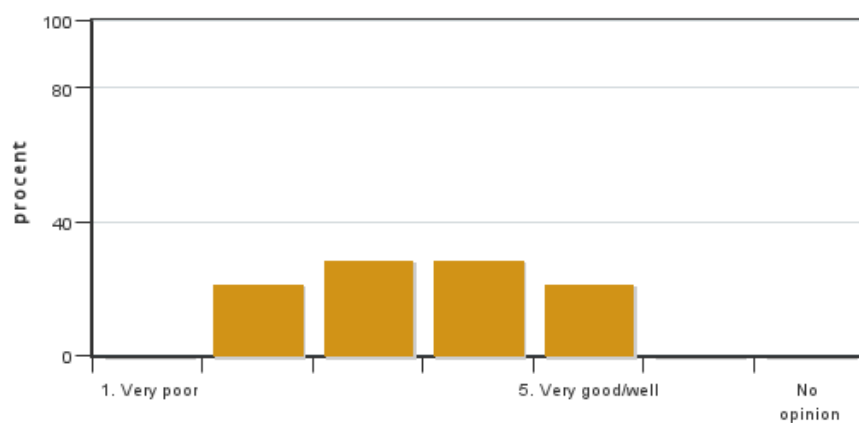
Answers 14

Number of students 20

Answer frequency 70 %

Mandatory standard questions

1. My overall impression of the course is:



Answers: 14

Medel: 3,5

Median: 3

1: 0

2: 3

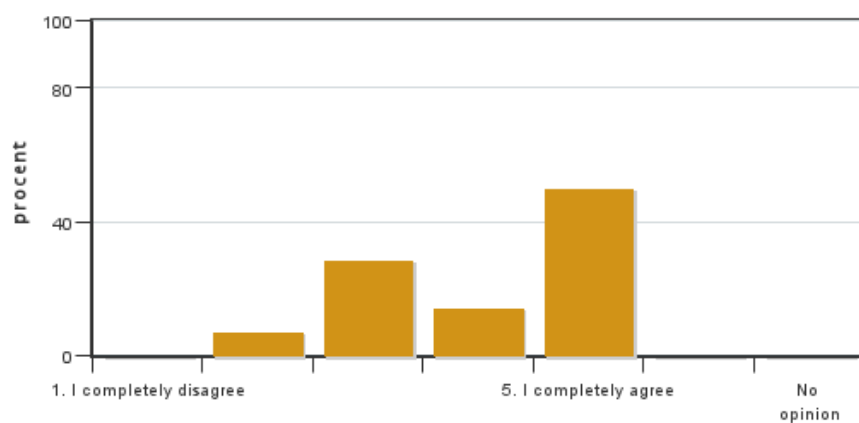
3: 4

4: 4

5: 3

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 14

Medel: 4,1

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 1

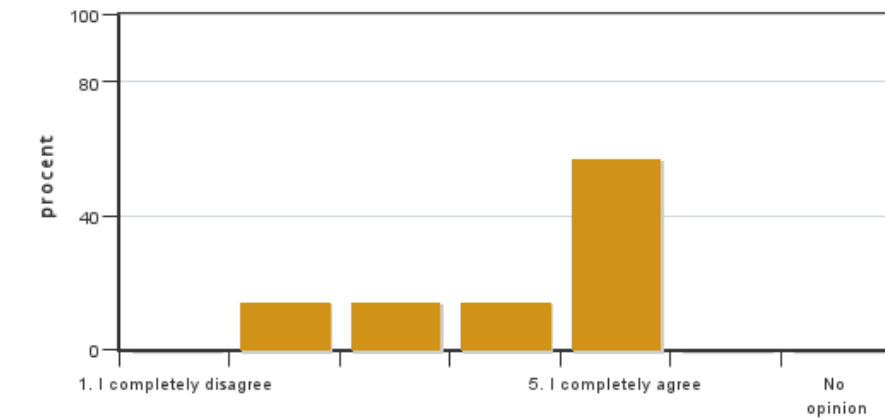
3: 4

4: 2

5: 7

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 14

Medel: 4,1

