International rural development
LU0086, 20163.2324

15 Hp
Pace of study = 100%
Education cycle = Basic
Course leader = Margarita Cuadra Romano

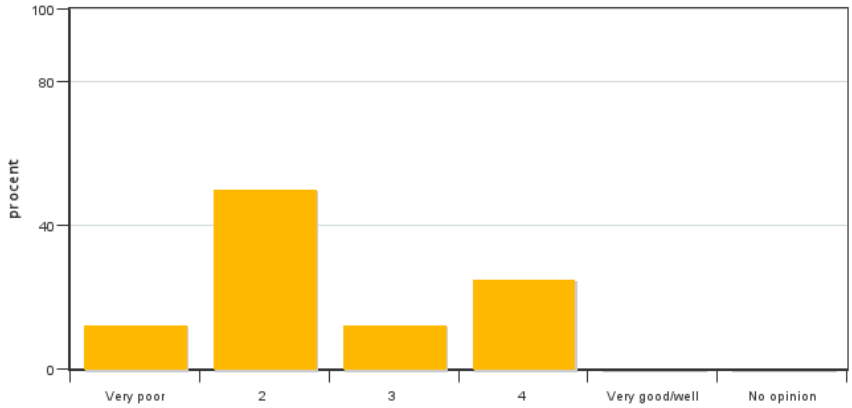
Evaluation report

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

Answers	8
Number of students	14
Answer frequency	57 %

Mandatory standard questions

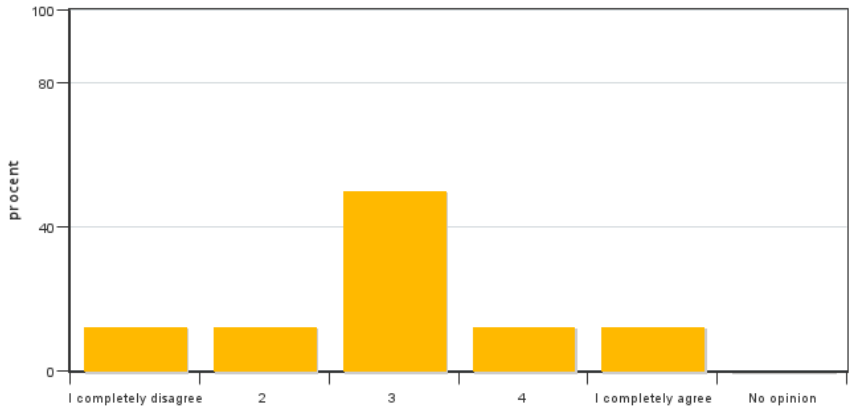
1. My overall impression of the course is:



Number of answers: 8
Average: 2,5
Median: 2

Very poor : 1
2: 4
3: 1
4: 2
Very good/well: 0
No opinion: 0

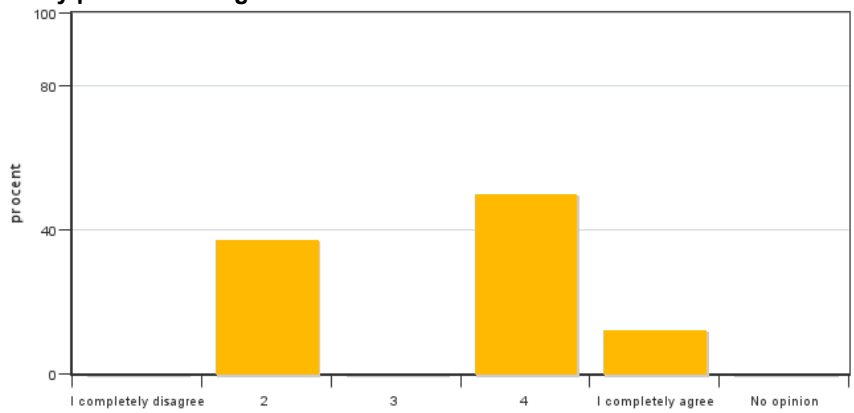
2. I found the course content to have clear links to the learning objectives of the course.



