Plant-microbe interactions
BI1354, 20019.2324

15 Hp
Pace of study = 100%
Education cycle = Advanced

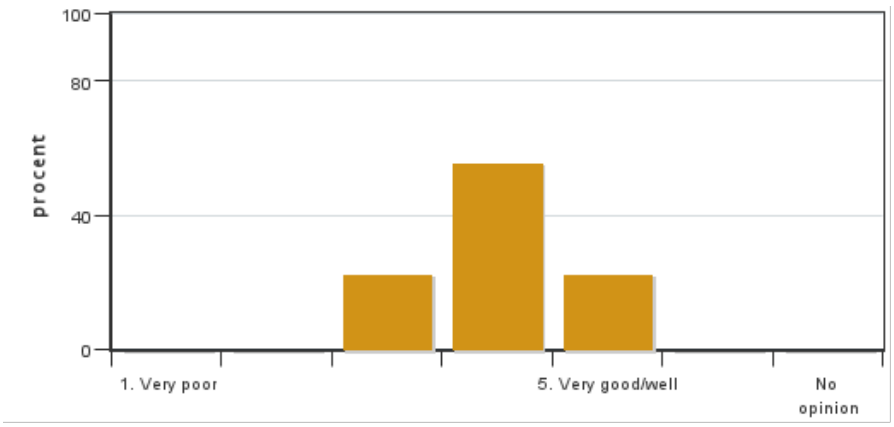
Evaluation report

Evaluation period: 2024-01-07 - 2024-01-28

Answers	9
Number of students	13
Answer frequency	69 %

Mandatory standard questions

1. My overall impression of the course is:

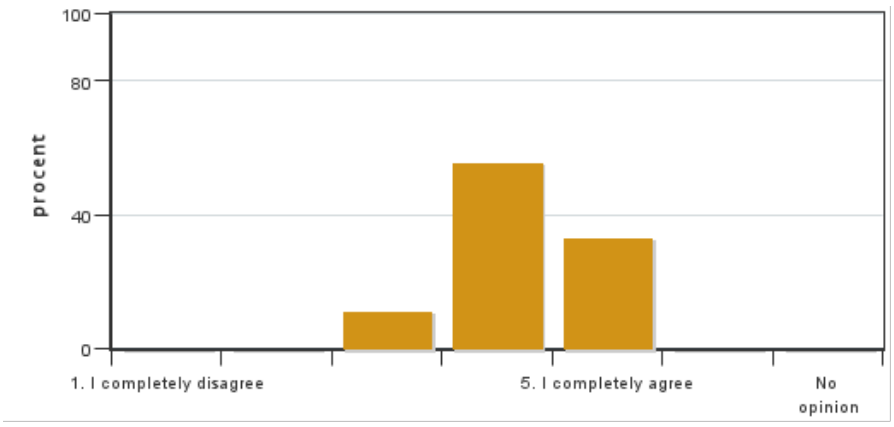


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,0
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0

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

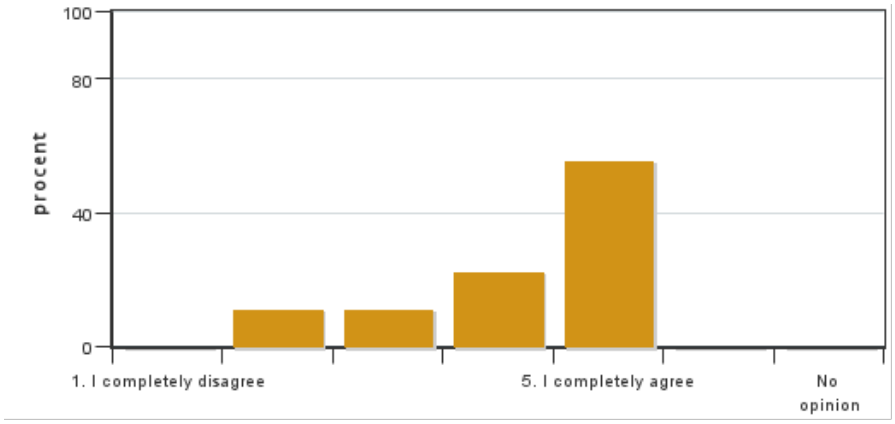


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,2
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0