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 2

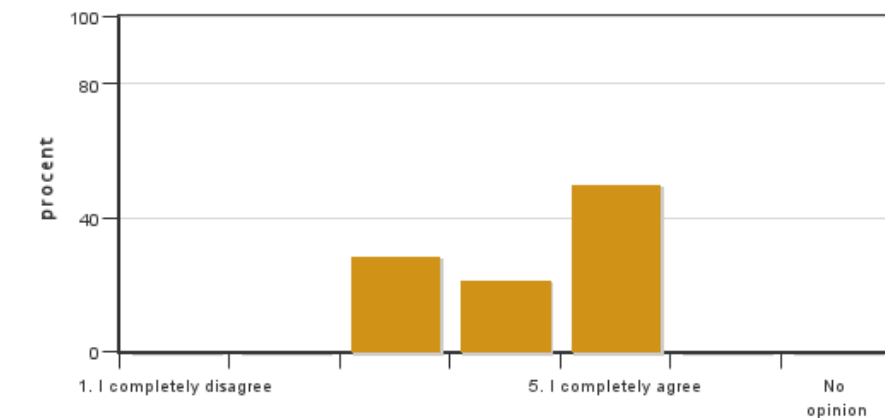
3: 2

4: 2

5: 8

No opinion: 0

4. The information about the course was easily accessible.



Answers: 14

Medel: 4,2

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 0

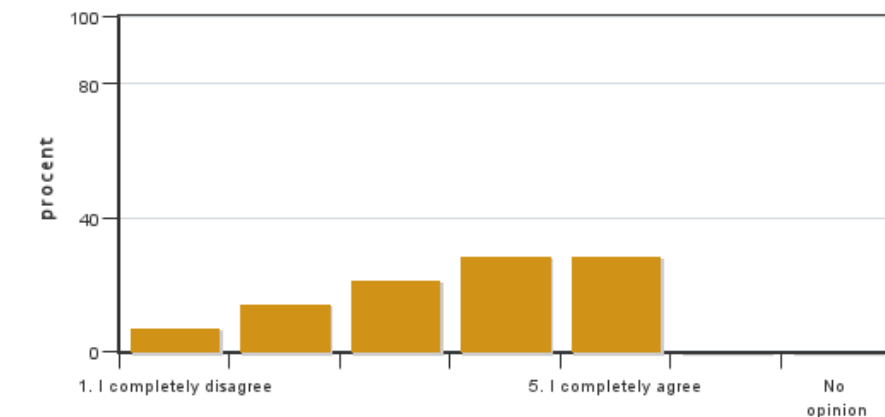
3: 4

4: 3

5: 7

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 14

Medel: 3,6

Median: 4

1: 1

2: 2

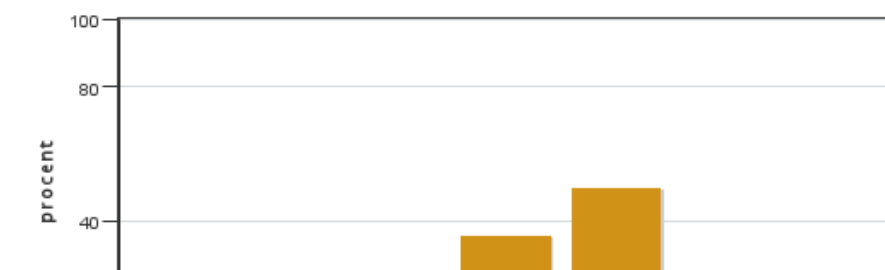
3: 3

4: 4

5: 4

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 14

