Landscape Analysis for People and Environment Studies MP0002, 30168.2021

15 Hp
Pace of study = 50%
Education cycle = Advanced
Course leader = Anna Bengtsson

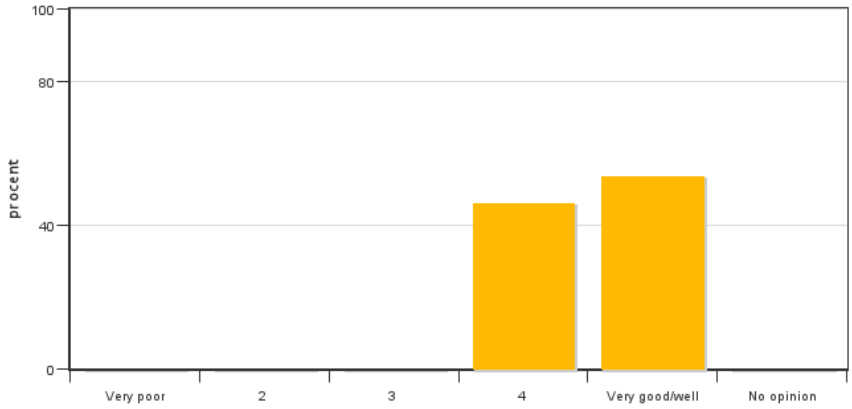
Evaluation report

Evaluation period: 2021-05-30 - 2021-06-20

Answers	13
Number of students	28
Answer frequency	46 %

Mandatory standard questions

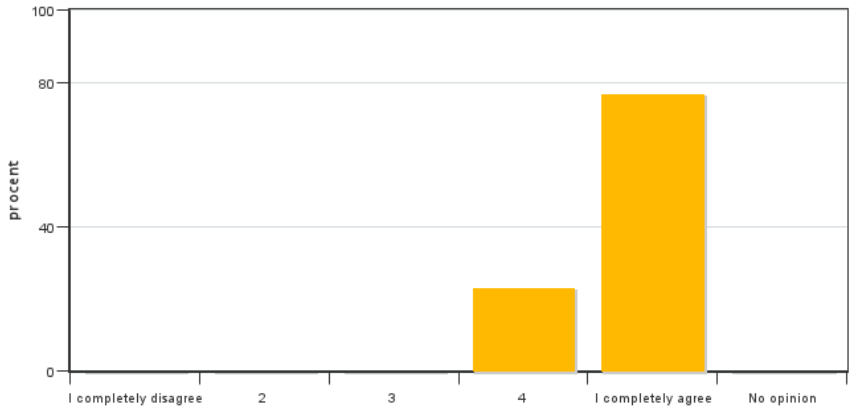
1. My overall impression of the course is:



Number of answers: 13
Average: 4,5
Median: 5

Very poor : 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 6
Very good/well: 7
No opinion: 0

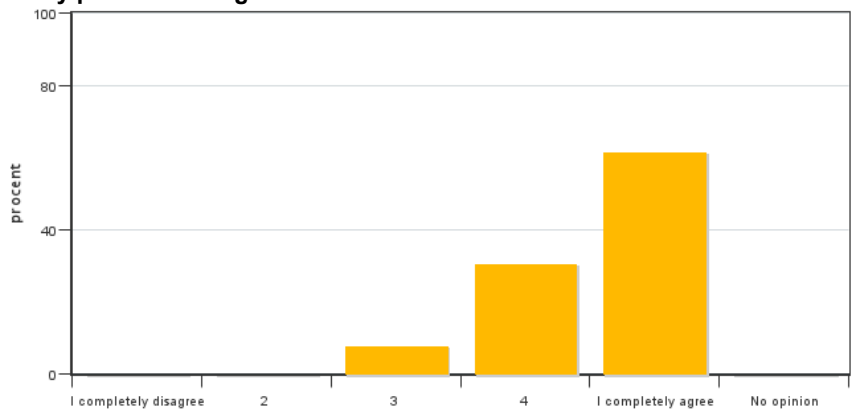
2. I found the course content to have clear links to the learning objectives of the course.



