



Sustainable Management of Boreal Forests SG0245, 40124.2223

15 Hp

Pace of study = 100%

Education cycle = Advanced

Course leader = Järvi Järveoja, Lenka Kuglerova

Evaluation report

Evaluation period: 2023-05-28 - 2023-06-18

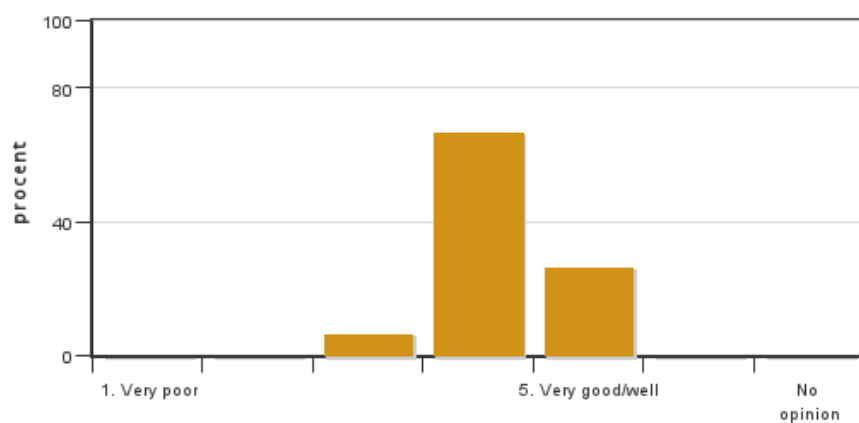
Answers 15

Number of students 18

Answer frequency 83 %

Mandatory standard questions

1. My overall impression of the course is:



Answers: 15

Medel: 4,2

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 0

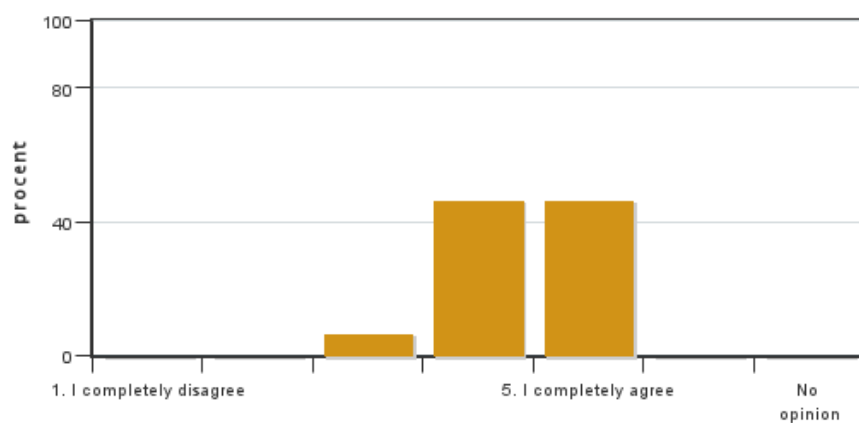
3: 1

4: 10

5: 4

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 15

Medel: 4,4

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 0

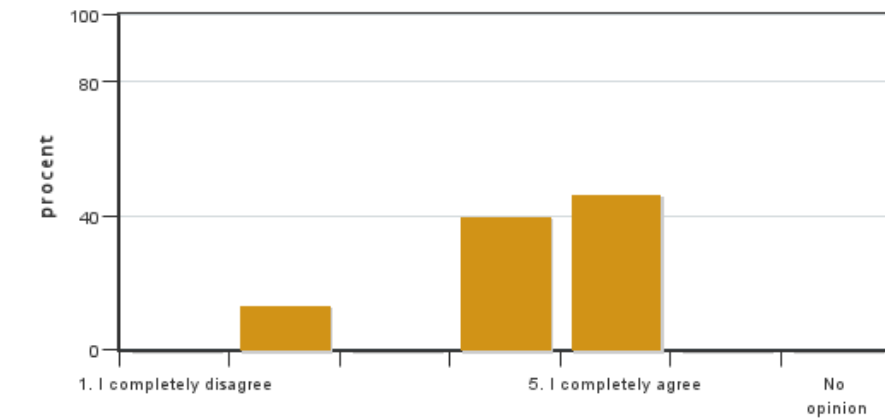