Medel: 4,2

Median: 4

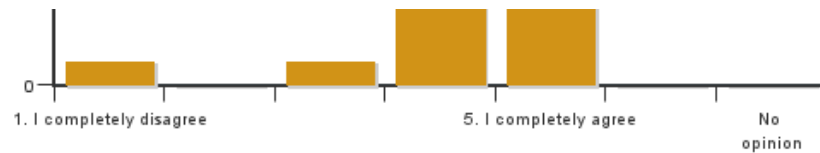
1: 1

2: 0

3: 1

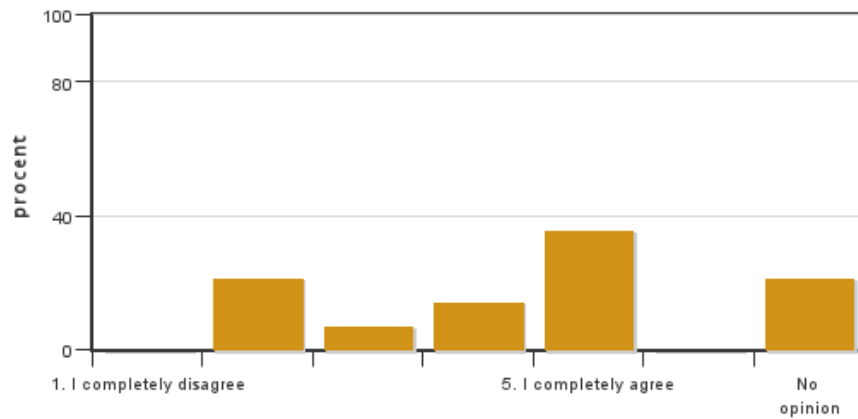
4: 5

5: 7



No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 14

Medel: 3,8

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 3

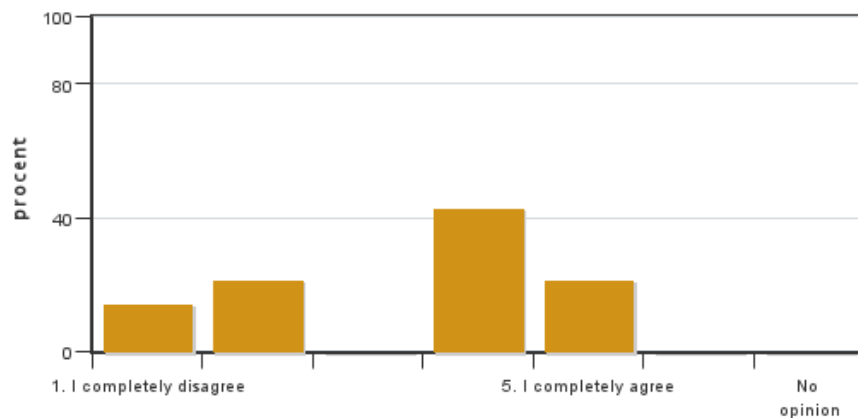
3: 1

4: 2

5: 5

No opinion: 3

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



Answers: 14

Medel: 3,4

Median: 4

1: 2

2: 3

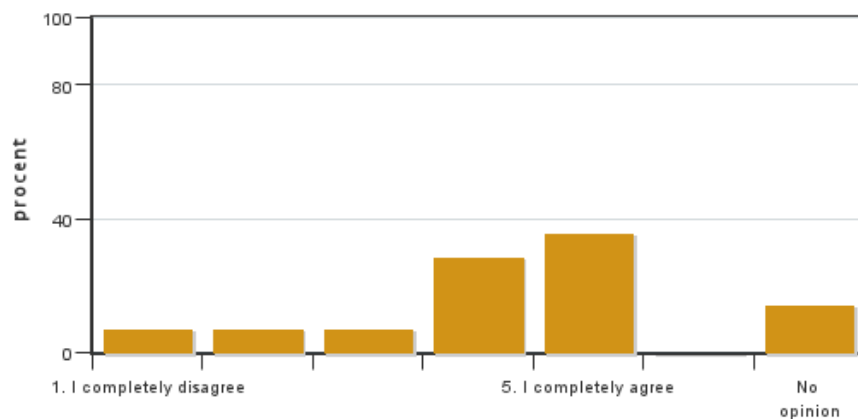
3: 0

4: 6

5: 3