Number of answers: 8
Average: 3,0
Median: 3

I completely disagree: 1
2: 1
3: 4
4: 1
I completely agree: 1
No opinion: 0

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

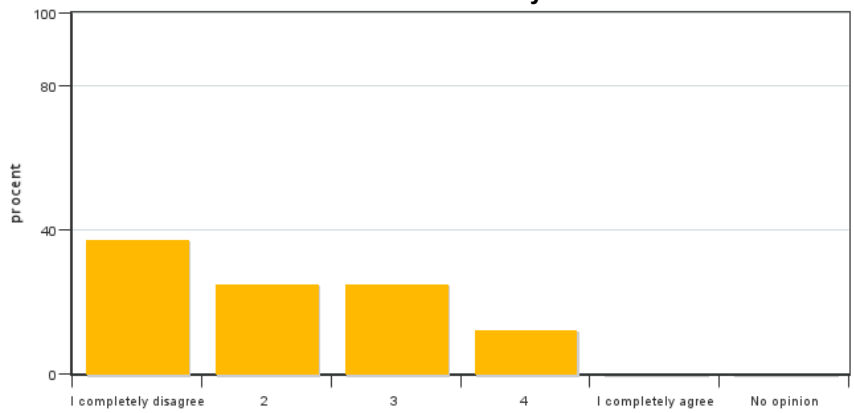


Number of answers: 8
Average: 3,4
Median: 4

I completely disagree: 0
2: 3
3: 0
4: 4
I completely agree: 1

No opinion: 0

4. The information about the course was easily accessible.

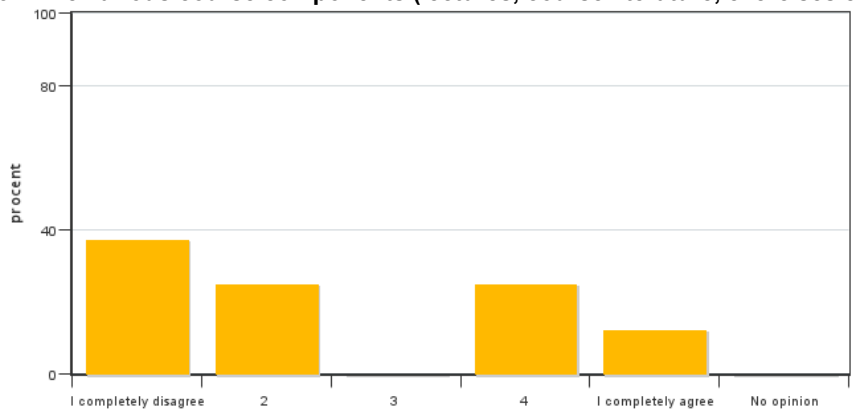


Number of answers: 8
Average: 2,1
Median: 2

I completely disagree: 3
2: 2
3: 2
4: 1
I completely agree: 0

No opinion: 0

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

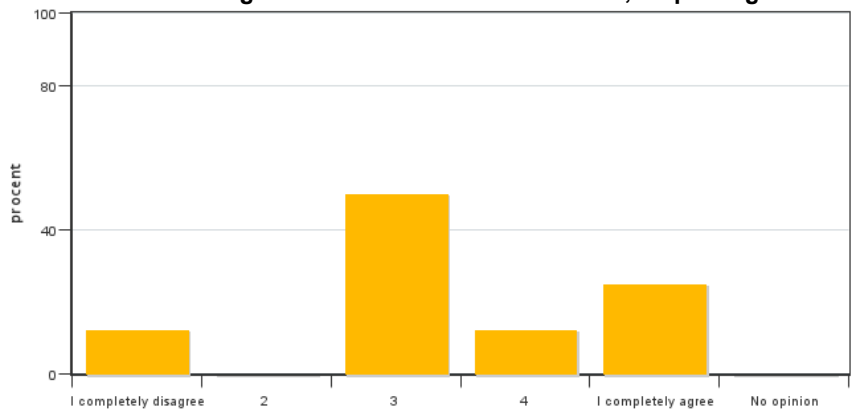


Number of answers: 8
Average: 2,5
Median: 2

I completely disagree: 3
2: 2
3: 0
4: 2
I completely agree: 1

No opinion: 0

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

