

Course Summary for NGEK01, Physical Geography and Ecosystem Analysis: Bachelor's Degree Project, 15 credits vt 2019

Course coordinator: Jonas Ardö

Teachers in the course: Jonas Ardö, Ladaea Rylander (Studieverkstaden) Charlotte Webb (Studieverkstaden), Britta Smångs (Geobiblioteket)

Supervisors: Andreas Persson, Dan Metcalfe, Fredrik Lagergren, Harry Lankreijer, Helena Borgqvist, Hongxiao Jin, Janne Rinne, Marko Scholze, Martin Berggren, Thomas Holst, Vaughan Phillips

Number of students: 12 registered students.

Grade distribution: 5 students received VG and 5 G, two presentations are postponed.

Evaluation

I. Summary of the course evaluation

Number of survey responses: 8 (out of 12), of which is 67 % of the students

In general, the students were very satisfied (overall score of 4.1, on a scale 1-5). The students were particularly satisfied with lectures given and ENDNOTE training. Not all are happy with the supervisors. See below.

II. Comments from the teaching team

One supervisor and one evaluator (the same person) did not show up during the presentations and did not inform the course responsible of his absence. Things like this are not respectful and make us look bad in front of the students.

Just one remark: a couple of years ago we decided that students should have a moment of data analysis in the bachelor thesis and not only a literature study. This has worked out well the last years and increased to my opinion the level of presented work. But it also increased the risk that the thesis has 'open ends': incomplete in several aspects concerning data analysis and/or literature references. The student gets easily overwhelmed of too many points to keep track, not the least in a correct assessment of uncertainty (thus statistics). In other words: time is limited to only 8 weeks. We as supervisors have to take care more carefully that the research question is feasible to answer in the time set and should plan the supervision accordingly.

About the evaluation: I think would still be good to have a short meeting to discuss the grading. I think the best would be if each evaluator does give grades first independently and then then discuss the grades. Obviously no need to discuss much if the individual grades agree but if there is a large difference between the grades of the two evaluators for certain criteria than I think it would be worth it to discuss this difference rather than just averaging.

Om examinatorernas jobb: jag tycker att det är bra om båda möjligheterna finns. Ibland kan man behöva diskutera sin uppfattning om bedömning. I andra fall kan man vilja stå för sin uppfattning utan att behöva synka med någon.

III. Evaluation of changes implemented since the last time the course was given

A supervisor instruction has been developed to ensure that the supervisors know what to do, see

http://web.nateko.lu.se/Courses/NGEK01/2018/NGEK01_Teacher_instruction.pdf

IV. Suggestions for changes to implement before the course is given the next time

Supervisors need some common guidelines to improve performance and increase their motivation according to the following quotes from the course evaluation:

“The supervisor-student relationship needs a serious reworking. Most supervisors are too busy to pay any attention to the students. Additionally, there needs to be some consensus amongst the supervisors with regards to proper citation, formatting, and general syntax as too many students were given conflicting accounts from different supervisors”

“The way that the supervisors are chosen is a bit unfair since it is kind of a first come first serve. Since there is a deadline to present your idea there should not be any advantage to whoever presents it much earlier than the deadline (as long as something is done by the deadline it should not present any disadvantage). I think it would be better to collect all of the ideas and then present them all together to all the supervisors”.

“The supervisors should be required to meet with the student a set number of hours, for example, or have more structured duties so they don't feel as free to do nothing.”

“Suffice to say, I'm deeply disappointed in the treatment of the students in the course by the supervisors.”

“The supervisors are in general very busy. My supervisor was very helpful but hardly ever actually have the time to read the material I sent”.

Suggestion 1

In order to improve this, I suggest that instead of allocating supervisors the normal way we let supervisors volunteer to supervise as this may increase motivation. We can ask for volunteer supervisors in due time during the autumn, giving them enough time to develop suitable suggestions for thesis topics. If the number of volunteer supervisors is less than the number of students, allocate supervisors in the regular way and let the course responsible have a say in this allocation.

Suggestion 2

We change the grading process to include discussion among evaluators when needed and only ONE grading sheet per student is to be submitted to the course coordinator. It is up to the evaluators to ensure that the final submitted grading represent the opinion of both evaluators.

Suggestion 3

We should develop a way to ensure better correspondence between supervisor guidelines and evaluator grading to avoid confusion for the students.

It is yet unclear how this should look but a set of specific criteria could perhaps be specified for *introduction, aim, hypothesis, methods, results, discussion, conclusion, language, illustrations, references etc.* To be further discussed and decided among teachers before the next time the course is given.

2019-06-18, this summary was done by Jonas Ardö

The summary should be mailed to the director of studies, ulrik.martensson@nateko.lu.se, Yvonne.Kedstrom@fysik.lu.se, for archiving, and published on the course homepage.