3: 1

4: 7

5: 7

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 15

Medel: 4,2

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 2

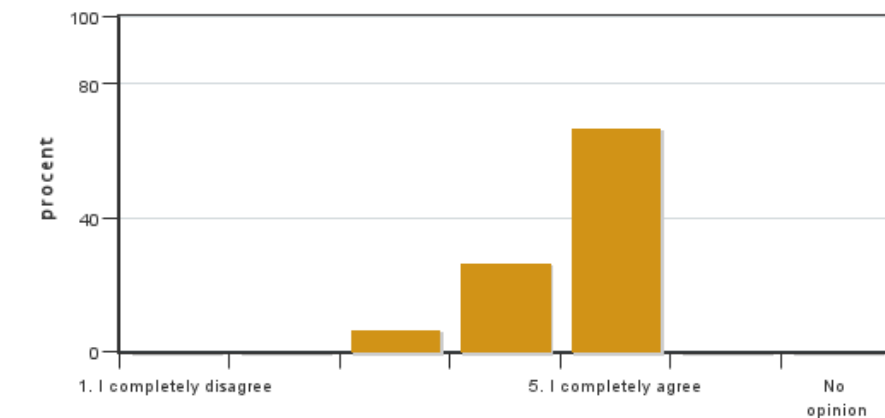
3: 0

4: 6

5: 7

No opinion: 0

4. The information about the course was easily accessible.



Answers: 15

Medel: 4,6

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

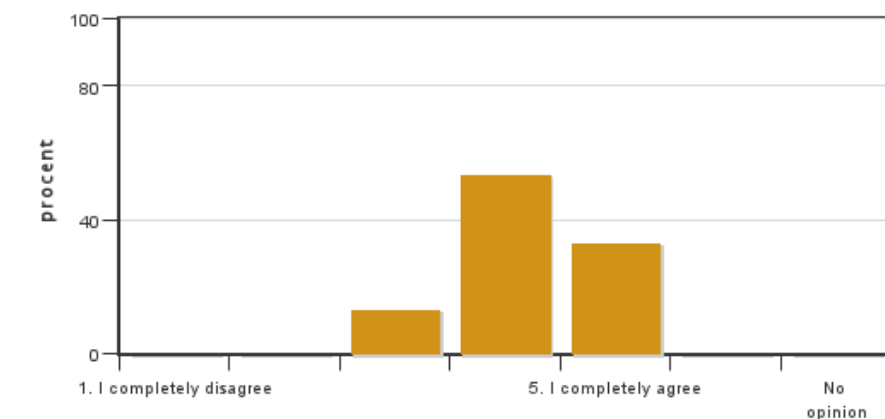
3: 1

4: 4

5: 10

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 15

Medel: 4,2

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 0

3: 2

4: 8

5: 5

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 15

Medel: 4,7

Median: 5

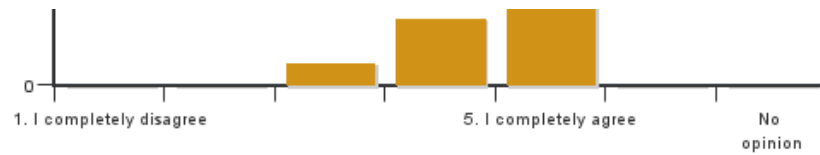
1: 0

2: 0