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

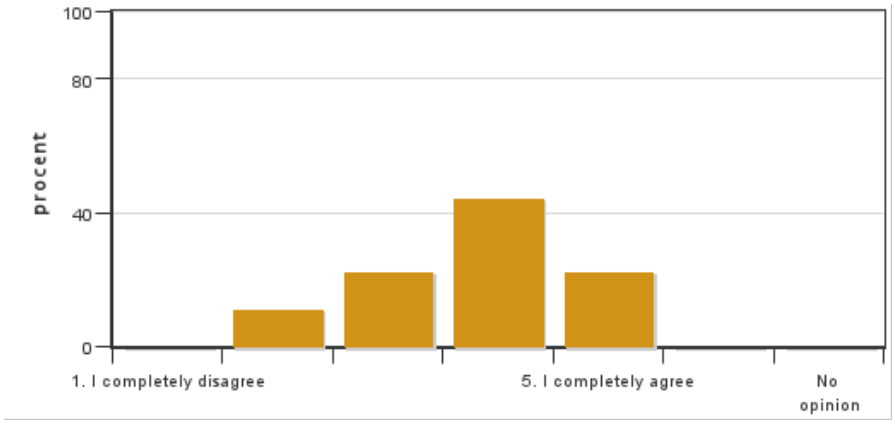


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,2
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

4. The information about the course was easily accessible.

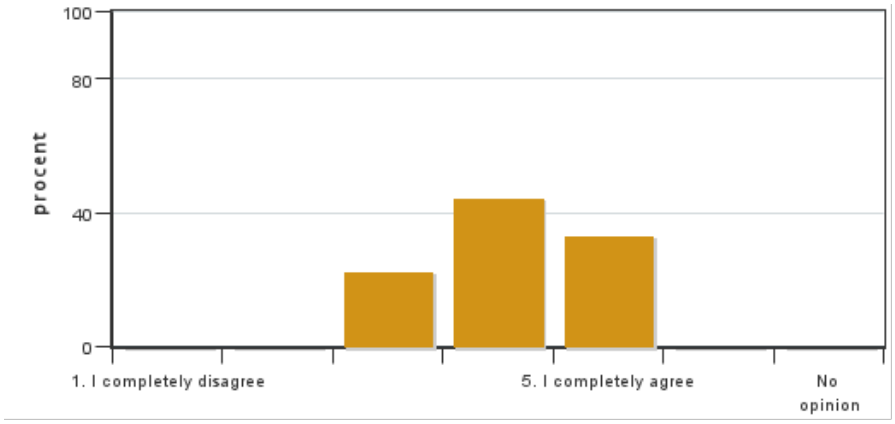


Answers: 9
Medel: 3,8
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0

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

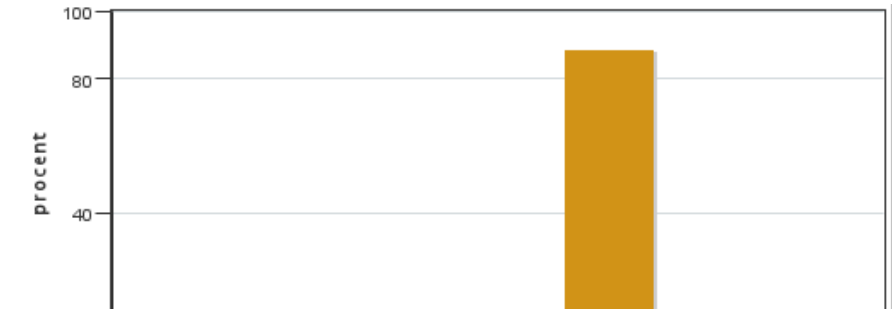


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,1
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0