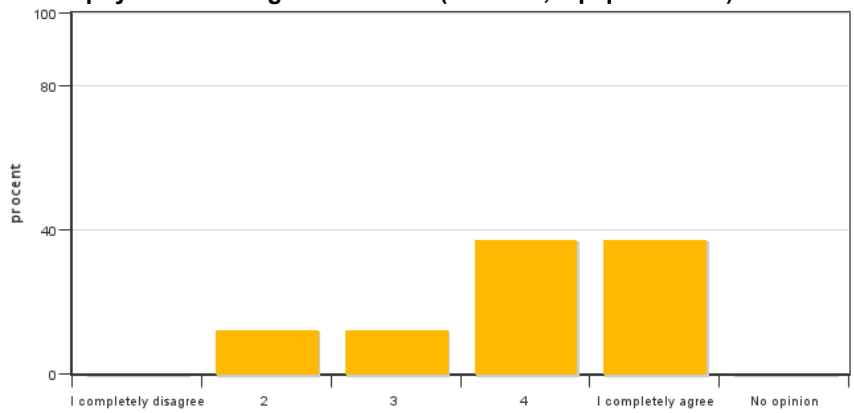


Number of answers: 8
Average: 3,4
Median: 3

I completely disagree: 1
2: 0
3: 4
4: 1
I completely agree: 2

No opinion: 0

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

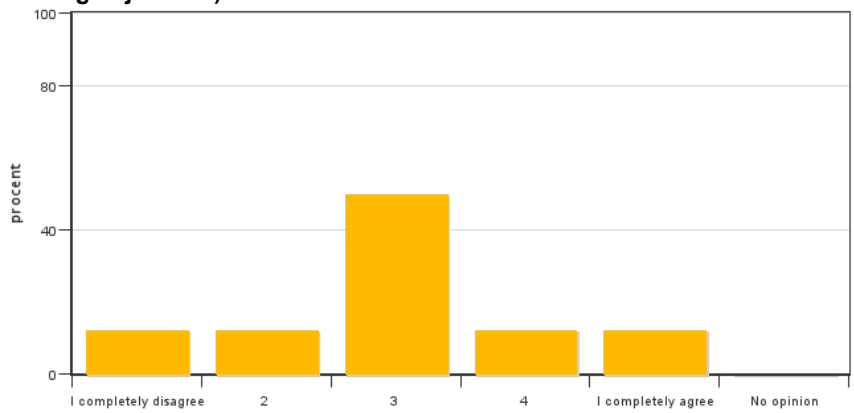


Number of answers: 8
Average: 4,0
Median: 4

I completely disagree: 0
2: 1
3: 1
4: 3
I completely agree: 3

No opinion: 0

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

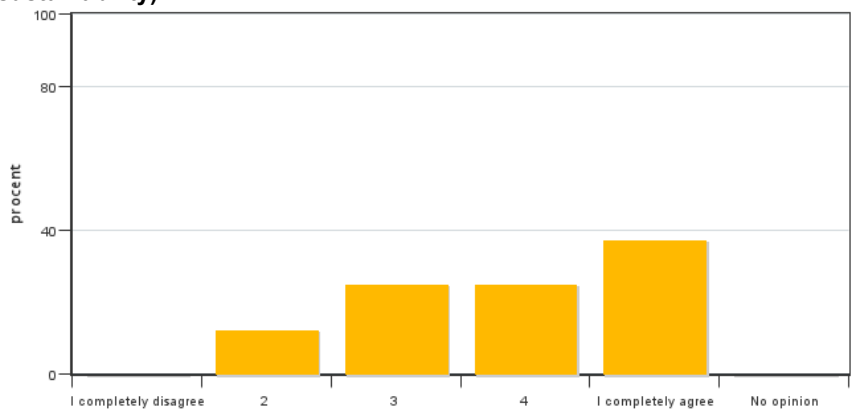


Number of answers: 8
Average: 3,0
Median: 3

I completely disagree: 1
2: 1
3: 4
4: 1
I completely agree: 1

No opinion: 0

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

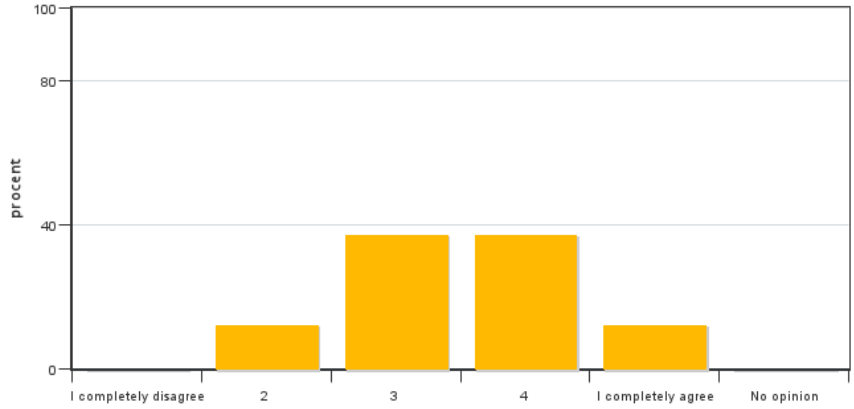


Number of answers: 8
Average: 3,9
Median: 4

I completely disagree: 0
2: 1
3: 2
4: 2
I completely agree: 3

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).