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 14

Medel: 3,9

Median: 4

1: 1

2: 1

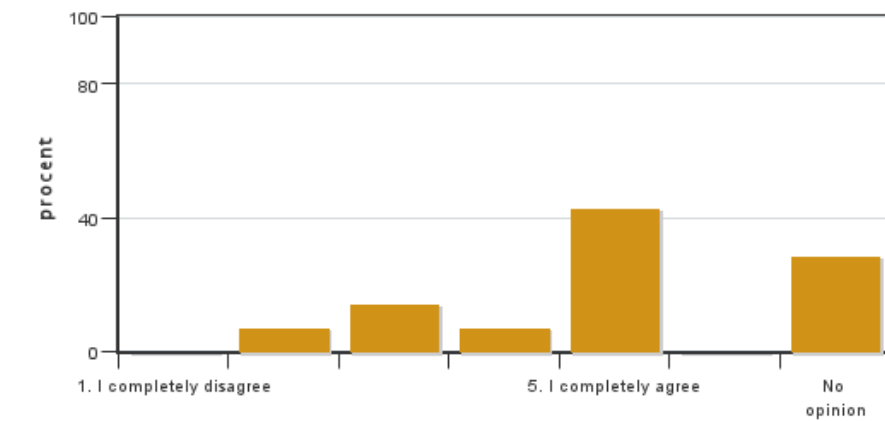
3: 1

4: 4

5: 5

No opinion: 2

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).

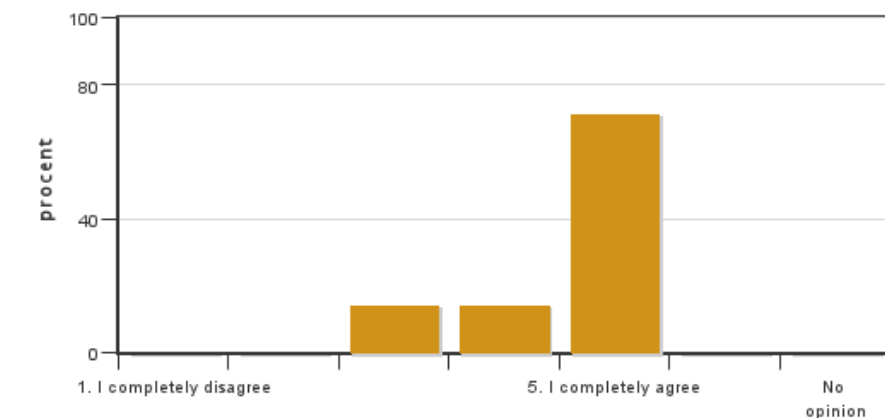


Answers: 14
Medel: 4,2
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 4

11. The course covered international perspectives.

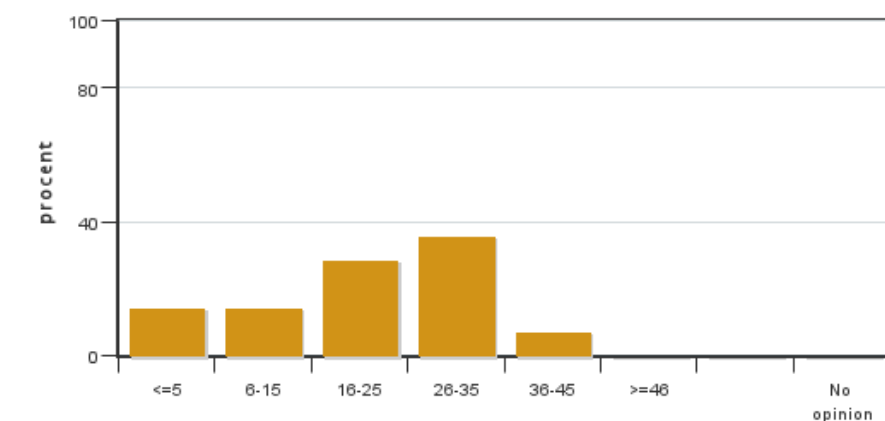


Answers: 14
Medel: 4,6
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 14
Medel: 21,1
Median: 16-25

