



Sustainable Management of Boreal Forests SG0245, 40115.2324

15 Hp
Pace of study = 100%
Education cycle = Advanced
Course leader = Järvi Järveoja, Lenka Kuglerová

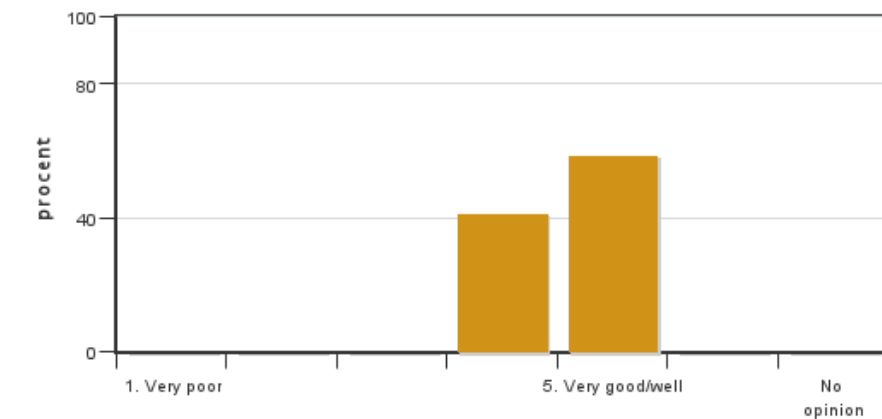
Evaluation report

Evaluation period: 2024-05-26 - 2024-06-16

Answers 17
Number of students 23
Answer frequency 73 %

Mandatory standard questions

1. My overall impression of the course is:

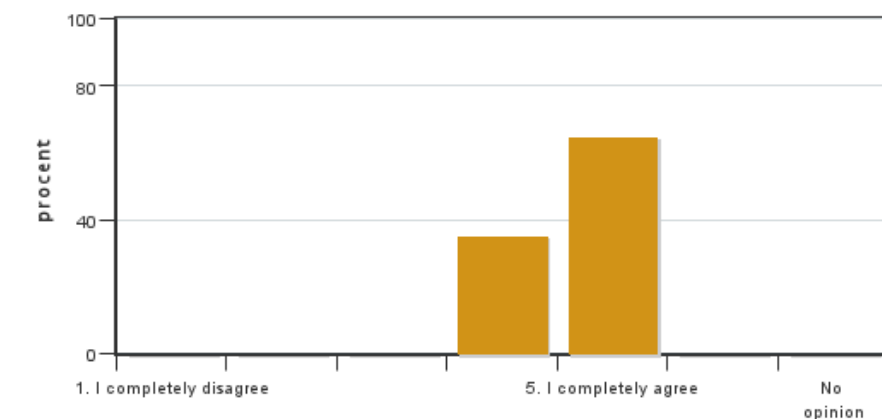


Answers: 17
Medel: 4,6
Median: 5

1: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 7
5: 10

No opinion: 0

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

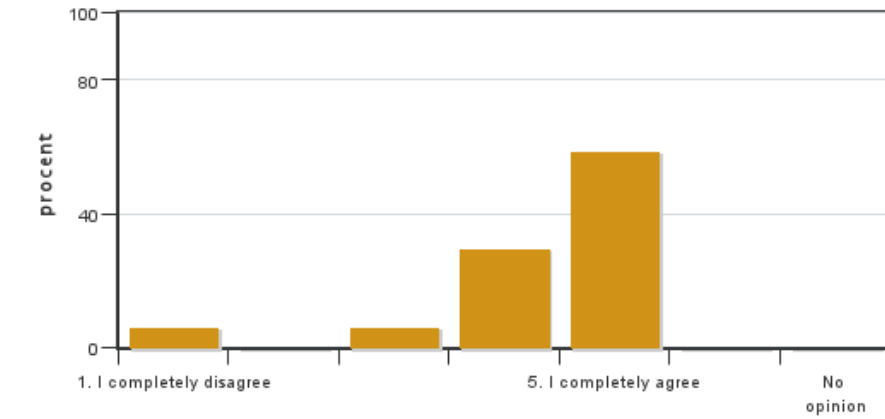


Answers: 17
Medel: 4,6
Median: 5

1: 0