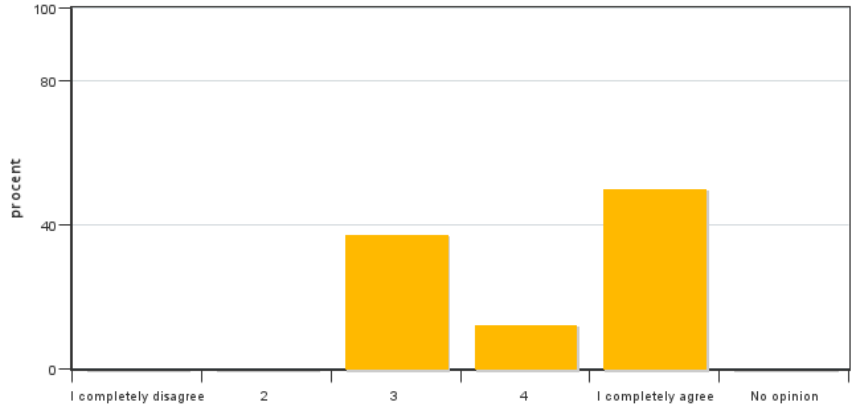


Number of answers: 8
Average: 3,5
Median: 3

I completely disagree: 0
2: 1
3: 3
4: 3
I completely agree: 1

No opinion: 0

11. The course covered international perspectives.

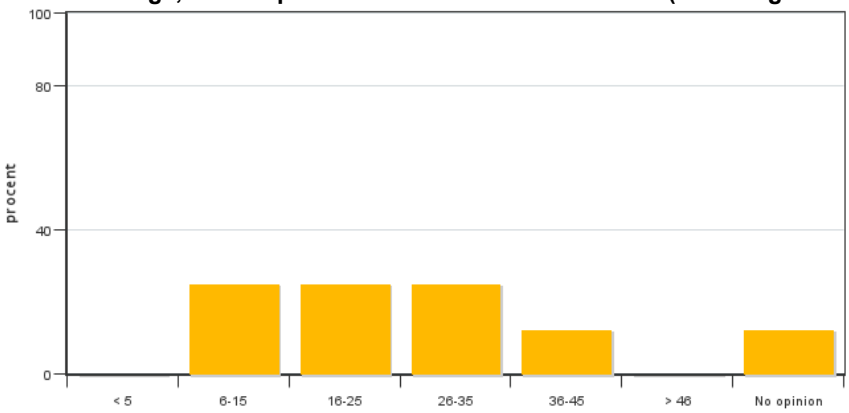


Number of answers: 8
Average: 4,1
Median: 4

I completely disagree: 0
2: 0
3: 3
4: 1
I completely agree: 4

No opinion: 0

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



Number of answers: 8
Average: 22,9
Median: 16-25

< 5: 0
6-15: 2
16-25: 2
26-35: 2
36-45: 1
> 46: 0

No opinion: 1

Course leaders comments

LU0086 – 2023 Course evaluation comments and reflections by the teachers

From our own teaching experience, we are aware that there is always room for improvement in any course; so we were prepared to receive constructive feedback to improve the course. Before the course end, we had an oral course evaluation with the students, and only two students showed up. We dedicated a lot of time to prepare the course and feel bad to get such a low score, and to the comments/complaints which to our knowledge are not based on what happened during the course.

From the comments, it is clear that some students were really confused with some course parts. To this, we would like to make it clear that both course leaders were available in person and/or via email during the whole course to answer questions or doubts regarding the different course activities. We explicitly asked in class: is everything clear? Very few students approached the teachers for specific questions or help. Early in the course, a student representative was appointed, and we expected that this would help us in the communication with the group and communication between students.

We think that two things contributed for students to get this negative perspective, one was the low number of students for this year (only 13); and the short time dedicated to the course by the students (22,9 hours/week on average). This included quite low attendance to the class activities. For example, one lecture by Dr Dil Khatri had no attendance, so they missed to hear about this topic. This issue was immediately communicated to the students and just one responded with apologies. Students were expecting a lot from the teachers, but they were not prepared to dedicate the corresponding time to the course and take responsibilities for their own learning.

As the students' comments/complaints were repeated across several questions, we have tried to summarize our answers to be clearer and avoid repetition.

Course structure