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

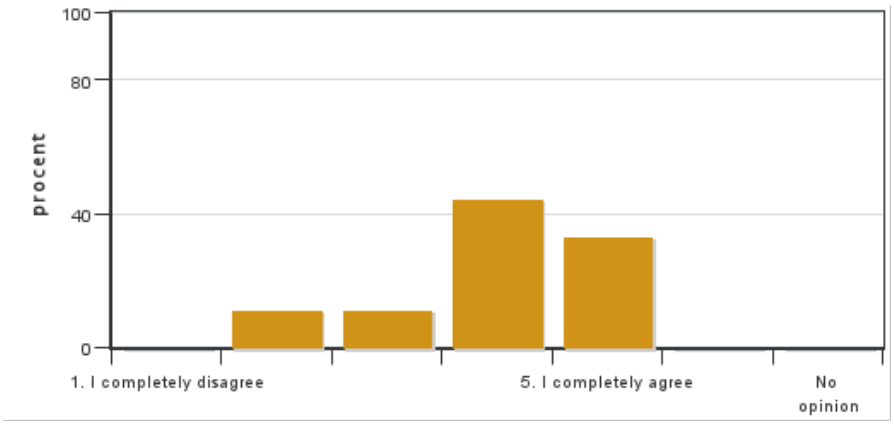


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,9
Median: 5

1: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 1
5: 8

No opinion: 0

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

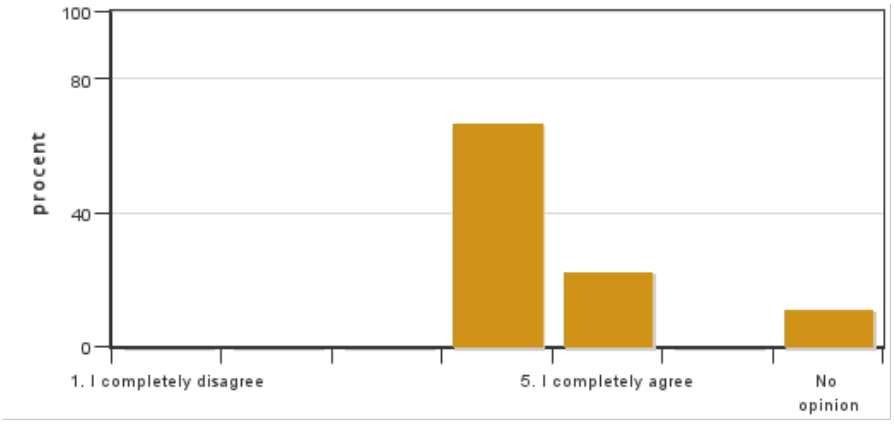


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,0
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0

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

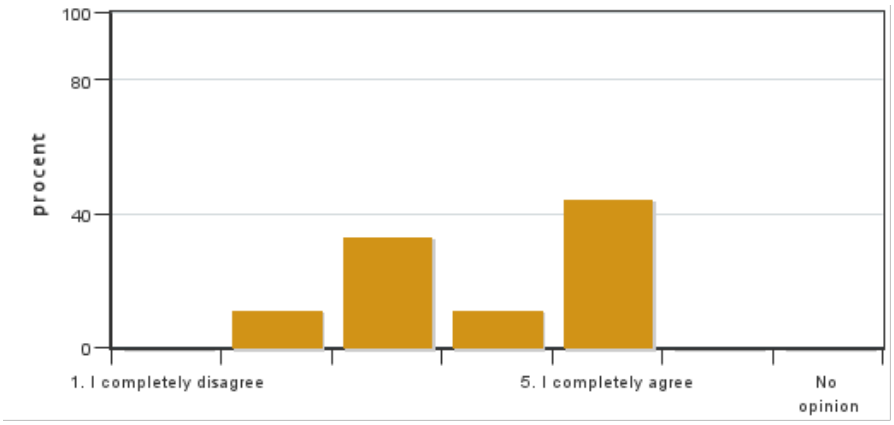


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,3
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 1