Number of answers: 13
Average: 4,8
Median: 5

I completely disagree: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 3
I completely agree: 10
No opinion: 0

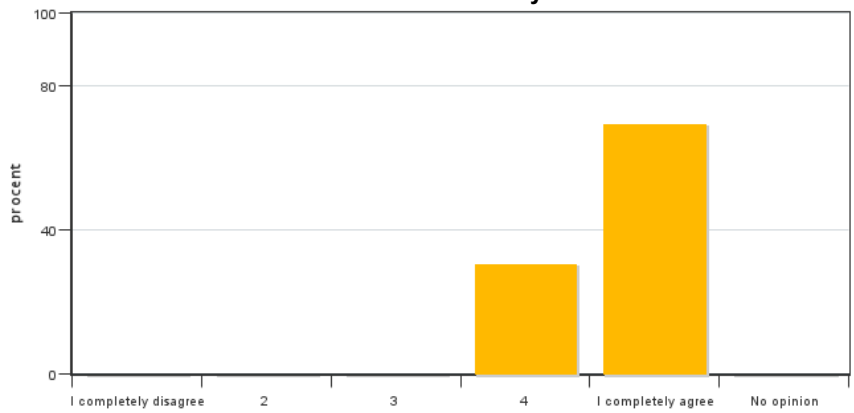
3. My prior knowledge was sufficient for me to benefit from the course.



Number of answers: 13
Average: 4,5
Median: 5

I completely disagree: 0
2: 0
3: 1
4: 4
I completely agree: 8
No opinion: 0

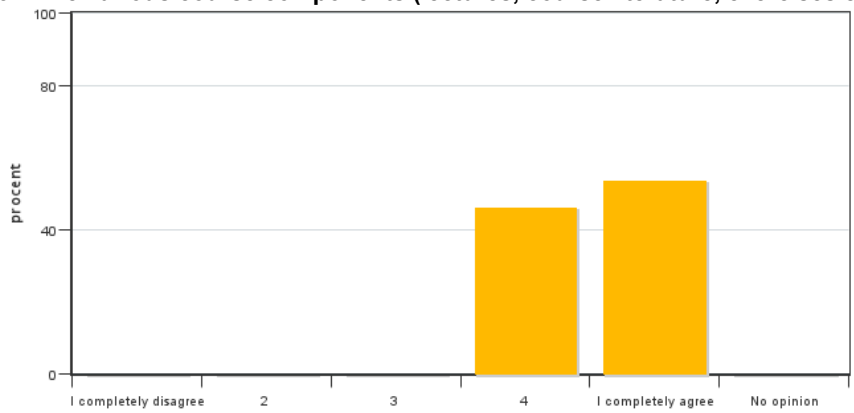
4. The information about the course was easily accessible.



Number of answers: 13
Average: 4,7
Median: 5

I completely disagree: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 4
I completely agree: 9
No opinion: 0

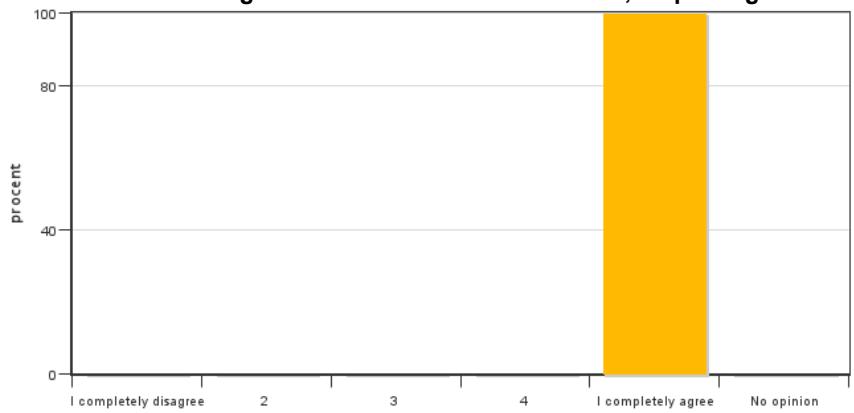
5. The various course components (lectures, course literature, exercises etc.) have supported my learning.



