



## National and International Forest Policy SG0234, 30026.2021

15 Hp

Pace of study = 100%

Education cycle = Advanced

Course leader = Vilis Brukas

### Evaluation report

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**Evaluation period: 2021-03-20 - 2021-03-23**

Answers 20

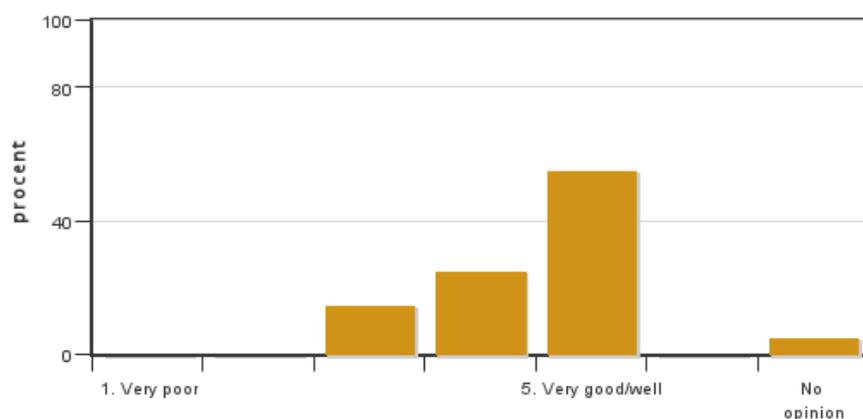
Number of students 24

Answer frequency 83 %

### Mandatory standard questions

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



Answers: 20

Medel: 4,4

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

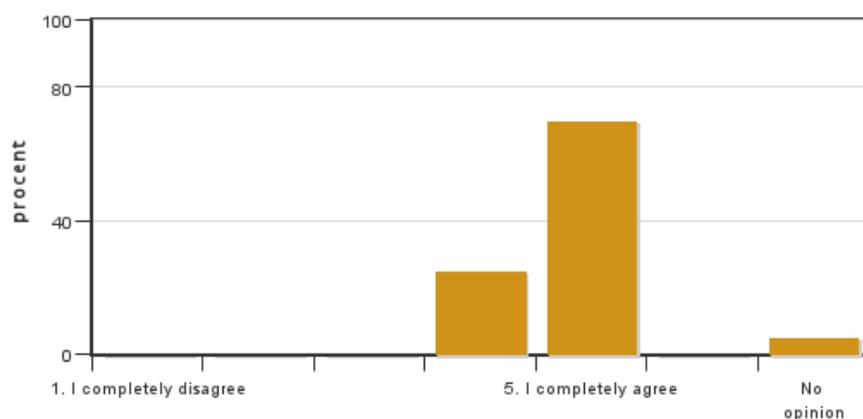
3: 3

4: 5

5: 11

No opinion: 1