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

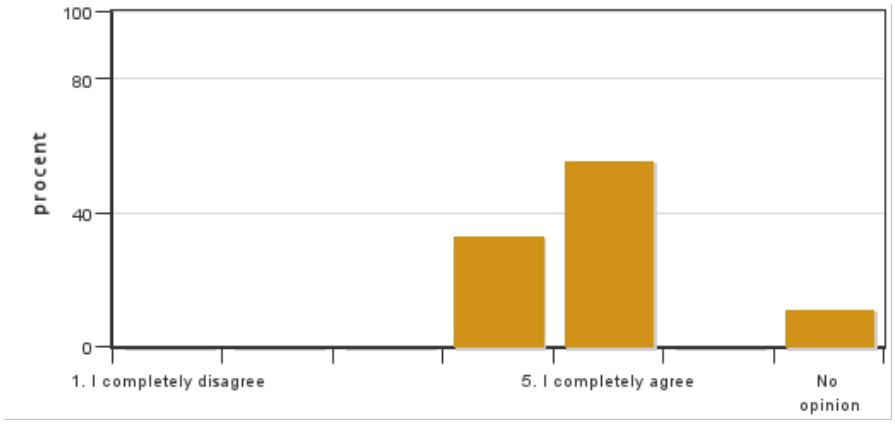


Answers: 9
Medel: 3,9
Median: 4

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

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).

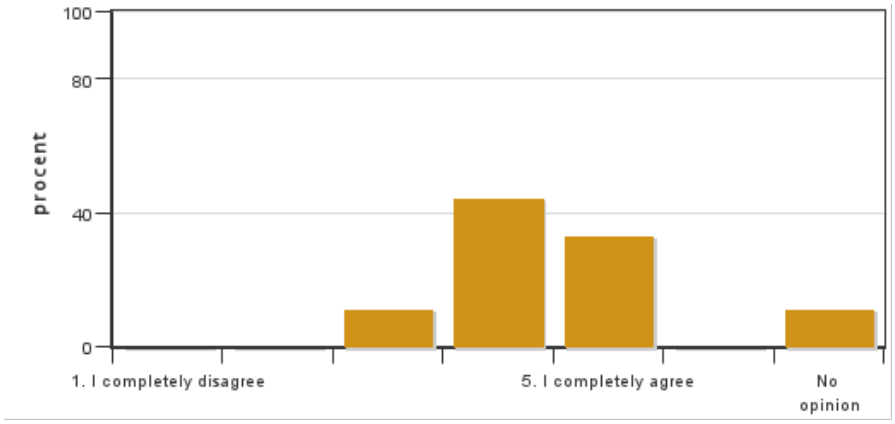


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,6
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 1

11. The course covered international perspectives.

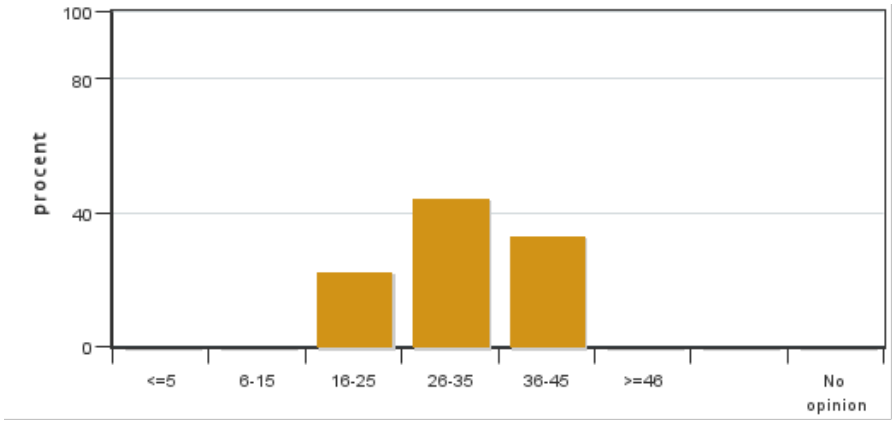


Answers: 9
Medel: 4,3
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 1

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



Answers: 9
Medel: 31,1
Median: 26-35

≤5: 0
6-15: 0
16-25: 2
26-35: 4
36-45: 3
≥46: 0

No opinion: 0

Course leaders comments

The course comprises lectures, discussion of study questions, a research-based lab practical in research groups, a computer exercise, and a literature project. The lectures are intended to be largely research-anchored and thus are given by experts in the respective subjects/fields. The lecture part is traditionally organized in collaboration with the plant-microbe interaction course at the University of Helsinki, which limits the possibility to have more than one lecture per day as preferred by the students. Due to this schedule, the working load appeared to the students rather low in the beginning of the course yet was partly perceived as more demanding towards the end. Based on the student´s feedback from 2022/2023, we had changed the course structure and scheduled the lab practical break before the Christmas break. This change also allowed us to find more hosting research group for the lab projects, which was particularly needed due to the significant increase in the number of participating students (13 compared to 8 in 2022). However, the written exam followed immediately after the time-intensive lab practical in the last week

before Christmas. This was in general regarded as positive because of a studying-free Christmas break, but also limited the time for exam preparation. We have carefully considered this “dilemma” and have scheduled the exam date for the HT2024 course to the 8th of January 2025, which gives a full week to recap on the lecture content after the New Year´s holiday.