2: 0
3: 0
4: 6
5: 11

No opinion: 0

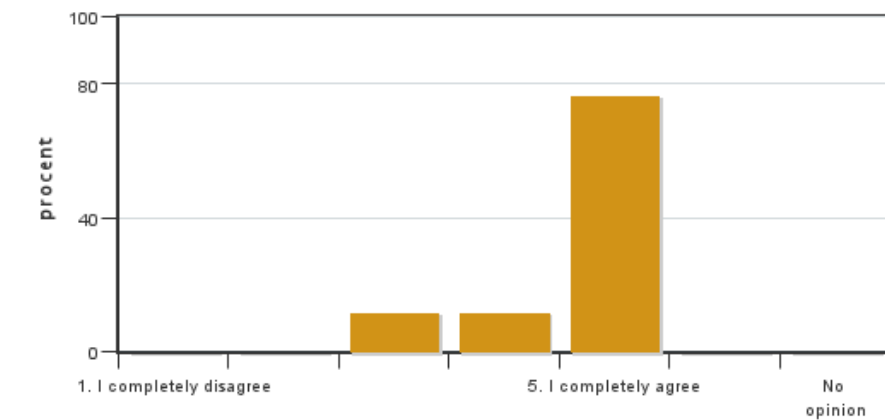
3. My prior knowledge was sufficient for me to benefit from the course.



Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,4
 Median: 5

1: 1
 2: 0
 3: 1
 4: 5
 5: 10
 No opinion: 0

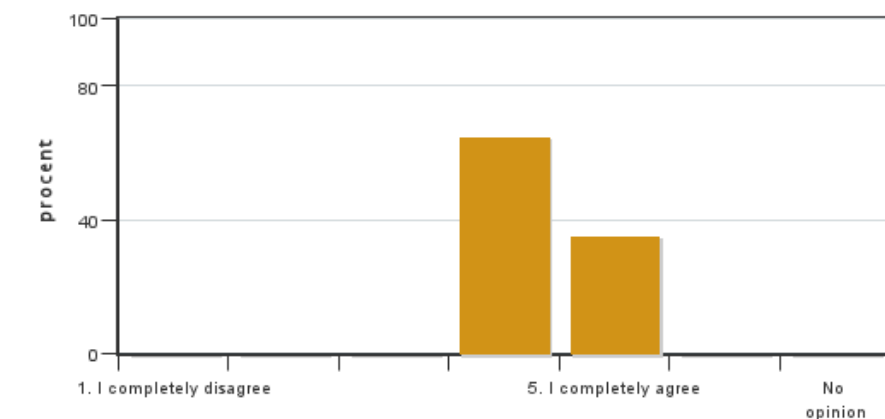
4. The information about the course was easily accessible.



Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,6
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 2
 4: 2
 5: 13
 No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,4
 Median: 4

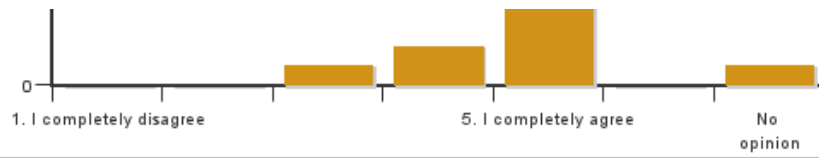
1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 0
 4: 11
 5: 6
 No opinion: 0