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



Answers: 20

Medel: 4,7

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

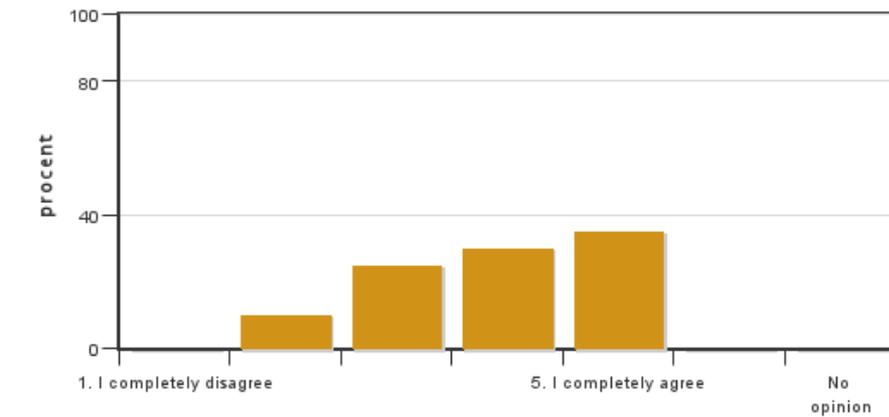
3: 0

4: 5

5: 14

No opinion: 1

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

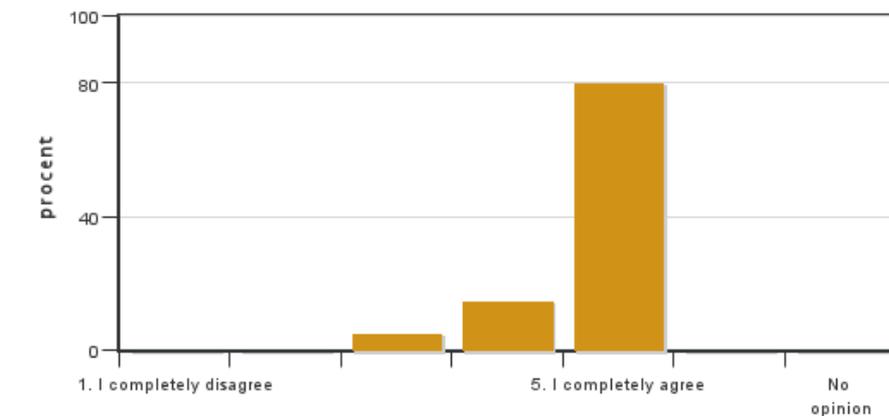


Answers: 20  
 Medel: 3,9  
 Median: 4

1: 0  
 2: 2  
 3: 5  
 4: 6  
 5: 7

No opinion: 0

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

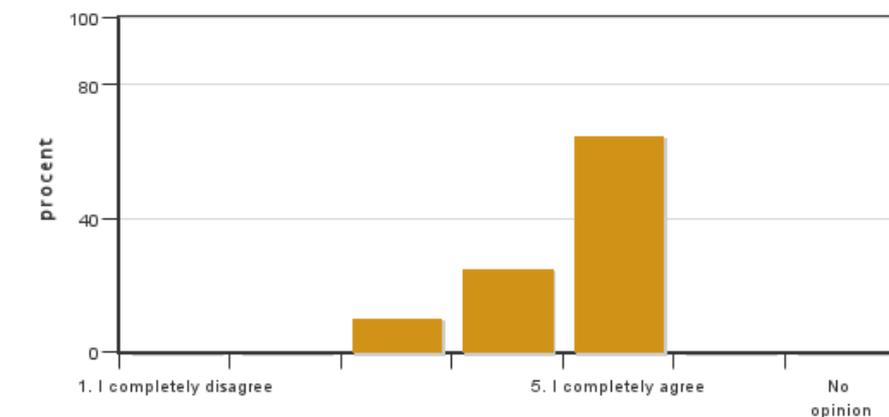


Answers: 20  
 Medel: 4,8  
 Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 20  
 Medel: 4,6  
 Median: 5

