Wildlife biology
BI0872, 10290.2021

15 Hp
Pace of study = 100%
Education cycle = Advanced
Course leader = Joachim Strengbom

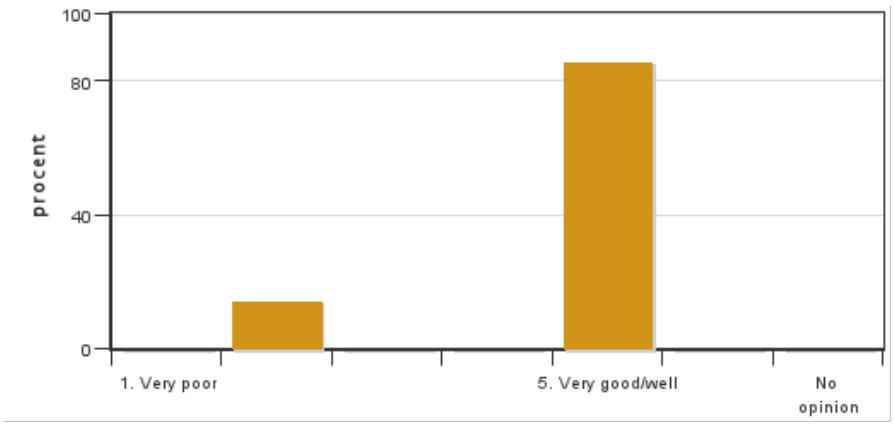
Evaluation report

Evaluation period: 2020-10-25 - 2020-11-15

Answers	7
Number of students	12
Answer frequency	58 %

Mandatory standard questions

1. My overall impression of the course is:

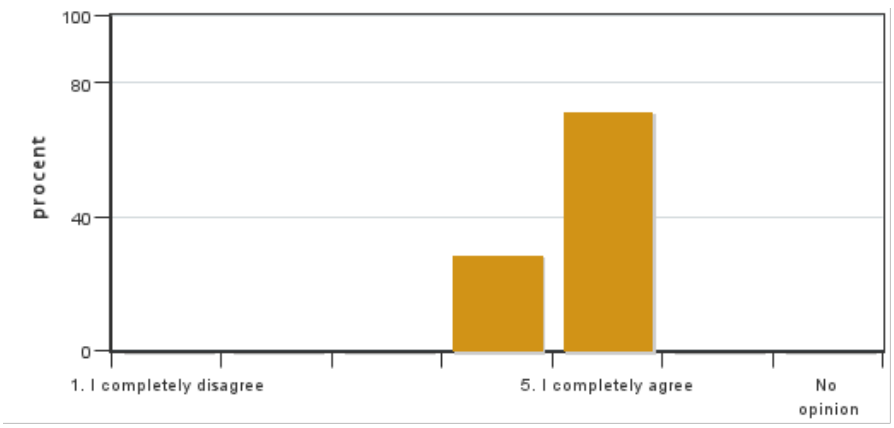


Answers: 7
Medel: 4,6
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

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

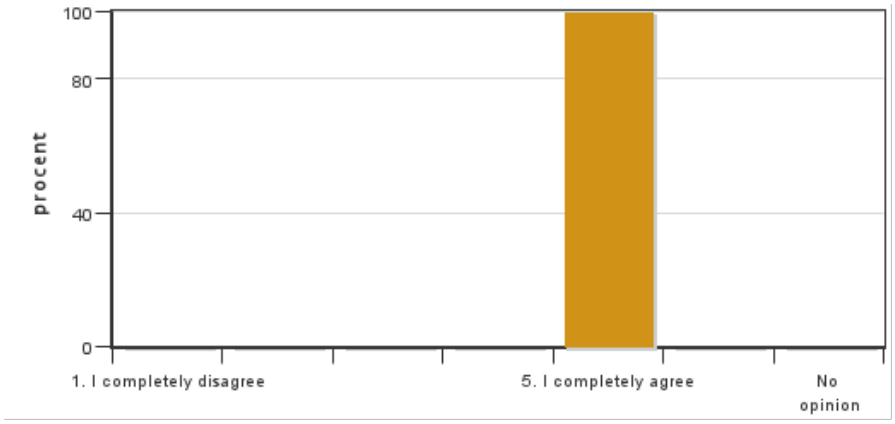


Answers: 7
Medel: 4,7
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

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