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



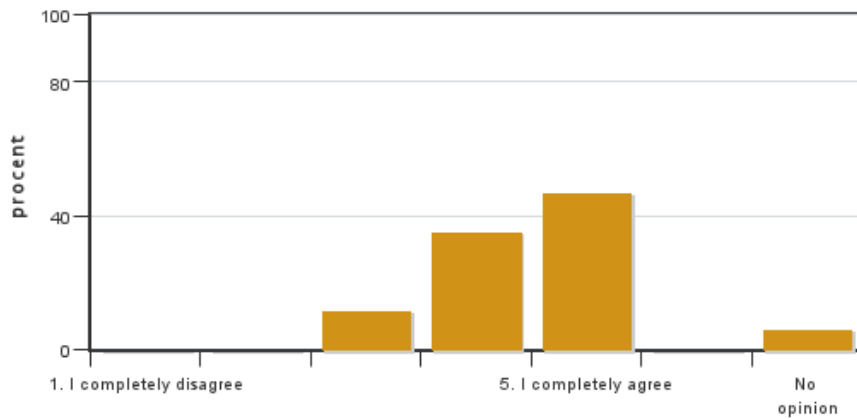
Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,8
 Median: 5

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



No opinion: 1

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



Answers: 17

Medel: 4,4

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 0

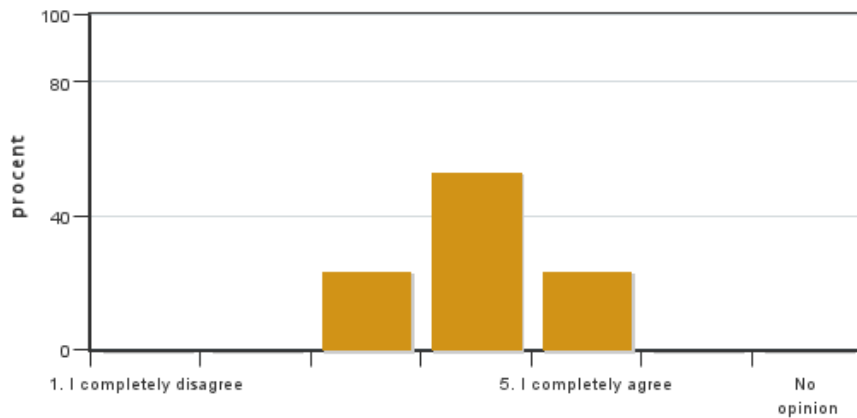
3: 2

4: 6

5: 8

No opinion: 1

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



Answers: 17

Medel: 4,0

Median: 4

1: 0

2: 0

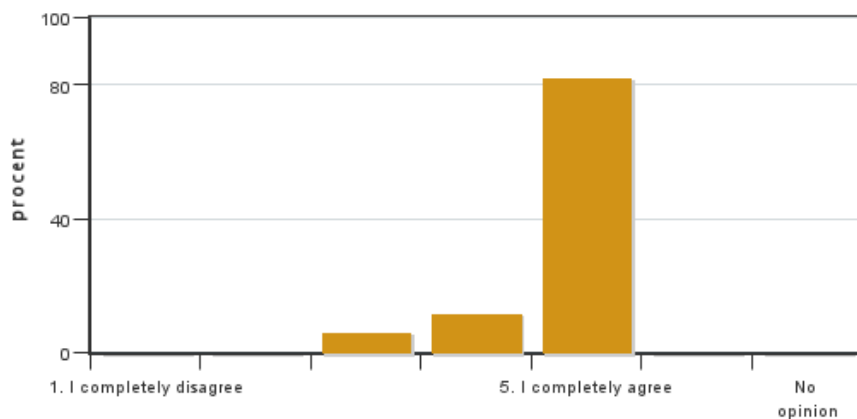
3: 4

4: 9

5: 4

No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 17