1: 0  
 2: 0  
 3: 2  
 4: 5  
 5: 13

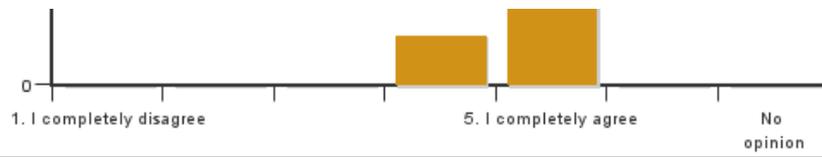
No opinion: 0

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



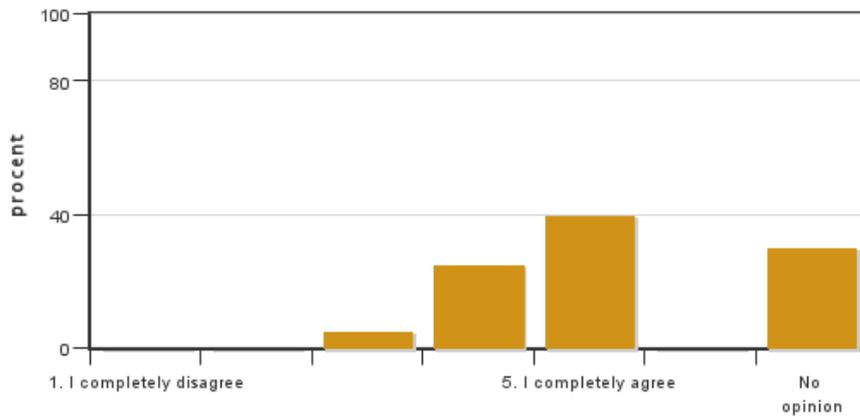
Answers: 20  
 Medel: 4,9  
 Median: 5

1: 0  
 2: 0  
 3: 0  
 4: 3  
 5: 17



No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 20

Medel: 4,5

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

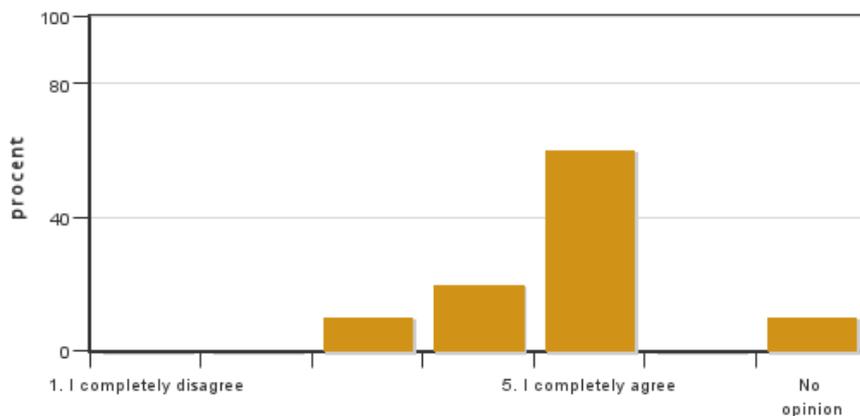
3: 1

4: 5

5: 8

No opinion: 6

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



Answers: 20

Medel: 4,6

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

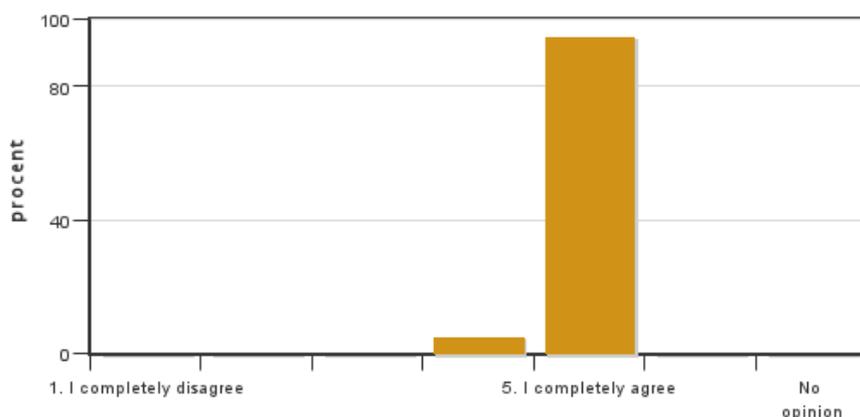
3: 2

4: 4

5: 12

No opinion: 2

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



Answers: 20

Medel: 5,0

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

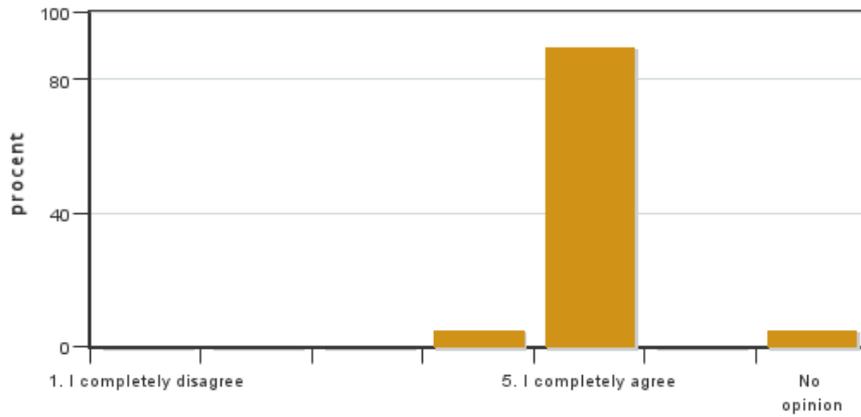
3: 0

4: 1

5: 19

No opinion: 0

**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).**

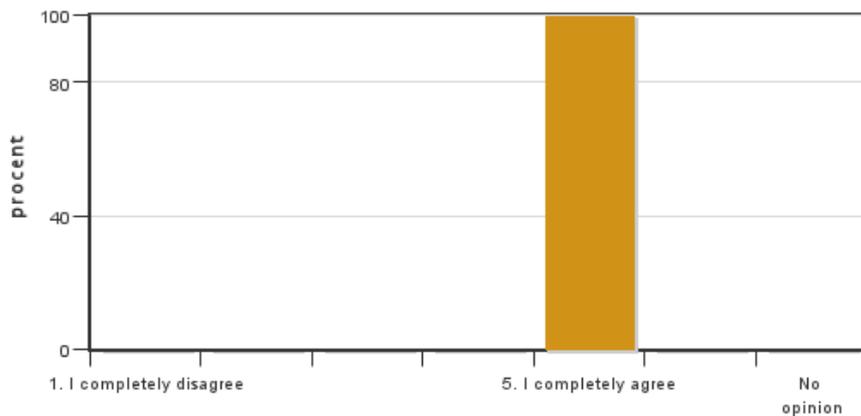


Answers: 20  
 Medel: 4,9  
 Median: 5

1: 0  
 2: 0  
 3: 0  
 4: 1  
 5: 18

No opinion: 1

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

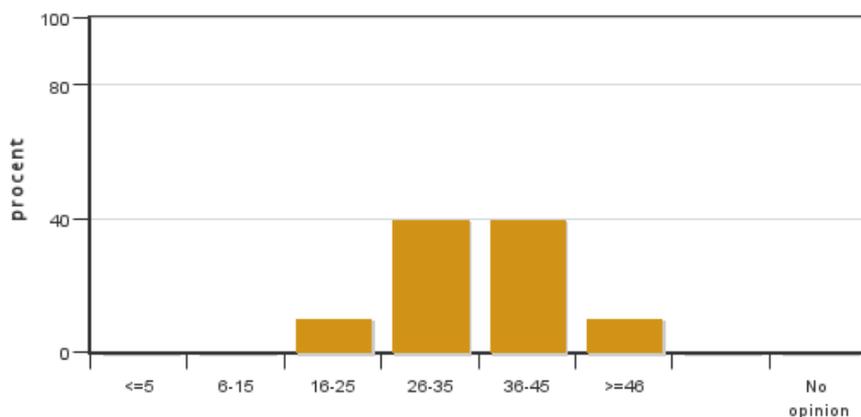


Answers: 20  
 Medel: 5,0  
 Median: 5

1: 0  
 2: 0  
 3: 0  
 4: 0  
 5: 20

No opinion: 0

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

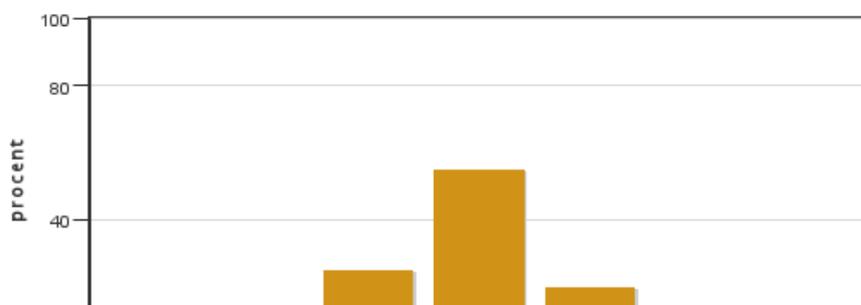


Answers: 20  
 Medel: 34,6  
 Median: 26-35

≤5: 0  
