Independent project in Environmental Psychology EX1000, 30254.2122

30 Hp
Pace of study = 100%
Education cycle = Advanced
Course leader = Fredrika Mårtensson

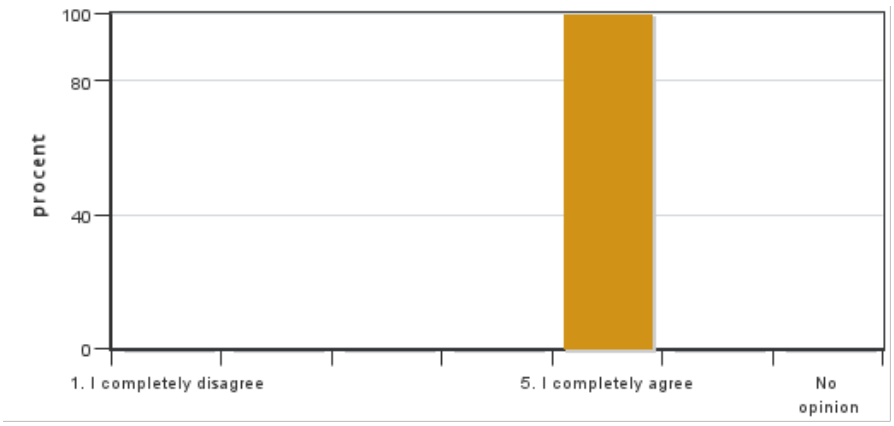
Evaluation report

Evaluation period: 2022-05-29 - 2022-06-19

Answers	1
Number of students	4
Answer frequency	25 %

Mandatory standard questions

1. I am generally satisfied with the independent project process

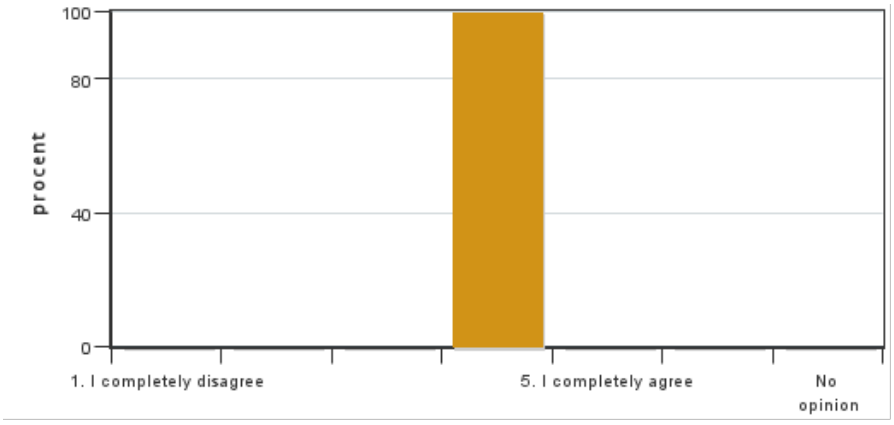


Answers: 1
Medel: 5,0
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

2. My prior knowledge was enough to carry out my independent project

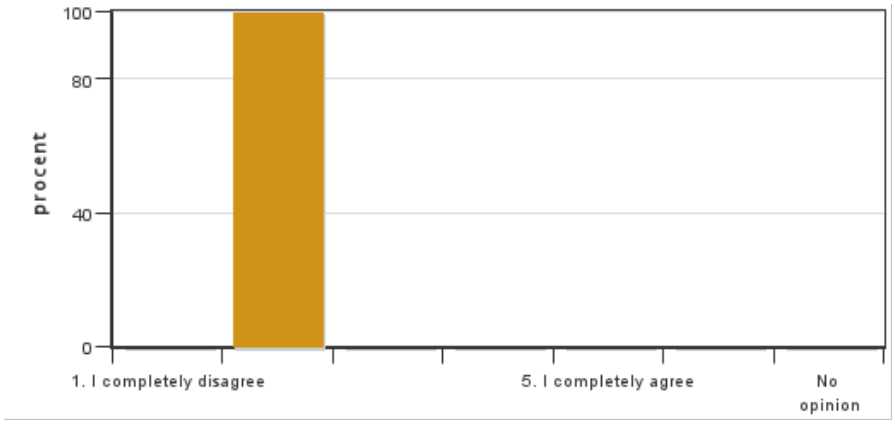


Answers: 1
Medel: 4,0
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0

3. Administration (including information) concerning my independent project has worked well

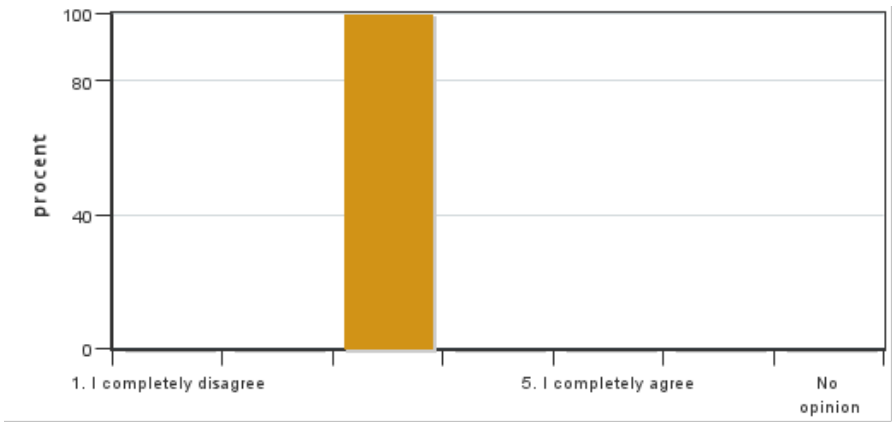


Answers: 1
Medel: 2,0
Median: 2

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

No opinion: 0

4. The social learning environment was inclusive (e.g. different opinions were respected, gender equality aspects, no master suppression techniques used)