≤5: 2
6-15: 2
16-25: 4
26-35: 5
36-45: 1
≥46: 0

No opinion: 0

13. If relevant, what is your overall experience of participating in all or part of your course online?



Answers: 14
Medel: 3,4
Median: 3

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

No opinion: 0



14. If relevant, please share what worked well when participating in teaching on distance

15. If relevant, please share what worked less well when participating in teaching on distance

Course leaders comments

The students on this online-only course were less motivated and some were substantially less mature than students on previous courses on Silviculture of Temperate Forests. This was clear already during the course and is just emphasised in the evaluation outcome. Several students did frequently not participate in the online teaching activities or were completely unprepared and all but one or two students consistently had their camera off during the sessions. This is a clear sign of their level of motivation and makes it difficult to interact with and get a discussion going with the students. Another clear sign of the low level of motivation by many students is the low number of hours spent on the course. This is a full-time course and the expectation is that students spend (at least) 40 hours per week. An average of 21.1 hours is way too low and you cannot expect any high level of learning at this level. Only one student reported more than 36 hours. Comments / scores indicating that the course did not sufficiently consider sustainable development is far-fetched and must have been given by students not bothering take active part in the course. One of the guest lecturers was Mette Løyche Wilkie who is director of FAO's forestry department and who lecture specifically on this. Moreover, sustainability is the whole core of the course. Next, 27 recorded field tours were made available in the course and was announced as a compulsory course component. According to the statistics on Canvas, four students never bothered to open any of the films. No student watched all of the films, and not even one student watched one whole film. So, all in all a disappointing level of motivation among students and, consequently, also a mediocre evaluation.

Student representatives comments

Comments by the student representative Lukáš Vaníček, in Semily, Czech Republic, November 7, 2020

Introduction

The course Silviculture of temperate forests, taking place 31.8.2020 – 1.11.2020 in SLU, Alnarp was the fifth milestone course of Euroforester master program. This course was open for Euroforester master students, students from different faculties and universities in Sweden obtaining for master diploma and exchange students. In total, 20 participants coming from Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Sweden and USA took part in the course.

This year of Silviculture of temperate forests course was bit specific. First, due to the covid-19 pandemic, this course had fully been converted into online format. Even though the learning environment was unique and all studying facilities had been substituted into online learning, the course would have probably better success in case of normal learning. Second, as it will be later discussed concerning evaluation by students, many of the students didn't take the course seriously, didn't participate most of the lectures and didn't show much interest since online environment enabled them to do so.

Course structure

The course had been structured into following blocks: Basics, Hardwoods, Conifers and Advanced.

Block Basics should have been for forestry students a repetition, since some of the topics had already been included in previous courses of bachelor' and master' studies. Block basics besides others included: introduction to the temperate forests, soils in Europe (pedology), natural regeneration, planting and seeding, forest productivity, thinning practices/managing stand density, pruning practices/managing stand quality, the clearcutting system, the uniform system, the irregular shelterwood system, selection systems, strip and wedge systems and coppice systems.

In Hardwoods and Conifers blocks, we have gained deep understanding of most but also less common tree species; each of them has included individual tree species profile, including management objectives, silviculture practices, regeneration, thinning regimes, wood quality improvements, health and production risks, economy and biodiversity purposes and others.

Block Hardwoods has included Norway maple, Sycamore, Silver birch, Downy birch, European beech, European ash, Black walnut, Persian walnut, Hybrid walnut, European aspen, Hybrid aspen, Western balsam poplar, Wild cherry, Sessile oak, Pedunculate oak, Wild service tree, Small-leaved lime, Large-leaved lime and Common lime. Of course, there had been mentioned and reached other broadleaves, but of less importance. The main focus had been on broadleaves mentioned above.

Block Conifers had included European silver fir, European larch, Japanese larch, Hybrid larch, Norway spruce, Sitka spruce and Douglas fir. Lower importance had been paid to other minor conifers. Main tree species had always been presented by Jens Peter during his lectures, minor tree species had been presented by students. Since we come from large scale of countries (therefore different climate and conditions for silviculture practices are used), it had been quite beneficial that students participated in tree species profiles and were able to demonstrate their knowledge about tree species, that are common in their home counties and elsewhere.

Block Advanced had included advanced level of understanding of silvicultural practices of temperate forests, with specific focus on silvicultural high forest systems, silvicultural practices for biodiversity, international forest policy of silviculture or site mapping for site-specific silviculture. Especially in this block, several guests had been invited to contribute and share their knowledge and long-term professional experience from a field they are working in. To be named as an example, we had got an opportunity to get a lecture by Mette Loyche Wilkie from Food and Agriculture organization of the United nations.

Distance learning

Even though the course had been set as online course, I don't see any big problems about it compared to normal (personal) teaching. I mean if students did read the literature, participated the lectures and discussions, and watched recorded video tours, then they should have benefit from it the same way. Big disadvantage of the course was that due to the covid-19 restrictions, students were not allowed to travel with the professor to Germany, Denmark or other European countries for the field visits. However, Jens Peter did the field visit himself and recorded field tours for us, always in cooperation with the local forest owners, managers and foresters. Moreover, since the tours are recorded in reasonable quality, students had a chance to come back to the video tours prior to the exam to refresh their knowledge.