Number of answers: 13
Average: 4,5
Median: 5

I completely disagree: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 6
I completely agree: 7
No opinion: 0

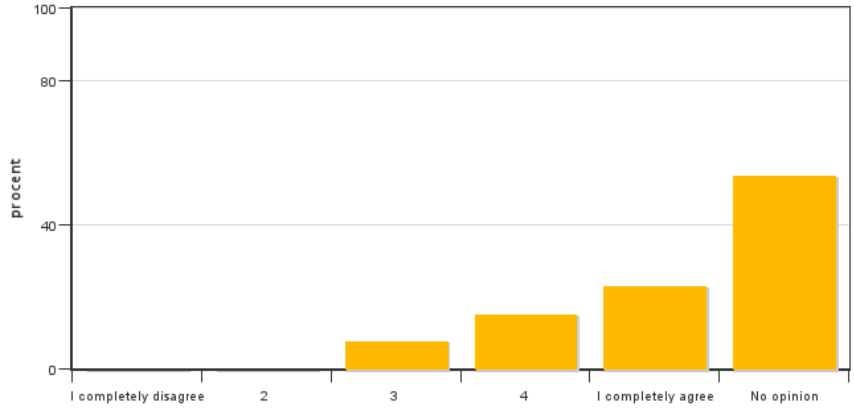
6. The social learning environment has been inclusive, respecting differences of opinion.



Number of answers: 13
Average: 5,0
Median: 5

I completely disagree: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 0
I completely agree: 13
No opinion: 0

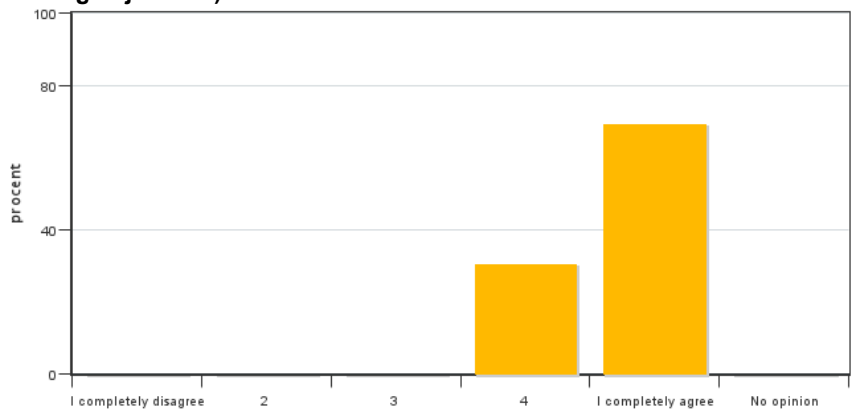
7. The physical learning environment (facilities, equipment etc.) has been satisfactory.



Number of answers: 13
Average: 4,3
Median: 4

I completely disagree: 0
2: 0
3: 1
4: 2
I completely agree: 3
No opinion: 7

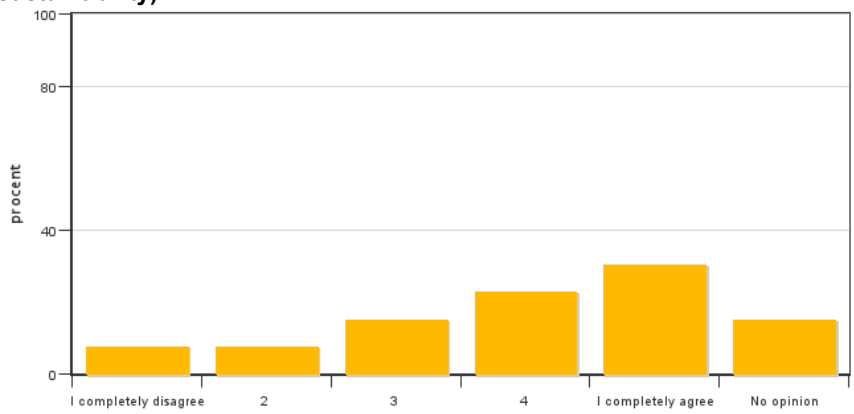
8. The examination(s) provided opportunity to demonstrate what I had learnt during the course (see the learning objectives).