This is a 15 credits course running at full time speed, this requires that students dedicate that amount of time during the course. However, when we asked some students about why they were not present, they usually mentioned they were either working or taking other courses at the same time.

At the course introduction (first day), we explained the students the overall course structure (lectures, compulsory seminars, farm case work, home essay) and course learning goals.

On the lack of common thread, we will improve that by looking at the literature seminars' structure, so they help with connecting all the lectures together.

One of the students commented that “**I believe the course leaders have tested ideas that haven't really worked since it's their first year with the course”.** We don't understand where this comment comes from. Dil Khatri, the vice course leader is a successful researcher from SIAS, Nepal with a PhD in rural development from SLU, with teaching experience and with extensive experience in facilitation. Dil has been guest lecturer in the course and co-organized seminars previously. Margarita Cuadra, the course leader has a PhD in Crop Production Ecology and extensive experience of teaching at SLU at bachelor and master's level. Margarita was vice course leader of this course in 2022. Besides, the course was implemented following the course syllabus and in a similar structure as in the previous years.

Assessment requirements

The course grading criteria were given at the course start, they are included in the Course Guide document available on the main page of the course, so students know what was expected. We did not receive any question on this. Students were told from course start about what they needed to deliver in order to pass the course and also the grading criteria.

The home essay final instructions were given on Dec 4th, 2023, well in advance to the final delivery on Jan 14, 2024.

Literature seminars

Even if seminars were compulsory, not all students showed up to the literature seminars, and some of them had not read the required literature and maybe had not been to class either. The seminar coordinator/s were left with the task to explain the things taught in class. So, the seminars might have been less useful for those who were better prepared and took the lectures and literature seriously. As mentioned above, we will check the literature seminars and lecture's structure, so that we can improve them, and improve the communication with students on why we have the lectures, course literature and seminars. For those missing seminars, there were extra assignments that needed to be delivered.

There was a comment about international students not being interested or being unprepared. We think this comment is unfair as we cannot generalize on this.