3: 1

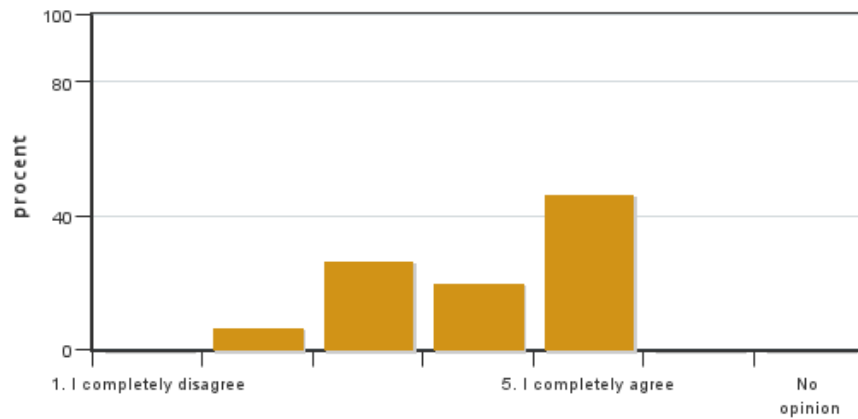
4: 3

5: 11



No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 15

Medel: 4,1

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 1

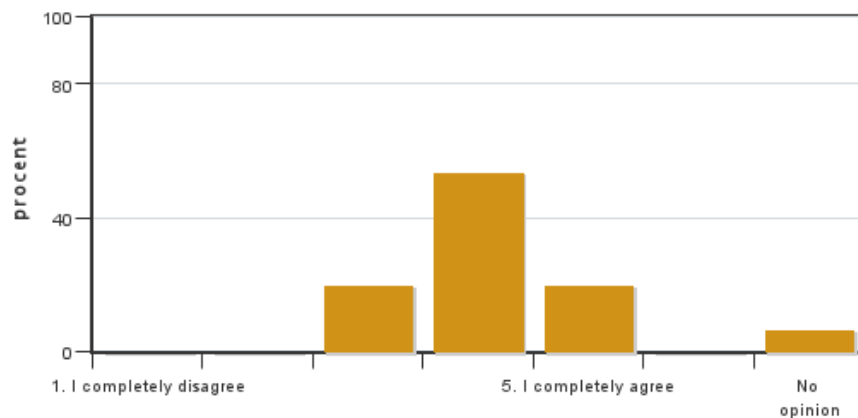
3: 4

4: 3

5: 7

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 15

Medel: 4,0

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 0

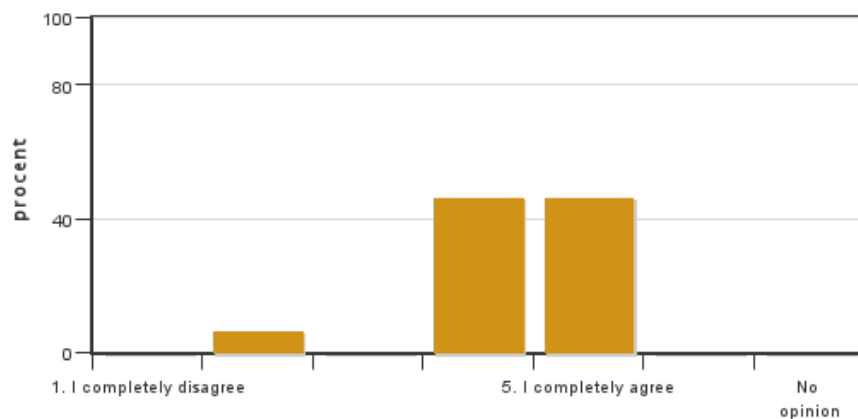
3: 3

4: 8

5: 3

No opinion: 1

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



Answers: 15

Medel: 4,3

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 1

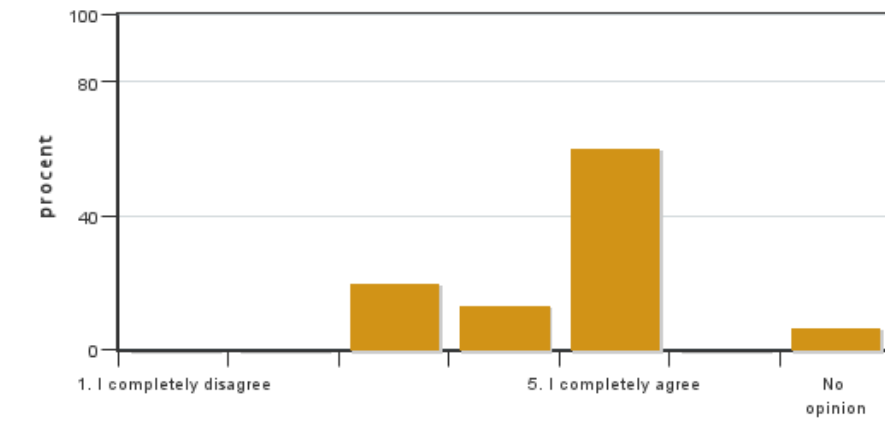
3: 0

4: 7

5: 7

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).