Number of answers: 13
Average: 4,7
Median: 5

I completely disagree: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 4
I completely agree: 9
No opinion: 0

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

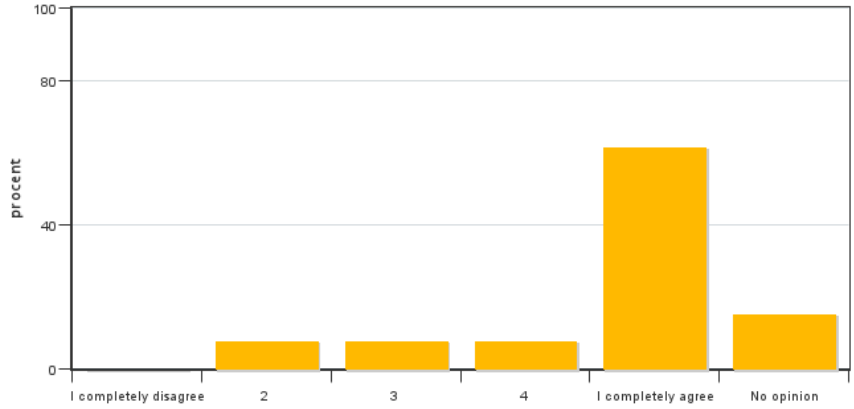


Number of answers: 13
Average: 3,7
Median: 4

I completely disagree: 1
2: 1
3: 2
4: 3
I completely agree: 4

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).