As in previous years, the course was perceived as overly positive which is, besides the oral feedback, reflected in the scores from the questionnaire in relation to overall impression, course components, alignment with learning objectives and examination, social and physical environment, as well as gender and equality aspects. There were some individual concerns on the course information, which were, however, kept in a similar format as in previous years when it was perceived as easily accessible. We will consider the feedback and will further improve the information flow on the scattered rooms both for videoconference lectures (which we cannot really influence) and the other events. The earlier rather low score on sustainability development aspect could be substantially improved (2.8 in HT2022 vs 3.9 in HT2023) and we will try to further encourage the lecturer to consider related questions in their lectures.

Some students felt that the literature project was a rather large assignment which was not equally weighted as the graded computer exercise and thus partly regarded as an unnecessary “time-filling” task. However, the course organizers still see the literature project as an important exercise for the students to train scientific literature work, writing and presentation skills, which are crucial for the Master thesis that most of the students start immediately after the PMI course. We also clearly communicated that the chosen topic can be connected to the MSc thesis work and thus, the required reading and writing would not be a “waste of time”. Nonetheless, we may consider for the upcoming course to grade also the literature project to make the efforts more “visible” in the final outcome. Similarly, there were some discussions during the oral feedback whether the individual lab reports for the lab practical in the should be graded as well. However, since we regard the lab practical in research groups as a team assignment, we see difficulties in giving grades for the individual performance as long as we offer the students to write a common lab report within the different groups.

Despite these concerns brought up by the students, they expressed during the oral evaluation their overall satisfaction with the course and the nice and constructive learning atmosphere, for instance during the weekly discussions of study questions. Furthermore, as already experienced in previous years, the hands-on lab practical in research groups was particularly enjoyed and appreciated by the students.

Student representatives comments

Lectures, literature work, a computer exercise, and laboratory work were part of this course. The final exam, which was scheduled just before the Christmas break, dealt with the main concepts and ideas that were taught in the courses. The feedback on this course, which was held in hybrid with Helsinki University, was very mixed concerning the scheduling and the workload but the students agree that the laboratory work in the work groups of the department and the study question sessions were highly appreciated.

The style of lectures with different lecturers who are experts in their field was a great way to see what range the topic of Plant-Microbe Interaction has to offer which also overlapped with plant pathology courses of SLU. The summary slides at the end of every presentation were very helpful in getting the key points and learnings of the lecture. Having one lecture per day could have easily been extended to having two lectures a day, which would give more time for other things as well as help with the social aspect of the course. The study questions provided by each lecturer at the end of the lectures were very helpful but could be adapted a bit more towards the actual message of the lecture. The study question sessions, where the study questions were discussed, helped a lot of students understand the topics and were a great opportunity to recap the topics in a laid-back and open atmosphere.

The timing of the exam before Christmas was liked a lot by the students as the Christmas break was free of studying. Also, the topics and styles of questions were well distributed from questions about concepts of immunity to specific questions (e.g. nematodes) in both an open, discussion style and concise style. Nevertheless, the students would have preferred a little more time to study as the laboratory work was just before the exam and quite extensive as it took the whole day. For the laboratory work, the students also asked for a standardized time frame as the workloads differed a lot across the supervisors. Overall, the possibility of experiencing a “real” research environment and contributing to “actual” research was positively highlighted in the evaluation.

For the literature project and the computer exercise, the students were a little confused about the grading and the feedback as the weight of the computer exercises was perceived as too high, and a huge additional report was felt unnecessary at the end of the course. However, the computer lab was perceived as a help for the upcoming thesis (master students) as it provided a step-by-step manual for analyzing sequencing data.