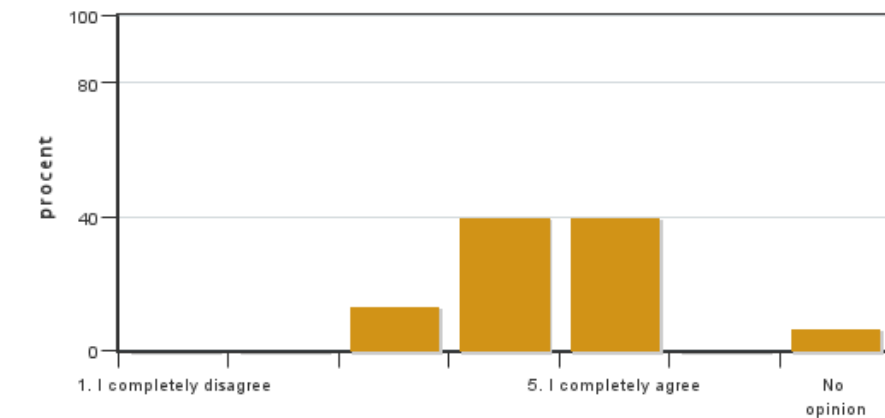


Answers: 15
Medel: 4,4
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 1

11. The course covered international perspectives.

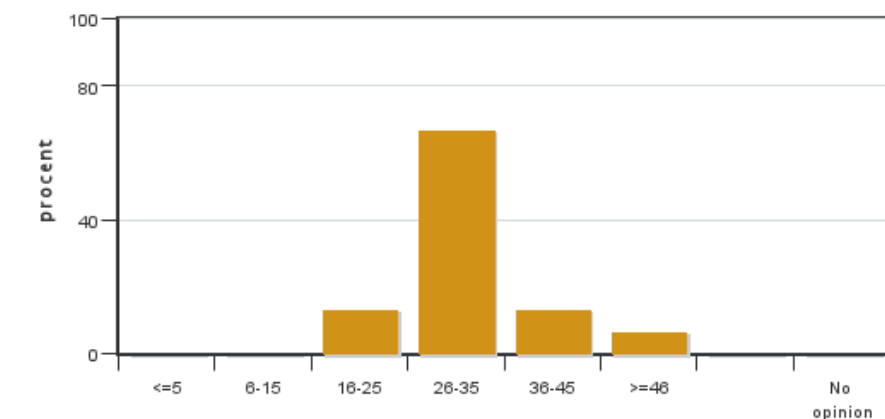


Answers: 15
Medel: 4,3
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 1

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

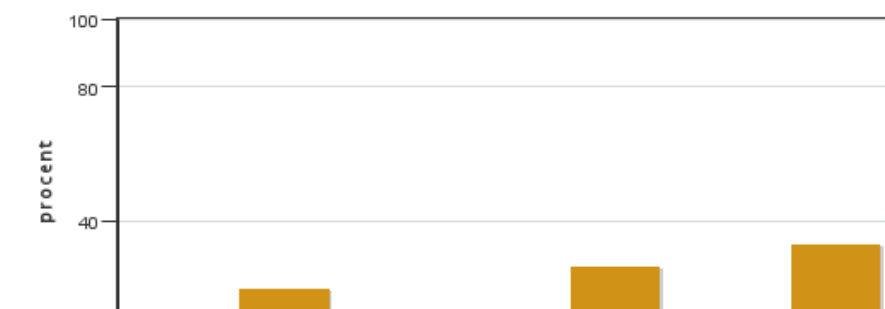


Answers: 15
Medel: 31,1
Median: 26-35

≤5: 0
6-15: 0
16-25: 2
26-35: 10
36-45: 2
≥46: 1

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 15
Medel: 3,7
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 5



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 course has been offered at SLU since 2013 but in 2022, the course leadership has changed. This was the second year with the new course leaders. While the new course leaders mostly followed the structure from previous years some small changes in the schedule, organization and teachers were made based on evaluation and experience from 2022. In total, 15 out of 18 students has filled the course evaluation, which is unusually high score. The course leaders repeatedly highlighted the importance of the course evaluation to the students, which seemed to work. A few changes will be made in the course content and structure for next year based on the evaluation.