 6-15: 0  
 16-25: 2  
 26-35: 8  
 36-45: 8  
 ≥46: 2

No opinion: 0

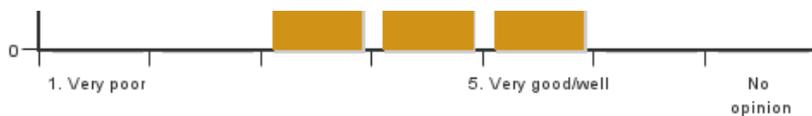
**13. If relevant, what is your overall experience of participating in all or part of your course online?**



Answers: 20  
 Medel: 4,0  
 Median: 4

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

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

## Additional own questions

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

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

## Course leaders comments

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### FP2021, Course evaluation commentary, Vilis

Comments on course evaluation by the course responsible Vilis Brukas, Alnarp, March 27, 2021.

#### Student group

As always, our international class consisted from many nationalities. 24 students represented the following countries:

**Sweden: 6** (2 jägmästare from Umeå, 1 skogsmästare from Skinnskatteberg, 1 agriculture/rural development from SLU Ultuna, 1 in environmental science (Lund?) and 1 in maritime science (Malmö))

**Other countries: 19.** Germany 2, Latvia 3, Lithuania 2, Poland 7, Romania 2, UK 2

#### Evaluation set up and response rate

The evaluation questions were answered by 20 out of 24 students participating in the, thus the response rate was 83%. We also had a concluding oral discussion on Zoom that took about 1.5 hour. 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.