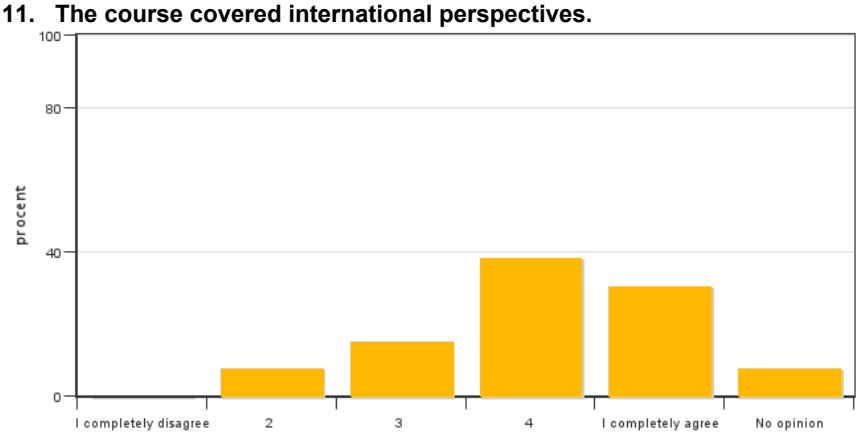


Number of answers: 13
Average: 4,5
Median: 5

I completely disagree: 0
2: 1
3: 1
4: 1
I completely agree: 8

No opinion: 2

11. The course covered international perspectives.

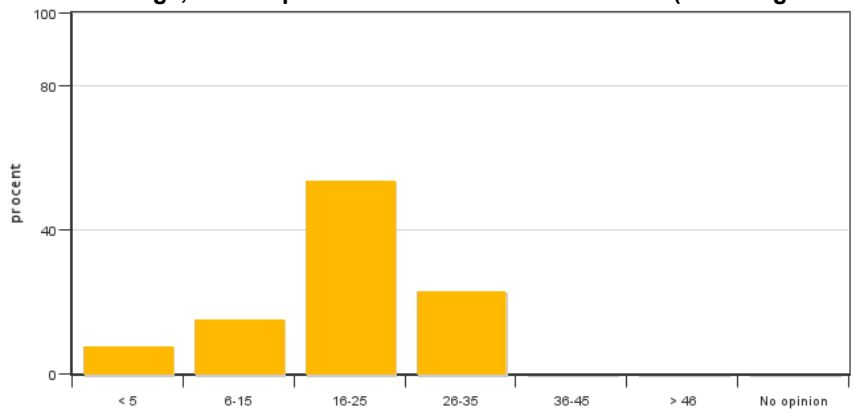


Number of answers: 13
Average: 4,0
Median: 4

I completely disagree: 0
2: 1
3: 2
4: 5
I completely agree: 4

No opinion: 1

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

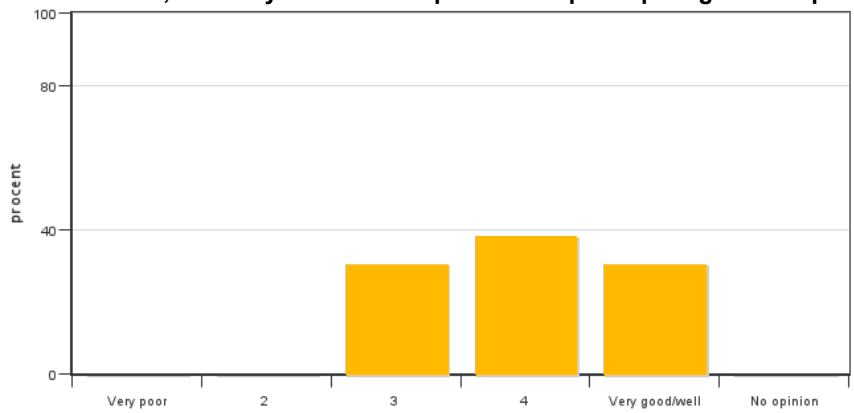


Number of answers: 13
Average: 19,4
Median: 16-25

< 5: 1
6-15: 2
16-25: 7
26-35: 3
36-45: 0
> 46: 0

No opinion: 0

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



Number of answers: 13
Average: 4,0
Median: 4

Very poor : 0
2: 0
3: 4
4: 5
Very good/well: 4

No opinion: 0

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

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

Additional own questions

14. The things that you liked the most with the course:

14. The things that you think could to be improved in the course:

Course leaders comments

No comments from the teacher

Student representatives comments

Summary of students' evaluations based on the questionnaire

13 out of 29 students responded to the course evaluation, which translates to a 44% response rate. The majority of students who responded to the course evaluation had a good overall impression of the course.

All respondents assess that the course content to a high or very high degree has clear links to the course's learning objectives.

12 out of 13 respondents highly or very highly agreed that their prior knowledge was sufficient for them to benefit from the course. One respondent opted for neutral.

9 respondents had no difficulty in accessing the information about the course, while the remaining 30.77% experienced a few issues such as technical problems accessing the university's course webpages, the library webpage, and Canvas.

7 respondents confirmed that the various course components (e.g. lectures, course literature, exercises) had supported their learning to a very high degree, while the remaining 46.15% wished there was less exercise (both individual and group exercises), there was more guidance from the course leader for individual specific readings, and that the course leader was present and gave feedback for the individual exercise.

All respondents experienced to a very high degree that the social learning environment was inclusive and respected differences of opinion.

5 respondents answered that they were to a high or very high degree satisfied with the physical learning environment (e.g. facilities, equipment). There is, nonetheless, a clear contrast with other response criteria. One student felt neutral and the majority 53.85% opted for “no opinion”.

9 respondents acknowledged that the examinations provided an opportunity to demonstrate what they had learnt during the course, while the rest felt the examination parts were a bit confusing from time to time.

7 respondents were in the opinion that the course covers one or more aspects of sustainable development (environmental, social, or financial sustainability) to a high or very high degree, while 2 students felt neutral, another 2 to a low or very low degree, and another 2 opted for “no opinion”.

4 respondents fully concurred that the course covers international perspectives. This is in clear contrast with 5 students who agreed to a certain extent, 2 neutral, 1 disagreed, and another 1 opted for “no opinion”.

8 respondents reckoned the course to have included aspects of gender and equality, both in content and teaching practices (e.g. perspectives on the subject, reading list, allocation of speaking time), while 1 agreed to a certain extent, another 1 neutral, another 1 disagreed, and 2 opted for “no opinion”.

9 respondents rated well or very well in their experience of participating in distance teaching, while 4 felt somewhat neutral.

Additionally, the respondents spent an average of 19.4 hours per week on the course (e.g. scheduled hours, self-study).

Summary of students' evaluations based on the open-ended survey and various discussions

What had emerged in the open-ended survey in this course evaluation and other evaluation occasions were, above all, the clear structure of the content, the course content itself, as well as prompt and meaningful responses from lecturers and course leaders on Canvas and via email. All students also highly valued that all the mandatory examination parts had been identified since the course introduction. This had helped students familiarise themselves with what to expect for the final examination.

All students were positive or highly positive about the MP0002 Landscape Analysis for People and Environment Studies course at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). All students particularly appreciated that there was a clear process in all examination parts where they were allowed to grow individually before handing in the final one. These students underlined how these examination parts were very well designed with the sole purpose of enabling them to keep learning and progressing forward. Some students, nevertheless, considered the course being overly demanding for a 15-credit one with a 50% study pace. These students suggested lessening the number of assignments (e.g. individual exercise) to make the course be more of an appropriate 15-credit course. A few others also recommended having more optional individual exercises or study tours for those living nearby to each other where they can involve outdoor environments in their local areas. In addition to this, some wished there were lesser mandatory readings so they could be more focused and have the opportunity to find other relevant readings that were more applicable with their own expertise or interests.