The overall impression of the course was good and thus no major changes are planned. The course will continue to be given in 10 individual modules with assignments within each module and without a final exam. This seems to be appreciated by the students. Grading was changed this year from grades for individual assignments (and weighted average for final grade) to 12 assignments being mandatory to pass with grade 3 and 3-4 voluntary assignments to pass with grade 4 and 5. This grading system avoids averaging and put more emphasis on optional work that can bring students to a higher grade. The new grading system was generally appreciated (with some exception) and the consensus was to keep it. Some students commented that voluntary assignments as a baseline for higher grades are not motivating and thus they chose not to do them. It is a responsibility and decision of every student to decide their level of ambition and therefore we will continue with this new grading system (while restructuring certain assignments).

As every year, this course main struggle is to set appropriate level of the content. Many of our own SLU students complain that the class is too easy (at least some assignments) while some of the international students find this level appropriate or even difficult, as they do not have as high a priory knowledge of the boreal forest. In the years to come, we will work towards advancing the level of the course because of the general restructuring of the programs at the Forestry faculty. Nevertheless, it is not possible to avoid some repetition from the bachelor program. Optional assignments for higher grades are a good way for the more ambitious students to increase the course difficulty. Unfortunately, not many SLU student chose to do them.

The course structure into modules with individual and group assignment has been working for many years, and has been repeatedly, including this year, evaluated positively by the students, no major changes are planned for years to come. However, based on the course evaluation, we will try to update some of the modules, especially when it comes to economic sustainability and forest damaging agents. This will be done in a discussion with module leaders. In some modules, we will also restructure assignments to decrease the number of group assignments and increase the individual student work load. We will continue with voluntary assignments as a base for higher grades but might redo some (e.g., annotated bibliography).

Canvas structure, the schedule and provision of information was evaluated positively, no changes are planned. We will encourage module leaders to post Canvas information earlier than on the module start date.

For the learning environment, the room Vita Havet was not optimal as pointed out by the students. We agree with this and hope that the ongoing updates of the room will improve the situation. We will also bring this up back with the department to discuss how students can feel more welcome at the department halls. As for online/hybrid teaching, we plan to provide this possibility if good hybrid rooms are available (or if this is easy in Vita Havet). Currently, SLU only has Björken as a good hybrid teaching option and the external microphone and speakers do not work so well in other rooms. However, many students really appreciated to join lectures and discussions online because of different circumstances and the course leaders strongly believe that this option should be kept in all higher education if our goal is student-centered teaching.

The field trip has been evaluated as the best part of the course and the course leaders will work towards keeping it in the course, if financing continues to be provided by the faculty/department.

Student representatives comments

Overall impressions of the course

15 out of 18 students answered the course evaluation, which is an unusually high percentage. Almost all students had a positive overall impression of the course. None of the students had an overall negative impression of the course. Students appreciated the course leadership and that there was no final exam, but the amount of assignments made some students feel that the course was a bit too hectic. Some of the students in the Swedish Jägmästar program found that the course contained a lot of repetition from previous courses. Some specific assignments got critique.

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

All students felt like the content was well or at least sufficiently well connected to the learning objectives. Some individual comments highlighted how the course gives a good overview of boreal forest managements but lacks in depth.

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

While most students felt they had enough prior knowledge, a few felt like they did not have the right background. But due to the breadth of the course, all students could feel confident in at least some part of the course.

The information about the course was easily accessible.

Almost all students praised the structure and accessibility on the Canvas page. Individual students found it to be too messy. There is a request to be able to access information for each module before they start.

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

Students generally agreed with this statement. The field trip was especially pointed out as a positive element, and the lecture to exercise balance was good. Individual specific got critique.

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

The majority of students fully agreed, but there were some comments that specific teachers had a too opinionated viewpoint.