#### Covid adaptations

This was the first time ever we conducted the course fully in online mode. The main conclusion is that, overall, students appreciated how the teacher team adapted to the circumstances. But still most people, students and teachers included, would prefer the conventional teaching in the classroom.

The biggest change from the normal years was the lacking possibility to conduct the study trips. Students appreciated our approach to replace 1-day study trip to private forest owners with a movie based on the teachers' visit to the estate followed up with a Zoom Q&A session between the owners and students. I must say that this worked above expectations. A similar solution of course was impossible for 10-days study trip abroad. This module was replaced by "Think global, act local" work with cases across the globe, under leadership of the Indian scholar Purabi Bose. Despite the fact that such module cannot fully compensate for seeing forest and people directly in "live study trip", the new module worked out very well.

#### Compulsory questions on SLUNIK

On 1 to 5 scale, the overall impression is 4.4. This corresponds to long-term average and is a good result, especially considering the switch to the online mode. Students gave high scores practically for all general aspects. What stands out this year is exceptionally high scoring for sustainable development (5.0 on average), international perspectives (5.0) and gender equality (4.9). I am sure that Purabi Bose's module contributed a lot to this outcome, e.g. Purabi arranged a special "gender day" in the International Women's Day on March 8.

|                           | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 7 years average | 2021       |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------------|------------|
| <b>Overall impression</b> | 4.4  | 4.1  | 4.9  | 4.6  | 4.4  | 4.1  | 4.6  | 4.4             | <b>4.4</b> |

Students on average put 35 hours for course work per week with a few outliers. This can be considered appropriate, despite a few students indicating high course intensity (some complaining but mostly appreciating commentaries). The averages for years 2018-2020 were 46, 36 and 33 hours per week, respectively.

### Additional remarks

This year I chose to online evaluate course modules by weeks and not separate pedagogic approaches. The mid course evaluation as well as oral discussion on the last day of the course revealed that, as usual, the opinions were very divided about the reflective journal. Some students strongly disliked it (due to extra effort needed and/or minor perceived benefit) and several students positively excited, even considering it the best part of the course (going into deep reflection, while enjoying much freedom and creativity; skills to summarise the essentials and useful notes for the final open-book exam, furthering writing skills). Such differences notwithstanding, I intend to continue with the journal assignment in case we have sufficient teaching capacity (e.g. through the upcoming PhD student).

### Changes to consider for the next year

Changes to consider will depend on the pandemic situation, as follows.

#### *In case of pandemic restrictions:*

- Run the "owner movie" assignment from this year (no extra work needed), followed up with a Zoom session with Gunilla and Mattias
- Continue with Purabi's module, perhaps adding some extra instructions for some of the assignments
- Building in more interactive elements in Zoom lectures (annotations, votes), particularly for Max and Norbert weeks.
- Shorter lectures, esp. international FP.
- A specific suggestion by a student: "Full day lectures following each other up in a row of days, such as during Prof. Krott's or Prof. Weber's parts made it sometimes difficult to stay motivated and concentrated as screen time is very high during these parts. Here, more interactive / self-organized / group work would maybe enhance my capability to adequately follow the course, e.g. build in 30-min. reading sessions of Prof. Krott's book and discuss the text afterwards with him/in the group etc.. So that screen time is split up a little bit and does not cover a full-day or various full-days in a row"

#### *Irrespective of restrictions*

- Move the highintensity Norbert Weber's week ahead to week 3 of the course, if possible.
- Student suggestion: "It would be great to have a (short) critical contextualization on the ontology and norms of discounting calculations, e.g. homo oeconomicus, rationalism, positivism, ecocentered vs. human-centered worldview, neo-classicaleconomics, etc.
- Try to create a bit more time for the intersection between role play and FC weeks.

### Concluding note

I truly liked the commitment by this year's students. As a fun exercise on the last day, students produced a wordcloud representing my impressions from the course. The prevailing keywords - Interesting, International, Intense, Fun, Reading - well reflect some of the key intentions of the course, it is satisfying to see them getting fulfilled.

## Student representatives comments

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### FP2021, Course evaluation commentary- Julia

#### General impression of the course

Overall students had a positive opinion about the course. It provided them with useful knowledge and touched upon issues that many of them have never studied before. During the course, the students were taught how to think outside of the box and look for hidden connections by reflecting deeply on different facts and events. The course broadened horizons and opened their eyes to entirely new aspects of forestry. The students highly praised the diversity of topics and the international perspective of the whole course.