Medel: 4,8

Median: 5

1: 0

2: 0

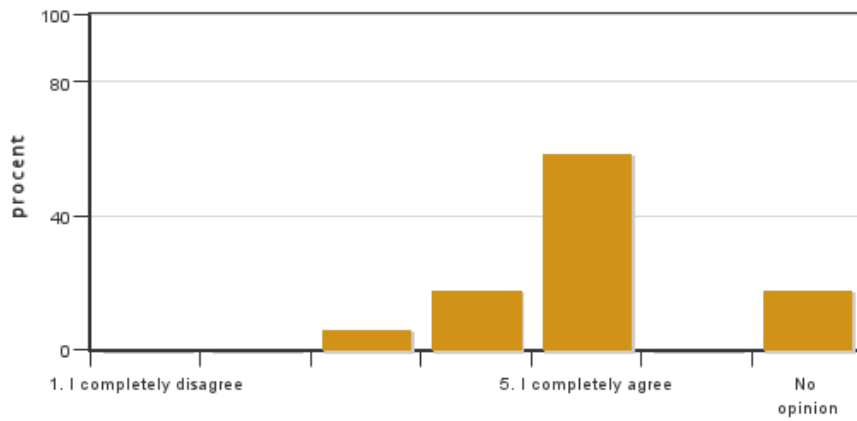
3: 1

4: 2

5: 14

No opinion: 0

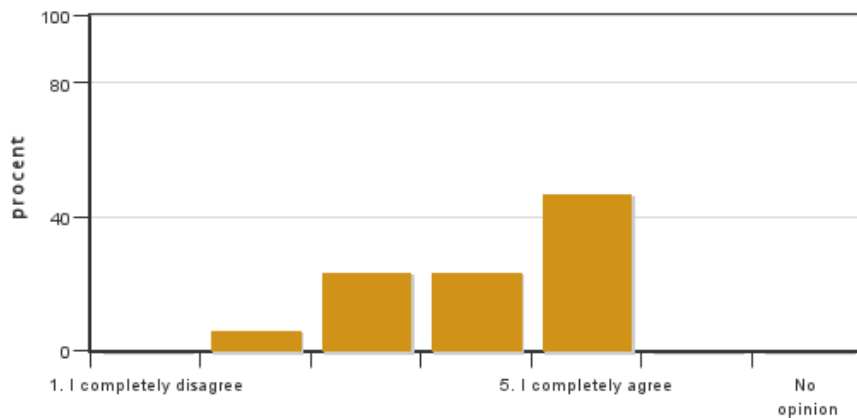
10. I believe the course has included a gender and equality aspect, regarding content as well as teaching practices (e.g. perspective on the subject, reading list, allocation of speaking time and the use of master suppression techniques).



Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,6
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 0
 3: 1
 4: 3
 5: 10
 No opinion: 3

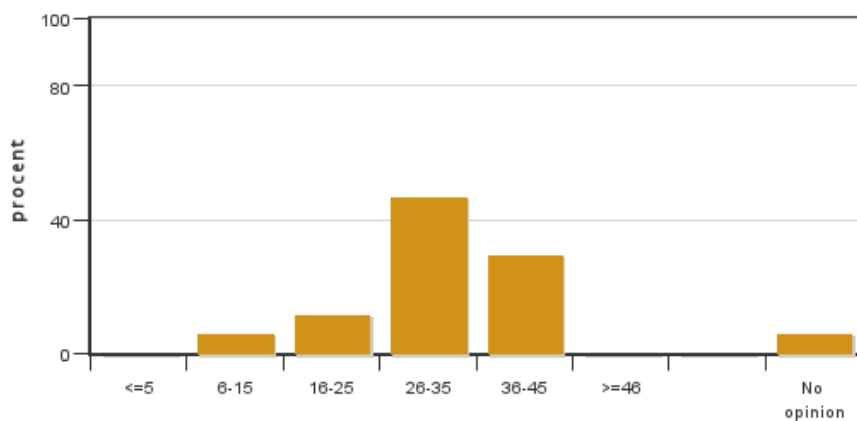
11. The course covered international perspectives.



Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,1
 Median: 4

1: 0
 2: 1
 3: 4
 4: 4
 5: 8
 No opinion: 0

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



Answers: 17
 Medel: 30,6
 Median: 26-35

≤5: 0
 6-15: 1
 16-25: 2
 26-35: 8
 36-45: 5
 ≥46: 0
 No opinion: 1

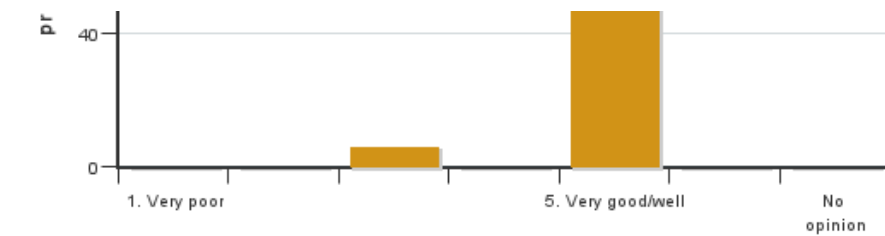
Additional own questions

13. The field trip was essential for the overall understanding of sustainable forest management in Sweden and should be kept as a mandatory part of the course.



Answers: 17
 Medel: 4,9
 Median: 5

1: 0
 2: 0



3: 1
 4: 0
 5: 16
 No opinion: 0

Course leaders comments

The course has been offered at SLU since 2013 but in 2022, the course leadership has changed. This was the third year with the new course leaders. While the 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 2022-2023. In total, 17 out of 23 students has filled the course evaluation, which is relatively high score (73%). 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 leaders are appreciated. The course will continue to be given in 10 individual modules without a final exam. Grading system will stay the same (final grade is based on the number of voluntary assignments). This grading system avoids averaging and put more emphasis on optional work that can bring students to a higher grade. This 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 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 experience the class 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 priori 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.

Canvas structure, the schedule and provision of information was evaluated positively, no changes are planned.

The course structure into modules with individual and group assignments within each module is no longer appreciated by the students. The consensus is that there should be one larger assignment that connects all the modules, while keeping some of the module-based tasks as learning tools (but not graded). The students greatly appreciated the final assignment – management plan for SLU property in Fagerdal – and suggested to expand on this assignment while connecting it to more modules. The course leaders agree that this would be an efficient way to make deeper connection between the individual modules and will restructure assignments and tasks to accommodate this new suggestion. The course leaders will discuss with the module leaders how to connect modules to the management plan and how to update modules to accommodate this new system. Some of the individual assignments will persist, especially the voluntary ones that are used for higher grades.

Lectures were evaluated both positively and negatively. Some lecturers were evaluated very highly (bringing new and advanced content) while some were too basic. While the students appreciated to meet with forestry representatives, their lectures were not very appreciated (and also poorly attended). The course leaders will consider how many and which forestry sector representatives should continue lecturing on the course.

For the learning environment, Björken was evaluated as a good room for lectures but not for discussions. Room allocation is done by the faculty and the course leaders has a very little options to change this. If the class is larger than 20 students (which it was this year), no other room that is better suited for discussion is available. SLU should invest into some more room options, but this is beyond the course leadership. Björken will likely continue to be the course domain, but the course leaders will try to set up better options for group discussions.

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. The SLU forest property Fagerdal will continue to play an essential role in the field trip and the connected management plan assignment.

Student representatives comments

Students gave the course very positive feedback. They appreciated the well-structured format, the high-quality knowledge provided, and the comprehensive overview of sustainable forestry. Students found the learning environment to be pleasant and that the content of the course connected well to the learning objectives.

Students had a mix of opinions on the required background knowledge, where some students felt unprepared, with one suggesting the program lacked support for those without a forestry background. This student highlighted a significant knowledge gap compared to students with prior experience. Another student simply lacked prior knowledge. An interesting suggestion came from a student who proposed a mandatory introductory course for non-forestry students as this is apparently common in other (European) forestry masters. This could bridge the knowledge gap and better prepare them for the main program.

Opinions on lectures, readings, and exercises were also mixed. While some aspects were praised, others needed improvement. One student particularly enjoyed lectures by specific instructors. However, a few students encountered issues with assignment instructions being uploaded slightly later than requested. Additionally, another student felt guest lectures, in particular those from representatives from the forestry sector, lacked depth and suggested including more critical analysis or featuring different speakers altogether. In addition, it was suggested to include more content on rotational forestry methods.