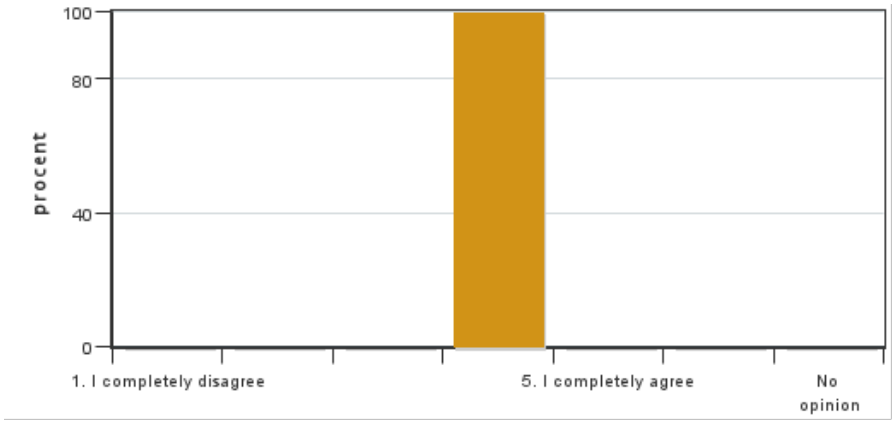


Answers: 1
Medel: 3,0
Median: 3

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

No opinion: 0

5. The physical learning environment (e.g. equipment and other resources) was satisfactory

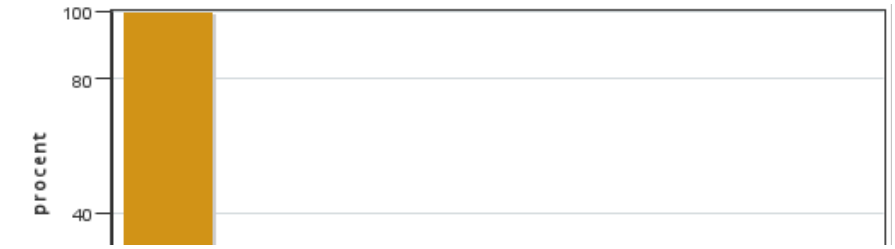


Answers: 1
Medel: 4,0
Median: 4

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

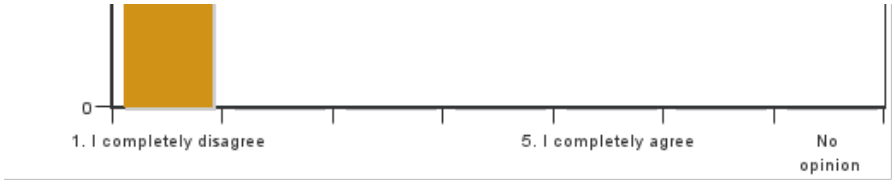
No opinion: 0

6. The course has touched on sustainable development (environmental, social and/or financial sustainability)



Answers: 1
Medel: 1,0
Median: 1

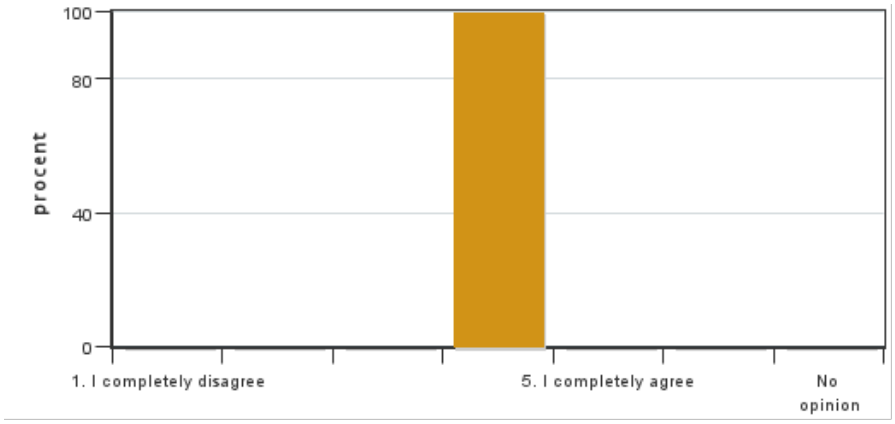
1: 1
2: 0
3: 0
4: 0



5: 0

No opinion: 0