The course was well-organised and structured in a clear way. A big amount of diverse, useful materials was provided- scientific articles, media articles, videos. The articles corresponded well with the content of the lectures and provided suitable knowledge, however some students found the readings too long and too complicated.

The students enjoyed both the diversity of teaching methods and the topics. The course had many linkages to sustainable development goals. The course encouraged students to keep researching current European and global issues by themselves.

When it comes to the global point of view, the students enjoyed the fact that the lecturers came from diverse backgrounds. Students gave an especially positive evaluation to the modules about private forestry in Sweden, participatory processes, certification and the global case studies, because they provided an opportunity to analyse the practical application of forest policies around the world and allowed them to get to know different perspectives.

### **New teaching approaches**

The way some topics were introduced and the way some modules were carried out was new and surprising for students. This course introduced new, innovative approaches to learning (peer assessment of essays, reflective journals, roleplay, virtual meeting with private forest owners), which were positively assessed by most of the students, even though the opinions about reflective journals were quite divided. What the students agreed on, is that these new elements made the course more interesting and reduced the element of boredom, which often appears during online courses. A few opinions from the students:

"I really liked peer assessment. The fact that I had to grade an essay whose author had a very different opinion from mine encouraged me to go deeply into the topic and really reflect on the issues connected to certification".

"I am not that great at writing in English, and because of that I had to spend more time than I would have liked on writing reflective journals. Still, I think it improved my writing skills."

"Writing the journal allowed to develop critical thinking, reflect deeply on the facts and thus understand the material better. It was also very helpful as a way of making notes and structuring the knowledge."

"I do not find the reflective journals beneficial for my learning, I would have preferred to write essays about specific topics instead".

"It was fun to do a role play! Learned a lot through the articles and the process itself!"

### **Study environment**

The atmosphere during the course was very friendly and inclusive. Students felt that they were encouraged to share their opinions freely, every comment was appreciated and the discussions were very interesting. The professors were open and accepting, which encouraged students to take active part in the classes. There were however some opinions that the participation tended to be uneven sometimes, with some students expressing themselves way more often than the others. It would be advantageous for the class if the lecturers paid more attention to encouraging the more timid students to speak up, to ensure equal participation.

### **Time and workload**

Many students were overwhelmed by the workload and the amount of time they had to spend on the course work. They highlighted the fact that it was especially exhausting because of the online format, which forced them to spend many hours in front of the screen. Lectures, assigned readings and writing tasks required a lot of work and many students complained about not having enough free time because of the readings. To lessen the pressure, they suggested prolonging breaks during the lectures. On the contrary, some students enjoyed the busy schedule, because it allowed them to challenge themselves and improve their time-management skills.

### **Grading and exam**

The grading process was transparent. Students appreciated the fact that the final grade was divided into parts and that not everything depended on the final exam. It encouraged students to keep up the hard work during the whole duration of the course and also reduced stress connected with the final exam. Many however had difficulties with presenting all of their knowledge during quizzes because of the short time available for writing answers. When it comes to the final exam however, the questions were clear and the time was sufficient to write all of the answers. The "open book form" was beneficial. Instead of memorizing definitions students could spend time on understanding and analysing processes, finding explanations and linking different facts.

Exam seminar deserves special praise. Dividing the material by weeks, coming up with potential exam questions and presenting them to the group was very useful for preparing for the exam and revising the information.

## **Adapting the course to distance mode**

While all of the students admit that they would have preferred to have the course in a traditional format and go on excursions, they view the online mode in a positive light. They appreciate the effort that the lecturers put in to enrich the lectures and make the classes more engaging by using the many functions of Zoom, like break-out rooms, annotations, reactions and other platforms like Mentimeter. The different assignments and group works were also highly appreciated. The students were positively surprised how well the roleplay was conducted. However, some modules (especially Norbert Weber's week) could use more interactive elements. The overwhelming amount of screen time was also a recurring topic among the students. It was hard to pay attention, especially during full days of lectures.

## **Practical suggestions for improvements**

- reducing screen time
- providing the feedback on all of the assignments in time
- more time for writing quizzes
- ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to speak during discussions
- longer breaks during lectures
- more interactive elements
- lessening the workload or prolonging the deadlines

## **Closing remarks**

It is important to mention that students highly praised the course leader, Villis. He was very involved, had a lot of positive energy and a great attitude to teaching, which motivated students to learn and put in more effort.

To sum up, this course requires a lot of time and commitment but at the same time provides relevant knowledge about international forest policy, develops useful skills and is very beneficial for the future development of students.