There is a suggestion to have the same groups in the seminars. It should not be a problem to have different groups in the seminars, the intention was to allow students to discuss with different students, coming from different context. However, it was not possible in this course to have the same groups as students failed to attend the seminars.

Farm case work, report, group work

The group work sessions were included in the course schedule, which was published in the web page around 4 weeks before course start. Group work is also included in the course syllabus. All of this was informed to students during the introduction on the first day of the course. Taking part in group work is part of this course. As a learning, we take that group work sessions should be made a compulsory activity.

Knowing why you do something is of course important. There were general instructions (Instructions farm cases) that were given to students when the group work started. In that document, it is clear what the objective of the overall farm case work is, the different steps, the methodology, content of the group report (with sections), format of the oral presentation of the final report and opposition, etc. They had their farm cases (one for each group) and specific literature regarding some of the tools used for the work.

In the instructions for the farm case work it says: “The objective of this group work is to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes enabling you as a student to deal with complex situations in rural development in the Global South. This means that you should not only acquire theoretical knowledge about how a farm is structured and how it functions, but also gain experience with methodology and tools for describing, analysing, and improving a farming system”.

In addition, each one of the four sessions and steps of group work had specific instructions and its own objectives.

As a clarification, we didn't have mindmaps in the farm case work. The general instructions for the farm cases specifically include the structure of the group report being **References** the last section, see below:

“The main sections of the group report should be:

1. Introduction describing objectives and content of the report (1 page)
2. A description of the present situation, using your Rich Picture (3 pages max)
3. Identification of themes (3 pages max)
4. An overview of the desired future (ideal situation) for the farmer(s) (3 pages max)
5. Some initial ideas for action (Plan of action) (3 pages max)
6. Conclusions (1 page)
7. References”

It was clear that **References** should be included. This document is in Canvas (Files – Farm cases) and was also sent to students. This was available to students at the start of group work. We also said they could read more about the country, the area, economy, etc and include that literature in the farm case report.

One of the groups had a farm case from Nepal, which is very well known by Dr Dil Khatri. Quite early during the group work, the course leader suggested directly to the group to contact Dil for a more updated information about the

case (for example, what happened after the earthquakes). The course leader never said that it was expected, just that it would have been good to contact Dr Dil. Besides, this was only suggested to the group with the farm case from Nepal. Actually, that group improved their work a lot after the discussion and final presentation.

International perspectives - course focusing on Nepal

We included a few more lectures from Nepal, as we made use of some visiting guest lecturers with experience from that part of the world. Some other years, we might have had a dominance of lectures on Africa which we have tried to balance by including examples from other parts of the Global South, like Vietnam and Latin America. For next year, we plan to include other contexts, particularly Latin America. However, the course had a clear **international** approach and this should not be seen as negative just because it was mostly from Nepal this year. Those concepts/theories could be applied elsewhere.

Final examination

The home essay was one of the examinations within the course and we told them this from course start. To prepare the students for that, we gave them instructions in three steps: the first one was to find out a case, that was given on the first week of the course. The second part came a few weeks later, instructions to hand in an Essay plan which they delivered, and we gave individual comments to improve their writing. On Dec 4th, we gave them a third document with further instructions on the final essay. On Dec 11, they had a writing seminar to help them with their writing. They should deliver their final essay by Jan 14, 2024, so they had the final instructions for over a month.

it is always difficult to assess how much a student has learned. We will include a few shorter evaluations during the course.

Prior knowledge was sufficient to benefit from the course

We will check this, there were lectures that were not on case studies, and that presented students with general concepts/theories in rural development. Students also had the course literature and seminars to support their learning of theories. Most lectures had both theories/concepts and the case study part.

This is a bachelor's level course, an introduction to International Rural Development and the depth should be according to that. However, we will check this for the next year's course. For some students, the concepts were harder to follow because of their background, and we needed to be as simple as possible and for others they found it a bit basic. We will seek ways to find balance. Advanced students are always free to ask the course leaders or the specific lecturers for additional information and readings.