Most common way of learning on distance was Zoom meetings, where professor or other guest lecturers (or students themselves) gave us a lecture. The sessions had been written down on list of lectures, which had usually been updated about one or two weeks in advance. During the zoom lectures, there had always been extra time for discussions, questions or follow-up sessions. Some of the lectures of higher importance had also been recorded for future replay. Next, dozens of articles had been available on canvas for each of the study block. Plus, four main pdf books had been uploaded on canvas as well.

Course evaluation

The course gave a chance for the students to improve future runs of the course by giving a feedback. The course evaluation had been designed as an online questionnaire with questions, where students ranked their commitment on the course or shown their compliance of various tasks. Students also ranked their satisfaction of several course components. In the end of the questionnaire, few open-ended questions had been provided. It is sad, but seen from the questionnaire, which had undertaken only 14 students out of 20, students didn't take the course seriously.

Here will come my comments to some selected questions:

Q1 „My overall impression of the course is “. Answers shown somewhat mean, normal division with some lower as well as very good impression. The whole curve is shifted towards right, towards higher impression.

Q3 „My prior knowledge was sufficient for me to benefit from the course “. Students mostly do agree with the statement. There were even some forestry prerequisites in order to participate the course. One individual student disagrees with the statement, but then he should think about his shortcomings and take more forestry introductory courses. Moreover, the forestry basics had been repeated during first two weeks, therefore I believe all people who took the course seriously should have extract maximum benefit.

Q6 „The social learning environment has been inclusive, respecting differences in opinion “. Students more-or less agreed on the statement. The study environment was very open-minded and everyone had always had an opportunity to discuss, share their wishes and opinions during and in the end of every zoom lecture.

Q11 „On average, I have spent “. Here come the self-explaining answers by students who filled in the questionnaire. In general, not all students take the course seriously. I have participated myself most of the lectures and remember, that there was usually between 10 and 15 participants. People who spent less than 5 hours a week (sad but there are some) didn't participate much and came here only to get credit points probably without any deeper motivation.

Q13 „Please rate how you experienced participating in teaching on distance “. Answers are truthful, student's participation was more or less passive. It was seen during the zoom lectures: Many times, some students just logged in the zoom session, but turned off their camera and after being addressed they didn't even answer back. Discussions during the zoom meetings were rather poor, many times the same question from astonished Jens Peter had been asked: „No comments, no questions? “ I believe the teacher deserves to have better feedback; it should be at least decency from students.

Discussion

Compared to other online course that I have undergone, I have recognized following patterns: Students should turn the camera on and not to be hidden under anonymous black screen whenever zoom meeting is going on. With camera being on, the interaction between students and teacher would have been much better. When all students having camera of, it looks like teacher is talking to the wall (to empty classroom) with no responses.

There had been lack of assignments; in the beginning of the course our professor explained it is student's responsibility to be prepared on every session and to read the literature, however (and as seen from the questionnaire), it was rather easy to go through the course without proper preparation since no knowledge quizzes or not much assignment had been set.

Online lectures had been rather long and to be honest harder to keep attention in cases that we started at 8 or 9 in the morning and after lunchbreak we continued up to late afternoon.

It was confused to always use different zoom link, especially in case of crowded weeks which included several lectures; it was sometimes even necessary to quit one session at certain time and restart the meeting using different link. My suggestion is to use only one link for all zoom meetings.

Summary

To sum up, I believe study objectives had been fulfilled. Personally, I recommend this course to all future foresters, forest owners and managers, who would like to manage their forest in a sustainable way, combining balance of purposes on high quality timber and biodiversity values. There are some challenges and difficulties when taking any course online, which didn't dispense with during this course as well. Even though the course had not been for the online format ranked best, I believe Jens Peter together with his colleagues had offered us a unique course, which would be ranked even better if being set alive = in normal (offline) format. Zoom lectures and recorded video tours has replaced usual field visits and offline lectures respectively; their quality was high anyway.