7. Contact with my supervisor was sufficient for me to complete my independent project

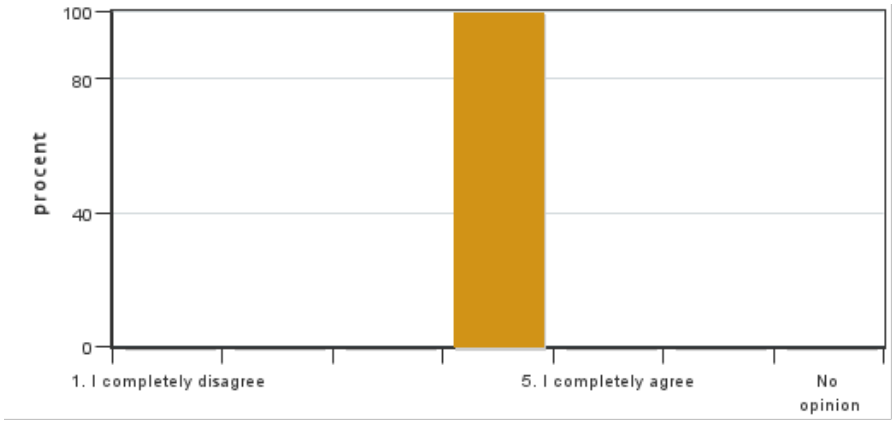


Answers: 1
Medel: 4,0
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0

8. I received constructive feedback on the written part of my project

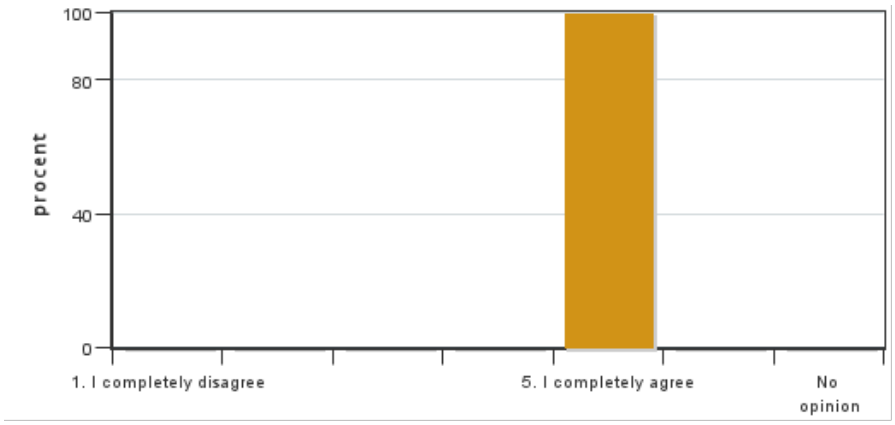


Answers: 1
Medel: 4,0
Median: 4

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

No opinion: 0

9. I received constructive feedback on the oral presentation of my project

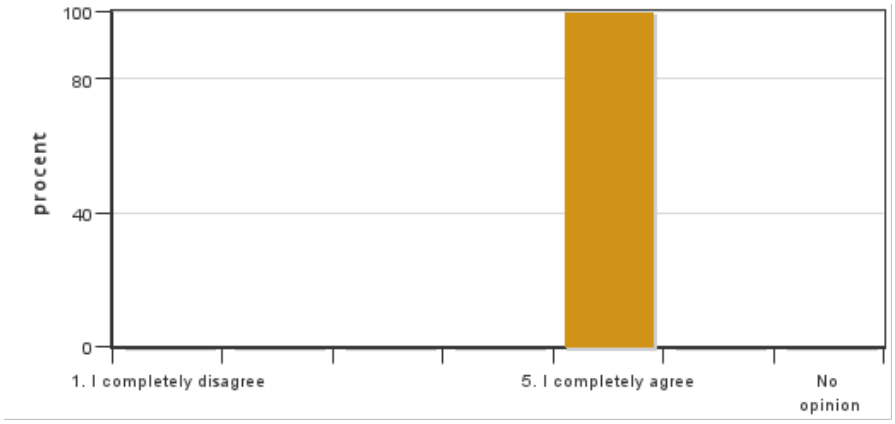


Answers: 1
Medel: 5,0
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

10. I received constructive feedback on my review of another student's project