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

Most students did not have any serious complaints, but there was fair amount of frustration with the room Vita Havet. The frustration was generally about the poor air quality, poor sound isolation, lack of power outlets and a feeling of being seen a nuisance to the staff working in the institution.

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

While no student really seemed to hate the examination methods there seems to be a split between students that enjoyed the grading methods and some that did not (see more further down).

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

In general students agreed, but some students felt like the financial sustainability was covered poorly.

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).

Students generally agreed with this statement, but gender equality was not brought up specifically in the course content, which may have been beneficial in a class with a majority male students.

The course covered international perspectives.

Students in general agreed and found this to be an important aspect of the course. Students pointed out that the focus still in general was Sweden.

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

Most students spent 26-35 hours on the course, a few students spent more time and a few students spent less time.

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

Many students did not feel like this was relevant since the course was on campus except for a few guest lectures. Students appreciated the possibility to join on Zoom when needed and found the few online lectures we had to be fine. Some students feel strongly that online teaching should be avoided if not absolutely unavoidable. Technical aspects of hybrid classes worked fine.

Course specific questions

A bit more than half of the students answered these questions

- The biodiversity and water modules stood out as the best. Most modules were among the favorites of at least a few students. Students point out that the water module contained a lot of new, interesting information, even for the Jägmästar students.
- Overall, students disliked the boreal forestry context, wood value chain and damaging agents the most. For the boreal forestry context module, I think that the assignment structure is what students disliked the most. For the wood value chain module, some students point out that it was too short and that they did not have enough prior knowledge to follow it.
- The management plan assignment in the water module and the health trail assignment landscape planning module were the favorite group assignments among the students. Students seem to have enjoyed the creative assignments where the finished product is more than only text and a presentation.
- The boreal forestry context and climate change assignments stood out as the worst among the group assignments. The boreal forestry context assignment got heavy critique for being too messy and involved with different group constellations, especially for being the first group assignment of the course.
- The individual forest excursion was a clear favorite among the individual assignments, but most assignments was seen as among the best for at least one student.
- The climate change quiz was seen as the worst individual assignment - likely due to the unforgiving way it, consciously or unconsciously, was set up on Canvas. The conference presentation was also poorly graded by the students.
- In general, students seem to like the grading system where the grade is determined by the number of assignments the student chooses to do. A subset of students disagree. I think that the students that choose to skip the voluntary assignments enjoy this system for obvious reasons, while students that choose to do the voluntary assignments feel like the interfered with the mandatory assignments and that it got too much focus on quantity rather than quality. However, no students clearly state that this system should be completely changed but rather to adjust it. Some students also request that assignments are graded faster and ask specifically for the wood value chain module to be kept in the course.
- All students want to keep the field trip.
- The day on Riparian Zones stood out among the students as the best field trip day. The first and last field trip days were the least favorite, probably because they felt a bit rushed and/or unnecessary. The Östersund camping was not the best according to the students.

Summary

Main positive aspects

- The attitude, teaching style and presence of the course leaders.
- The variety in the course, giving a good overview of the content.
- Creative variety of assignments
- Not having a final exam and being able to choose which grade level to aim for by choosing how many assignments to do.
- Great field trip.
- Having on campus teaching.
- In general, a good level for everyone to follow along.
- Good course structure on Canvas.

Main negative aspects

- Too many assignments, especially among students that chose to do voluntary assignments.
- Some frustrations regarding specific assignments.
- Vita Havet isn't the best room.
- Too much repetition for some students.
- Including too little about financial sustainability.

Possible improvements

- No major changes needed, each module leader can fine tune some things and the course leaders can see if any adjustments needs to be done with the time allotment for each module.
- Some of the assignments and/or modules can need some larger changes (such as the boreal forestry context group assignment and the wood value chain module).
- Thinking through if some adjustments can be made to the grading so students don't feel like it's only about quantity, while still keeping the general grading structure. Consider omitting some assignments (like the annotated bibliography, did any student even choose to do it?)
- Lobby for getting assigned a better room than Vita Havet, even if the class is small.
- Find creative ways to keep the course accessible for international students while decreasing the amount of repetition for Jägmästar students.