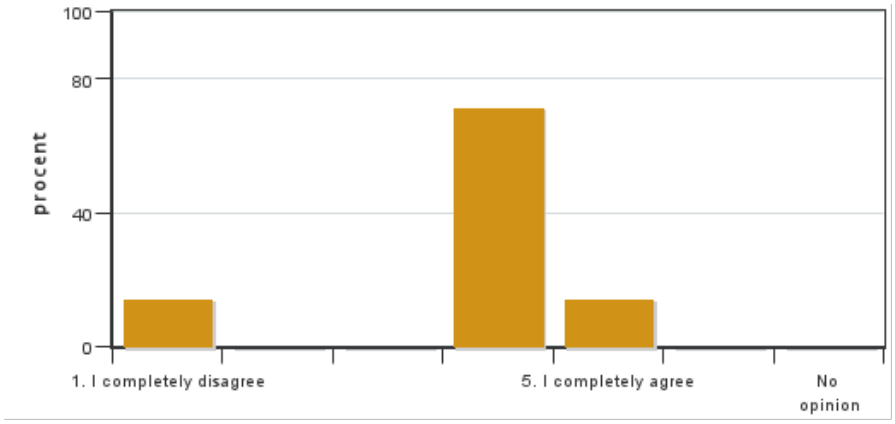


Answers: 7
Medel: 5,0
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

4. The information about the course was easily accessible.

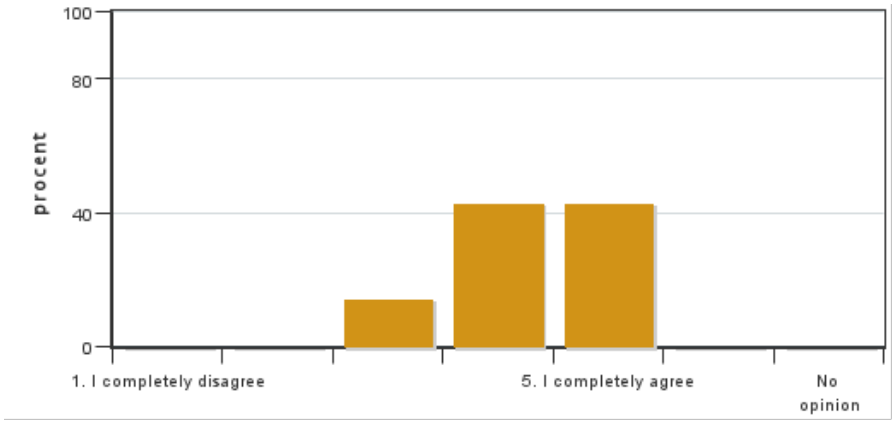


Answers: 7
Medel: 3,7
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0

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

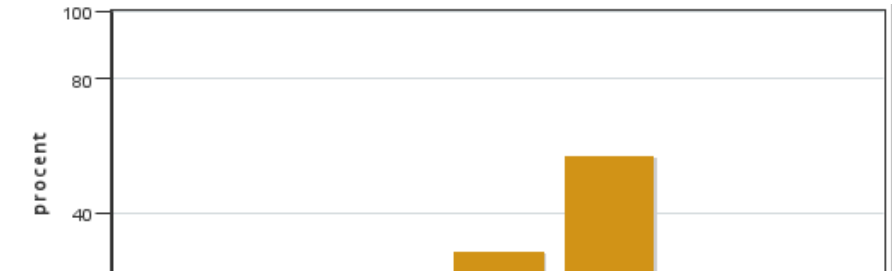


Answers: 7
Medel: 4,3
Median: 4

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

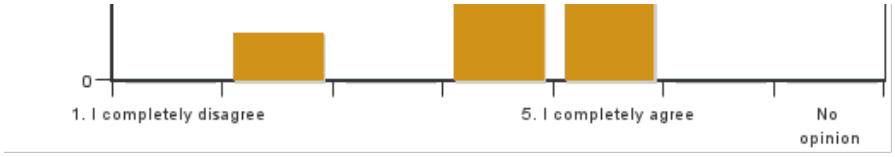
No opinion: 0

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



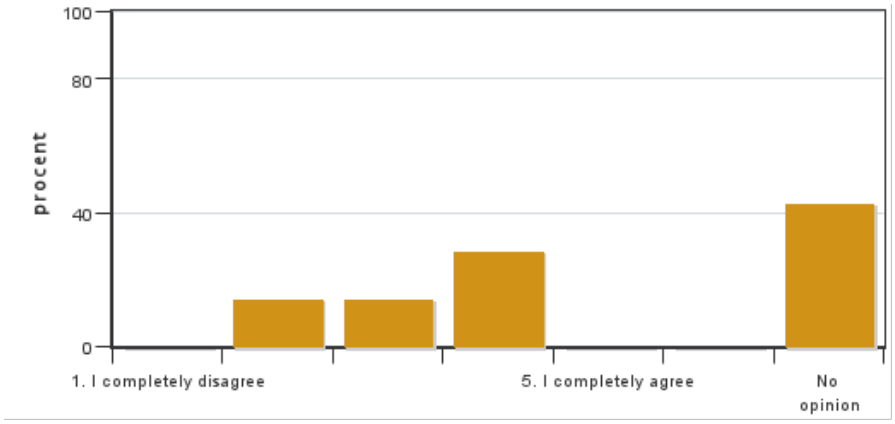
Answers: 7
Medel: 4,3
Median: 5