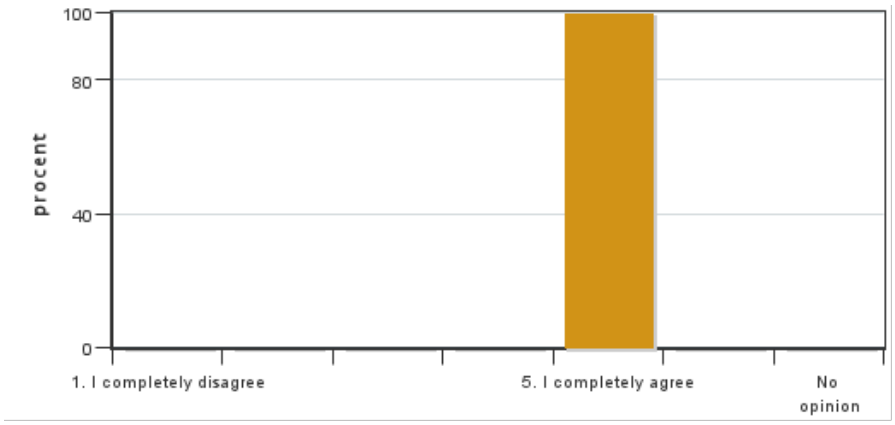


Answers: 1
Medel: 5,0
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

11. My ability to work independently has developed after carrying out my independent project



Answers: 1
Medel: 5,0
Median: 5

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

No opinion: 0

12. Other comments

Course leaders comments

No comments from the teacher

Student representatives comments

Summary of students' evaluations based on the questionnaire

One in four students responded to the course evaluation, which translates to a 25% response rate. The majority of students who responded to the course evaluation had a very good overall impression of the course.