The information about the course was easily accessible:

There is always room for improvement, though we disagree that the Canvas page for the course was unstructured, as it actually followed the same structure of the previous years when more students were attending and they have not complained about any lack of structure or lack of information in Canvas. Also, if/when students were missing something the course leaders were always available to upload/send the information needed.

Rooms

We can check this for next year's course, we can suggest rooms, but we cannot decide which room we will get.

Internal comments

Student representatives comments

1. The overall impression of the course:

- I spent a lot of time being confused about what the assessment requirements were and Margarita refused to release the assignment details at the start of the course and released them in small segments so it was extremely difficult to do the work without knowing what the end result was supposed to be. This required us to have to go back and redo a lot of the work as when more instructions were released it sometimes contradicted things from the past

information we had.

- The course structure was confusing, the lectures were incomprehensible, the seminars were uneventful and unimportant whereas the actual important part of the course were not mandatory but you were still expected to show up. Most of the lectures also focused on Nepal, which is interesting, but I was expecting more parts of the world to be included in 'International' part of the course name.

- The course has felt a bit unstructured. We recieved information on the final examination really late in the course which meant that it was quite difficult to follow what parts of lectures and literature were important. In the course almost all lectures were by guest lecturers which provided a range of perspectives but it also meant that there wasn't really a common thread throughout the course. All in all this meant that the lectures didn't really feel particularly coherent.

- I believe the course leaders have tested ideas that haven't really worked since it's their first year with the course.

Medel: 2,5

2. The course content to have clear links to the learning objectives of the course:

- The course did touch on international rural development and communities, even though it was mostly in Nepal.

- There was a lot of different presentations but without us having a clear end goal until the end of the course it was really hard to see the common thread.

Medel: 3

3. **Prior knowledge was sufficient to benefit from the course:**

- I needed a lot of prior knowledge to get through this course.

- It would have been appreciated to be introduced to concepts and theories more deeply and not only through lecturers' case studies.

Medel: 3,4

4. **The information about the course was easily accessible:**

- Canvas was unstructured and it was not easy to find the information needed for the different assignments etc. During the last assignment the report was supposed to be based on the farm report, but after the final presentation Margarita let one group know that you were expected to reach out for more information to Dil. That was unclear and no group knew you were supposed to do that.

- The canvas-room should be better structured - it has been difficult to find information on it and sometimes instructions for seminars have been published in different sections of the canvas from week to week making it even more difficult to find information. There is a template for canvas-rooms that could be used to structure canvas in the future. The flow of information has also been quite slow. A lot of the time it has been quite unclear what the end goal is and what we were supposed to do for our examinations.

- The canvas site was hard to understand.

Medel: 2,1

5. **The various course components (lectures, course literature, exercises etc.) have supported the student's learning:**

- The lectures were sufficient however the information we were given for our assessments was confusing and hard to follow.

- The literature and lectures had basically the same information, neither of them gave depth to the course. The lectures did however give new perspectives that I haven't seen before.

- I would have gained way more knowledge if we talked more about theories more thoroughly and then had a few case studies to try these theories on instead of only tons of case studies. Also the seminars have been poorly structured and it has mostly been Dil talking and we listening. That is not a very welcoming enviroment for learning and trying my own thoughts. Also the fact that Margarita didn't want to tell us what to use the different pictures we created was for has in overall shut my brain down. I need some kind of background info for it to start working so this has just not worked for me.

- Lectures have overall been quite interesting to attend but given that we didn't recieve information about what the final examination was going to be until really late in the course it was very difficult to understand what parts of lectures were important. The same goes for course literature. Since we didn't know the ins and outs of the final examination until late december it was very difficult to understand what literature was important for the course.

- They were good but when we had our end assignment they felt spread out and many of them wouldn't fit for your assignments.