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



No opinion: 0

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

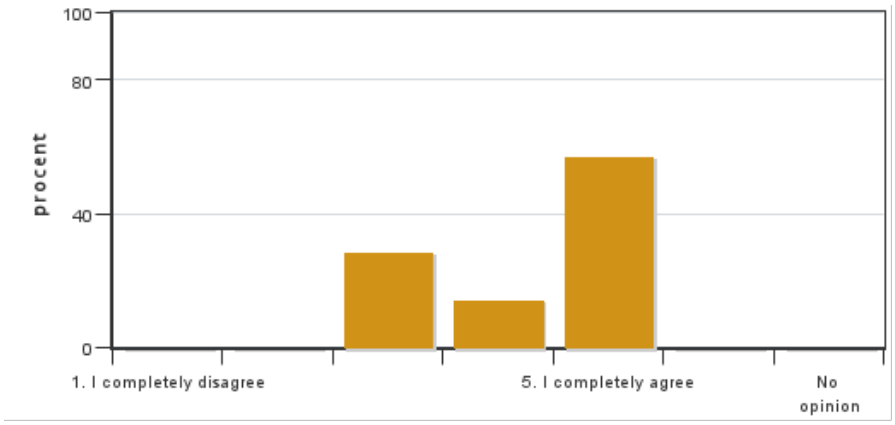


Answers: 7
Medel: 3,3
Median: 3

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

No opinion: 3

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

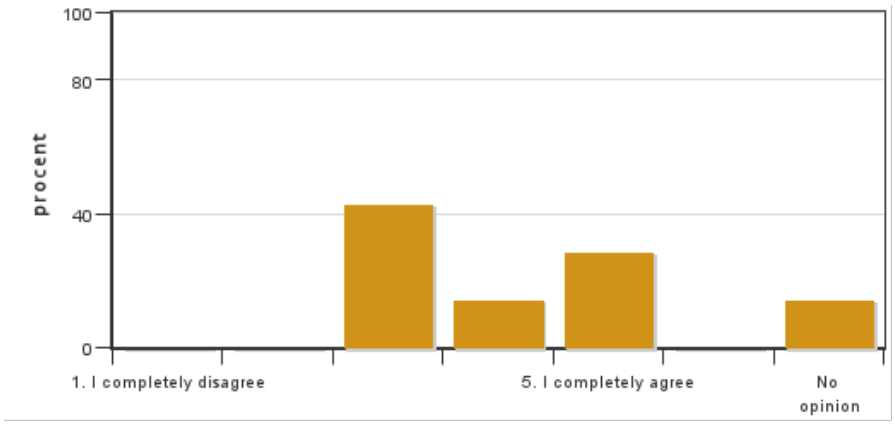


Answers: 7
Medel: 4,3
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

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

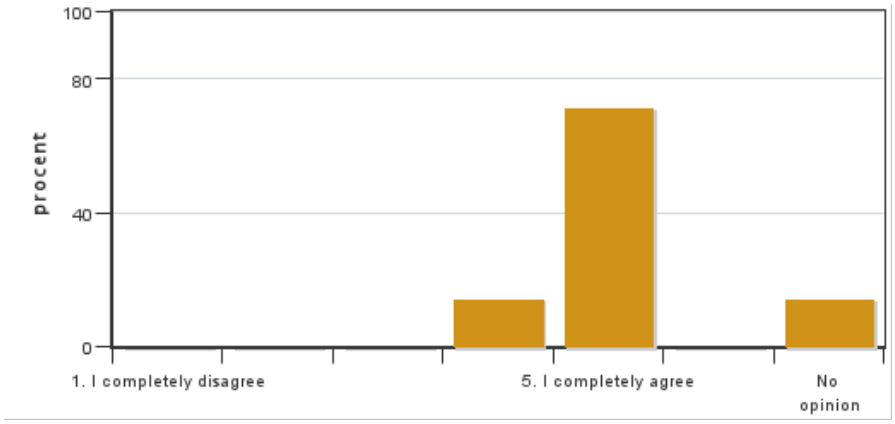


Answers: 7
Medel: 3,8
Median: 3

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

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).