The respondent agreed to some extent that the course content had clear links to the course's learning objectives.

The respondent answered that their prior knowledge was rather sufficient for them to benefit from the course.

The respondent experienced some difficulties regarding the administration, including information, about the course. The respondent asserted that more information could have been described more clearly.

The respondent opted for neutral when it comes to whether the social learning environment was inclusive and respected differences of opinion. The respondent had a bad experience with one of their classmates. The respondent claimed that the classmate had given out degrading feedback without understanding how to give constructive feedback.

The respondent answered that they were to a high degree satisfied with the physical learning environment (e.g.

facilities, equipment). The respondent noted that, while online classes worked very well, they encountered some problems with the very limited readings at the library in both physical and electronic versions.

The respondent acknowledged that the contact with the supervisor was sufficient for them to complete their independent project. The respondent added that sometimes it took at least a week to get any response from their supervisor.

The respondent was of the opinion that they received good constructive feedback on the written part of their project. The respondent also fully concurred that they acquired very good constructive feedback on both the oral presentation of their project and their review of another student's project.

The respondent completely reckoned the course to have developed their ability to work independently after carrying out their independent project.

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 course content itself, the frequency of the seminars, as well as constructive feedback from the opponents, supervisors, and examiners for the final part of the independent projects.

All students were quite positive about the EX1000 Independent Project in Environmental Psychology course at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). These students particularly appreciated the good course structure, the pleasant course contents with easily accessible materials on the Canvas platform, and that there was clear process during the course where they were allowed to grow individually before handing in their independent projects. They also highlighted how much they appreciated the frequency of the course meetings – with only one mandatory meeting before the final presentation (either the start- or mid-seminar) – as they could use the time more effectively to focus on their own independent projects.

Many students were satisfied with their supervisors. Some students, nonetheless, underlined their disappointment towards their supervisors. Some supervisors had been reported of responding very slowly (i.e. gave feedback the day before the deadline), while some others promised to give feedback within a certain amount of time but never managed to keep the promise. In addition, many students felt that it was the course leader who was very slow in giving a response (i.e. more than one month). All these incidents, unfortunately, still occurred regardless of the reminders the students had given after their initial contact.

When it comes to whether the course information was good enough and well-structured, the opinions were divided. Some students strongly agreed, while some others disagreed to a certain extent. The latter group mentioned that some information was not clear nor structured enough for them.

All students considered Zoom and Canvas to be user-friendly platforms that 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. Apart from these technologies, a few students had a bad experience with one of their classmates due to degrading feedback that was given.

A clear majority of the students felt that the social learning environment was inclusive and respected differences of opinion. However, a few students disagreed due to the same explanation from the questionnaire.

A few students experienced some difficulties in gaining access to some of the readings for their independent projects as these were not available in the library, neither in physical nor electronic versions. These students wished the library could provide more reading material within the field of Environmental Psychology.

Some students were longing for some information about, or at least encouragement for them to relate their independent projects to, sustainable development in this course, especially since the university has been doing lots of work regarding the topic.

During this semester, two students were selected for being recipients of a scholarship/grant so that they could do their fieldwork in the international context. One of these students won a grant, subsidised by the European Commission, to participate in an exchange program within the EU+ countries. Another one won the scholarship/grant from Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency / Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete) to conduct their fieldwork in a developing country. Both students highly appreciated such opportunities existed while taking the course. With the independent projects from these students, more international perspectives and collaborations were possible.