Students seemed satisfied with the learning environment. However, there were mixed opinions on the room Björken. While some found it suitable for lectures, others felt the formal seating and sometimes functioning air conditioning made it less conducive to discussions. One student even suggested incorporating more outdoor learning experiences, even in wintery conditions, to directly experience the boreal forest firsthand. Most students spend between 26-35 hours per week on the course.

Students had mixed reactions on whether the examination effectively assessed their learning. A few students felt overwhelmed by the number of assignments. They argued the weekly assignments prevented them from going deeper than superficial knowledge into topics and felt that the assignments were merely there to fill up time and suggested reducing the frequency to bi-weekly assignments. Another student proposed replacing the numerous small assignments with a single, larger management plan assignment. This, they argued, would promote a more interconnected learning experience by requiring students to synthesize knowledge from different course modules. The extra assignments, required for a higher grade, contributed to students' sense of learning. However, the grading of these extra assignments should be up to the lecturers who assigned them and not the course leaders.

One student questioned the course's overall emphasis on writing skills over practical forest management expertise. While they found the course valuable, they felt a disconnect between the program title and its focus. This student suggested the title might need revision to better reflect the program's content.

Students were positive about the course's coverage of sustainable development (environmental, social and financial aspects), and the gender and equality aspect of the course. However, one student, while satisfied with how sustainability was handled, suggested the course could be further improved by including more content on working conditions in forestry and Sami land rights, which are important social considerations within sustainable development.

Some students were happy with the international aspects, finding a specific module valuable or appreciating the insights gained. However, others felt there could be more focus on this area. They suggested including comparisons of forest management practices in different countries or incorporating more discussions on international challenges and solutions related to boreal forests.

Students found several course modules as particularly valuable. Students overwhelmingly praised the field trip as an essential part of the course. Many students emphasized how the trip solidified their classroom learning by providing practical experience. They appreciated seeing real life examples of forest management practices firsthand, and felt it helped them understand the theoretical concepts learned in class. The trip was seen as especially valuable for those without a forestry background, helping them understand concepts like forest microclimates and protected riparian zones. One suggestion involved utilizing student ambassadors who could leverage their experience in planning trips and logistics to enhance the experience.

Another highly rated module was "Water in Forested Landscapes" (Module 7). Students appreciated its in-depth lectures of water management, particularly how complexities and potential contradictions were addressed. A few students also singled out the "Forest Management" and "Biodiversity" modules.

Students had mixed opinions on the weakest modules in the course. The Wood module (M3) seemed repetitive for students with a forestry background, and the Forest Health module (M5) had a confusing structure. Another student disliked the poster assignment associated with M5, questioning its value as a learning tool. Furthermore, the Forest and Human Health module (M6) was seen as lacking depth in information compared to others, and failing to stimulate independent thinking according to one student. A student criticized a module on Forest Damages for focusing on individual damaging agents rather than forest health as a whole. This student felt the connections between these issues and their management were missed. They also felt the ungulate management aspect was missing.

There were a few mentions of other areas for improvement: A student disliked the workload associated with an extra assignment (A2b) requiring 2500 words in a short timeframe. Another student felt pressured by the assignments for the Climate Change module (M2) although they found the content itself interesting. Further, a student disliked the

seemingly contradictory expectations regarding the presentation style (eye-catching vs. information-dense) for an assignment labeled A-5.

In summary, the course evaluation shows overall positive feedback from students, highlighting the well-structured format, high-quality knowledge, and comprehensive coverage of sustainable forestry. Students particularly valued the practical experience from the field trip and modules like "Water in Forested Landscapes." However, there were mixed opinions regarding the assumed prior knowledge, with some students feeling unprepared and suggesting an introductory course for non-forestry students. Concerns were also raised about the number and frequency of assignments, the depth and criticality of some guest lectures, and the suitability of the learning environment. Suggestions for improvement included more outdoor learning experiences, enhanced content on rotational forestry methods, and greater focus on international forest management practices.

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