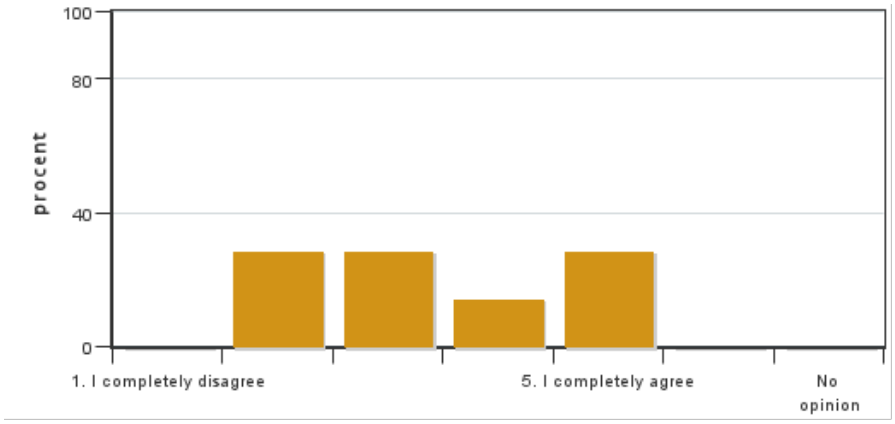


Answers: 7
Medel: 4,8
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 1

11. The course covered international perspectives.

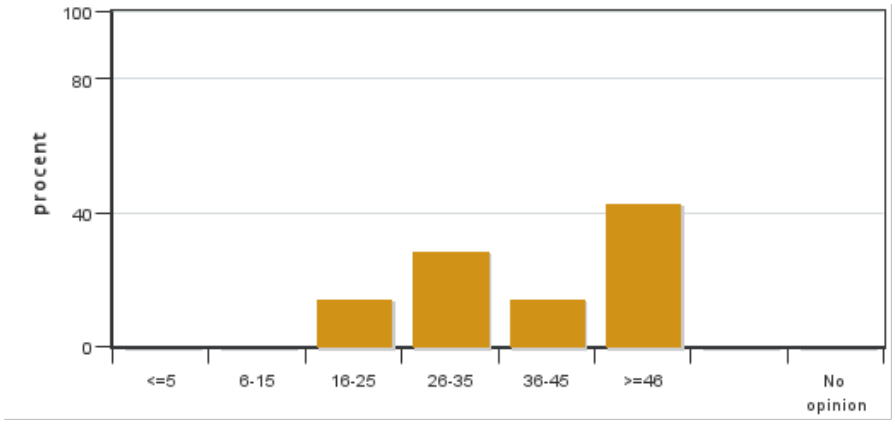


Answers: 7
Medel: 3,4
Median: 3

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

No opinion: 0

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

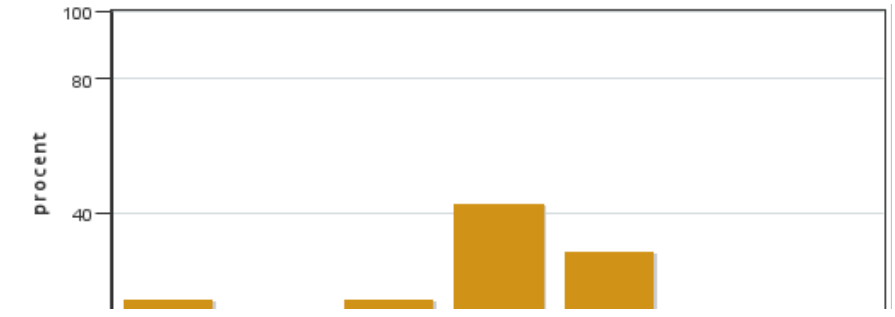


Answers: 7
Medel: 36,9
Median: 36-45

≤5: 0
6-15: 0
16-25: 1
26-35: 2
36-45: 1
≥46: 3

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 7
Medel: 3,7
Median: 4

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

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

No comments from the teacher

Student representatives comments

Due to the circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, 2020 ended up becoming a very different year for the Wildlife Biology course. On behalf of all the students participating in this year's course I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to everyone involved in making the course's fulfilment possible. You did not decide to take the easy way out and simply cancel, which several other courses in similar situations would – and also have – felt compelled to, but instead you chose to give us a special edition distance version. For this we are immensely grateful.