All students really enjoyed the flexible deadlines (i.e. possible dates to choose to present their independent projects) from the course leader as they claimed it helped with their mental health and better scheduling with their other activities (e.g. work schedule).

All students emphasized how much they valued the final seminar (i.e. thesis defence) on the 25th of May to be a hybrid one. This way, those who could attend the event physically had the possibility at their own risk (i.e. due to the ongoing pandemic situation), while at the same time, those who could not still had the option to participate digitally. These students also highly appreciated that the course leader allowed their close ones (e.g. family members) to join

in digitally and even briefly introduced each one to the class.

Nearly all of the students were disappointed that they did not get the course evaluation link nor any reminder from the course leader/admin to fill in the evaluation during the one-month period the link was accessible. It should be nothe few students who received the link proposed to have the course evaluation link available until the students have received the final grade. They reasoned that the final grade is also a part of the course and should be included in the evaluation.

There were many attitudes that were highly appreciated by the students, including that the course had a good frequency of the seminars, the constructive feedback received especially from the teaching staff, the user-friendly platforms, the flexible deadlines, the hybrid form of the final seminar, and a challenging but stimulating learning process throughout their independent projects.

Suggestions for improvements

Respond to students within a reasonable amount of time. Students should not wait too long (i.e. more than a month) to receive an answer and/or feedback from their supervisors and the course leader. An average of one week should be reasonable enough during regular working hours. If more than one week is needed, the supervisors and the course leader should inform the students so they know what to expect.

Simplify and revise the currently available instructions that have been used at least in the past year. While the content is similar if not the same, the instructions could be made more structured in a way where students could easily find the important information that they needed to complete the course. A simple to-do list could be created to help the students identify all the mandatory parts of the independent projects. The list should be presented during the course introduction (first day of the course) to help students familiarise themselves with what to expect for completing the course.

Offer advice on how to give constructive feedback before or at least during the start-seminar and not later in the mid-seminar. It would be more helpful for the students to learn how to not only give but also receive constructive feedback. If introduced early, students will have more individual time to digest every process and information they receive, while having the opportunity to practice these skills, such as during the optional group discussions. Clearer guidelines could be given by using the presentation from lecturer Ann Dolling, titled “To give and receive feedback”. This presentation was introduced during one of the optional courses within the international *Outdoor Environments for Health and Well-Being* (OHW) Master's programme, the MP0007 Nature-Based Interventions course.

Collaborate with the library to have the possibility of providing more reading material within the field of Environmental Psychology. The material can be considered by checking from previous OHW theses and listing the material that does not exist at the library. The electronic version of the readings should be prioritised if available, considering that many students do not have physical access to the library (e.g. due to residing outside of Sweden or far away from Alnarp).

Provide 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.

As soon as the evaluation link is available, remind students regularly (e.g. once in two weeks) to help respond to the course evaluation. The student representative had already reminded the students on at least 2 different occasions on her own initiative. However, most students did not even get the evaluation link to begin with. The link was supposed to be automatically sent out from the course as soon as it was available. There was no reminder sent from the course either. 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.

Ask the IT department to fix the course evaluation system. Apart from the aforementioned error in the system, it seems that there was another concerning problem. In the questionnaire, the system noticed that there was only a total of 4 students taking the course, while there should be a total of 11 students. One student completed their independent project on the 4th of February, three on the 1st of April, and seven on the 25th of May; therefore, the system should have recognised 11 students which should translate to a 9.09% response rate and not 25% for the questionnaire. One possible explanation could be that some of these students were registered in the older version of the course, EX0858 Independent project in Landscape Architecture. However, at least 8 of these 11 students confirmed that they were registered in the EX1000 course. It is within the students' rights to have the opportunity to voice the course evaluation anonymously.

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 their independent projects. Independent projects are part of the course and, 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 so that the course can be taken by more international students. The hybrid form of the final seminars, with the possibility where students' close ones can participate digitally, should be kept too.

Kei Nilsson
Student Representative for EX1000 Course
Spring semester of 2022

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