A clear majority of the students emphasized the benefits of distance learning, such as how they felt very safe not having to travel to a physical location due to the ongoing pandemic situation, and how online learning helped them adapt to their individual learning environments which have contributed to the improvement of their own learning process. Some even highlighted that they would not be able to take the course if it was not held entirely online. Many appreciated the lecturers and course leaders who seemed to be trying their best to adapt to online learning due to the ongoing pandemic situation. Some have also strongly encouraged the Department of People and Society to make the course entirely available on the distance even after the pandemic has ended. These students argued that the course will be accessible to more international students around the world if that is the case. Most students – who were mainly Swedish – also noticed that it was indeed the international students who could weigh on international perspectives for the field of Environmental Psychology during the course.

The majority of the students were satisfied with the course content itself, although they also wished more international perspectives were covered throughout the course. Though many lecturers provided the students with various perspectives, only one presented international examples.

Nearly all students considered Zoom and Canvas to be user-friendly platforms that have provided excellent opportunities to learn, regardless of the ongoing pandemic situation. They also revealed that group discussions in Zoom's breakout rooms worked very well, although some hoped they could have various opportunities to discuss their individual assignments with the course leader instead of only discussing these with classmates who were also still learning. These students felt they could have learnt much more effectively by obtaining such valuable feedback from the professionals.

Some also pointed out that they should be treated like adults. They stated this was due to the course leader who always requested all students to turn their cameras on during every meeting. They felt that it was their own responsibility as a Master's level student to be able to fully grasp the lectures and discussions. A few claimed that their camera was not working and some others mentioned that their internet connection significantly worsened when their camera was being turned on.

Some others also felt the lectures should have been made optional for students to attend. They argued that they had taken other courses within the *Outdoor Environments for Health and Well-Being* (OHW) programme, of which content had very similar knowledge.

All students felt inclusivity in the social learning environment. These students also truly appreciated the course leader who provided access to most of the mandatory readings as these were not available in the library, neither in physical nor electronic version.

A clear majority of the students highly recommended the course not only to focus on the Western world, especially Sweden. These students felt that there should be a wider perspective within the field of Environmental Psychology, including in this course.

While many cherished a compact schedule (e.g. full 2.5-day lectures/seminars per module rather than spreading them out over several weeks), some students suggested having more breaks from one lecture to another as well as more short breaks within a lecture. They argued that it was truly a challenge to focus during the tightly scheduled lectures and look at the computer screen all day. These students also pointed out that the last individual presentation days were the hardest parts of the course. They found it very difficult to focus on everyone's presentation. However, many were grateful that the course leader encouraged the students to take individual breaks whenever they needed those, and that the students were not expected to attend both final presentation days.

Many appreciated the freedom to structure their assignments, while a few others wished the course leader set certain clear headings and sub-headings to help them understand what was expected from them. These students also wished there were clearer instructions for each part of the examinations. They clarified that many of them came from different educational backgrounds, which consequently means that they might interpret certain instructions

differently.

Most assessed they received constructive feedback that were also delivered within a reasonable amount of time from the course examiner for each examination. A few, nevertheless, felt that the feedback they received was neither informative nor clear. These students also pointed out that the feedback should be focused on the content of the examination itself, not the students' grammar nor citation style. Some others also wished the feedback for each examination was given much faster to continue on the next parts.

Some proposed to have the course evaluation link available until we have received the final grade and feedback. These students reasoned that final grades and feedback are also parts of the course and should be included in the evaluation. A few also wished the course leader made it possible for completely anonymous evaluation by not having a discussion led by the course leader at the end of the course. However, these students also noted that they felt it was okay to do it for this course because they deemed that the course leader genuinely wanted to know constructive feedback from the students and has the willingness to improve the course.