Eleven students participated in the course this autumn. Most were present for the majority of the lectures (on Zoom) and seven (64%) responded to the official course evaluation. Two informal discussions about the course were held at separate occasions on Zoom in the weeks following the end of the course. Additionally, thoughts and suggestions were communicated throughout and after the course via private messages.

A clear majority of the students had a very positive impression of the course, which is reflected in the official evaluation (mean score 4.6; median score 5 out of 5). In addition, several students consider this to be the best or one of the best courses during their time at university content-wise, indicating that the course's high standard in this regard was upheld also under the current conditions. Everyone felt that the lectures supported their learning; taking part of current research and getting direct insight into ongoing projects was extra appreciated. Lectures on specific topics (ecology and research/management methods) were mentioned by a number of students as especially good and rewarding, while in general also being more interactive compared to some of the species presentations. The topics covered by lecturers were numerous and overall perceived as relevant.

Considering that this is the first time the course has been given on distance – and the short time in which adjustments had to be made accordingly – most students acknowledge that some of the course's shortcomings would have been difficult for the course administration to handle differently. Chiefly in regard to the continuous uncertainties in the schedule, which made it difficult to efficiently plan our studies. However, all students agree that the workload was unevenly distributed between the course's first and the second halves. Too little time was available for studying during the last weeks of the course due to collisions between group projects, the individual essay, new lectures, and preparing for the final exam. Several suggest that the individual essay should have been introduced earlier rather than at the same time as the group projects, so that people get a chance to at least start researching their chosen topics before the other heavy tasks commence.

The format of both the individual essay (semi-free topic, acceptable word-range) and the group projects (interesting research-related data, oral presentation only) was appreciated. Many students felt like it was a bit difficult to know what level to keep for the group projects; expectations from the respective supervisors were perceived as high, but at the same time the projects were not part of the final grade – making the decision on how prioritise hard. Varying background in and experience with statistics and R within the groups also made the workload somewhat uneven between students. The final exam included aspects of most of the major topics covered during the course and several questions were formulated as to allow students to answer according to their level of knowledge. Together with the individual essay, the exam provided plenty of opportunities to demonstrate what we had learned. However, some students felt that they would have needed more time to properly be able to answer all of the questions in the exam. In total, the workload throughout the course was perceived as heavy but manageable by most students this year.

The communication from the course administration worked well in general and course information was easily accessible on the Canvas course page, which was very well structured. However, several students mention the issue of not receiving presentations from the lecturers in a reasonable time. Some hand-outs were provided very late, just days before the exam, negatively affecting the students' opportunities to learn and review the material. Furthermore, information about the final exam itself was given only days before it was due, making it difficult to know what to prepare for and how to best approach the large quantity of lecture material.

Overall, the technical difficulties with Zoom and distance given lectures were minor; both image and sound quality

were at large satisfactory. Individual students sometimes experienced trouble with stable internet connection, but when/if communicated, the lecture in progress could in most cases be recorded upon request. The biggest issue with teaching on distance, pointed out to various extent by a number of students, was the length of the Zoom lectures in combination with the lecture format. Only a few lecturers attempted to adapt their presentations or encouraged active participation in some way. Days with four-hour lectures scheduled in both the morning and afternoon can be tough under normal conditions, but trying to stay focused sitting in front of a screen for that long when lectures are not interactive is close to impossible. It was definitely favourable that all lectures were live, allowing for questions to be asked directly, and not provided pre-recorded. Nonetheless, many lectures could easily have been made more interactive by arranging student discussions (e.g. by using break-out rooms) or including some form of exercise.

If the course is to be given on distance again sometime in the future, we would like to recommend putting in some extra effort in the beginning to help students to get to know each other better. One example could be through organising discussions on various topics in small, alternating groups. This may positively influence discussions and collaboration later on during the course, if students feeling insecure about speaking in front of others get a chance to do so in a more relaxed environment first. Lecturers could perhaps also be encouraged to devote some of their (spare) time to answering potential questions they receive from students outside of the scheduled lecture hours, since we cannot pop in their offices like we would have been able to during a normal year.

We are all looking forward to visiting Grimsö in the future (hopefully already in spring 2021!) and make up for some of those research-related discussions and field moments that the Wildlife Biology course is typically so famous for!

Thank you to Jens and Rick for making the course work out so excellently this year.

Boel Nilsson

Student Representative WB Course 2020

Kontakta support: support@slu.se - 018-67 6600