- The lectures and litterature was the best part about the course. With that said. Having 15 different guest lectures makes as you say in Swedish, the red rope disappear. I like the setup of the weeks having themes. But for this to work you need to have seminars on thursdays or fridays. Having seminars on mondays doesn't work becasue all the weeks flow into each other an the stucture that was there disappear. The home essay plan could have been useful if the comments given on it actually were helpful. Becasue writing "good work" or " you need more course litrature" when someone asks for suggestions on course litrature that would suit the essay. Last we have the group work which felt like a burden without a point. I can't say with confindence that I have learned anything from the group work in this course. Making it so you just have to "trust the process" doesn't work. I want to know why Im doing something. I want to know what the end result is going to be and what the learning objective is. Or else it just feels like a filler projekt without any real objective.

Medel: 2,5

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

- Here I have to talk about the seminars and how they didn't contribute to my learning. This had to do as stated before with the placement of the seminars being in the beginning of each week. But it also has a lot to do with a certain group of students in the course who didnt take either the seminars and the whole course serious. Which made the learnig enviorment extremely unstimulating. Had they been more present in the course then I think just that would have solved some of the problems.

- I really liked the course atmosphere.

Medel: 3,4

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

- The lectures were mostly held in the room O1, which is not the nicest room at SLU, but fully working.

- Nothing against this course in particular, just the chairs in Undervisningshuset, the ones with the read steal beams being extremly uncumfrtable and the red steal beam in the back hurts atleast in my back. So this is part of my campaign to get them replased.

Medel: 4

8. **The examination(s) provided opportunity to demonstrate what was learnt during the course (see the learning objectives):**

- The examinations don't encompass what we learnt during all the lectures and depending on what case you get or topic you choose for essay you focus on only small parts of the course rather than everything we learnt.

- It's always interesting with groupwork, but it should have been mandatory in the beginning. And also some group exercises so that we get to know each other a bit more since some were not very engaged and also hard to reach.

- The seminars have quite often felt unstructured and I haven't understood what their purpose in our learning has been. The international students have also usually been unprepared and really disinterested so the seminars has usually just been the swedish students doing most of the work. It was quite weird to have the seminars on mondays - the seminars could have been held at the end of the week, like thursday or friday instead.

- All the scheduled time for working on the farm case should just be made compulsory. Everyone was expected to attend these lectures anyways so it would make it a lot clearer for everyone if it was just compulsory.

- The farm case group work, both presentation and report felt like a middle school project. To be at a academic institution and not use any references when writing a report and "solving" a case. Instead just writing colorful mindmaps and using our imagination felt exactly like middle school.

Medel: 3

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

Medel: 3,9

10. **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):**

- It could become way more advanced. The lecture we had was less thorough then the ones we had in other courses.

Medel: 3,5

11. The course covered international perspectives:

- It was mostly Nepal.

- Could definitely fit in more perspectives of countries who aren't considered to be underdeveloped.

Medel 4,1

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

Medel: 22,9

Median: 16-25

- Hoping the course leaders can take this feedback and change things to make it better for the next people taking this course. I believe this course can be so much more than what the state of it is rigth now.

The main points of requested change:

- Follow the guide on how to structure the canvas room. Always publish assignments / seminarquestions at the same place and link them in the announcements.

- Put the seminars on thursdays or fridays instead of monday or tuesday. Structure the seminars differently. With clear groups, perhaps even the same groups every week? And discussions more than the students listening to Dil. He's saying valid things, but seminars are for the students to try their thinking and reasoning.

- Clearer instructions about the end goal should be delivered earlier in the course. This would help pointing the students curiosity towards what they find most interesting among the multiple case studies presented and also make it easier to do the assignments more thoroughly (group project) If there is an understanding how they will be used.

- The group work should be mandatory, at least in the beginning.

- Clearer theories and concepts to be presented that later can be used to understand the cases, connecting to better communication between lecturers and course leaders. For exampel Fischer thought we had already talked about the SLA Approach with Dil and therefore didn't go deep into it. But we hadn't and it was the only lecture we had about that approach. A lot of the lectures were also based on Ellen Ostrom but we didn't read about her work a single time, she was just mentioned in the same way over and over. This could deepen the course if we had gone deeper into these (or other) systems of thinking.