There were many attitudes that were highly appreciated by the students, including that the course was very well-organised with a clear time frame, the specific instructions for all mandatory assignments were presented since the course introduction, and the student lectures during Block II were very helpful for the students to learn all the 6 main theories of landscape analysis and how to implement these to the illustrative plans by exchanging the knowledge with the other groups. It should be noted that many students also wished the student lectures were made optional for each individual. These students felt there were too many workloads on the group works. They also highlighted that they did not have an architectural background, making them have a very difficult time creating their individual illustrative plans.

Suggestions for improvements

Provide course literature, lectures, and examples that do not only focus on the Swedish perspectives. Since this course is one of the mandatory courses within the international OHW Master's programme, there should be a balance of learning material from broader international perspectives.

Divide the already comprehensive reading list to be mandatory and optional. The mandatory list should include readings that can help students to obtain must-have knowledge by the end of the course. Students need individual time to digest every process and information they receive, and therefore, it would be more helpful to direct them from the very beginning which readings will guide them to the skills they are expected to have from the course. Optional relevant readings that touch on more aspects of sustainable development. One of the university's environmental policies states, “SLU contributes to ecologically, socially, and financially sustainable development”, and therefore, more students will be particularly interested in delving deeper into these aspects related to course content. Also, provide some optional readings on more basic knowledge for students with no previous knowledge in the disciplines landscape architecture to help them create the illustrative maps, as well as on basic research methods within the field of environmental psychology to help the students who have not learnt any research methods before this course.

Keep the student lectures part as this was proven to show advantages for the learning process of a clear majority of the students. However, this part should be made optional for each individual – those who feel more benefited by learning with a group can join a group, while those who do not feel the same should have the option to study the theories by themselves.

Record some of the lectures. This way, it is possible to shorten the length of each day or Block (e.g. each day starts from 8:30 AM – 3:00 PM, having only two days for each Block instead of three).

Stay accessible for the students. Many students felt puzzled especially by the examination parts, but they highlighted the easy access to and fast response from the course leader had helped them greatly in understanding the course content and the exams. It could also be a good idea to offer individual meetings before the final examination for students who need more guidance (e.g. via Doodle set one-hour individual meeting sessions throughout the week for students to choose).

Make the individual exercise to be optional. Those who are interested in doing the exercise should be able to discuss the results with the presence of the course leader and receive feedback from the course leader. Such practice may help them to have clearer directions on the individual examination parts. Should time be the problem to include this in the course, this exercise can be made available via Canvas discussions so that classmates may have the option to comment if they want to. In this case, the course leader should give individual feedback too.

Keep the last presentation days as they were. However, when the last presentation days are divided into small groups, a bigger problem will appear; that is because the course leader will not be able to give constructive feedback right after the presentation for each student. While it is evidently important to activate the students during the presentations, it is more fruitful and meaningful to receive feedback from the professionals such as the course leader and examiner.

Set up optional sessions via Zoom for students who need help acquainting themselves with technical matters (e.g. how to create illustrative plans). Although some simple examples have been provided by the course leader, it can be more helpful for these students to video chat (e.g. via Zoom's sharing screen) with the course leader or someone from the Department of Landscape Architecture, Planning and Management (LAPF). It should be noted that certain colours should be recommended for students with colour blindness; there are several types of colour blindness.

Announce repetitively in each Block how students can get help with academic writing (e.g. English grammar, Harvard and/or APA citation style). Even though detailed information is available via the SLU webpage, many students are not aware of these.

As soon as the evaluation link is available, remind students regularly (e.g. once a week) to help respond to the course evaluation. The student representative had already reminded the students through at least 2 different occasions on her own initiative, such as by announcing it at the last course meeting and via Canvas inbox to each student. The course leaders have also reminded students a few times before the last day to access the link. Yet, the response rate is still low. When sending out the reminders, it should be mentioned that the course evaluation is anonymous and that more responses are needed to improve the course even though it is not mandatory. More students appear to be participating in course evaluations when anonymity is guaranteed and the students may feel they are contributing even though they are not obliged to.

Allow students to have a longer deadline for completing the course evaluation, at least a few days after they have received final grades and feedback on examinations. Examinations are part of the course. Those, consequently, should be included in the course evaluation (e.g. whether the students feel they have received constructive feedback or not).

Discuss with the Department of People and Society the possibility of making the course available completely online even after the pandemic has ended.

Kei Nilsson
Student Representative for MP0002 Course
Spring semester of 2021