

Course analysis GeoN06, autumn 2020

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GeoN06 is a master's level course open to students from geology, archaeology, geography, biology and related subjects. The course is built around a project work running through the course and a series of lectures by different teachers, with different specializations within paleoecology and related methodologies.

Five of the six students on the course answered the course evaluation online, where they were asked to score different course elements on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). The scores are shown below. In addition, the students could write free text comments.

Over-all scores for total impression of the course are high, three to five on the five-grade scale. The lectures, excursions, seminars get scores of four to five, while the course literature and exercises get points from three to five, and the project work three to four.

The scores, while overall still good, are slightly lower than previous years (2019 shown in figure 2 for comparison). This is likely related to the transition to distance based teaching, which took place rather abruptly during the course. The excursion was possible to carry out, but in a reduced version. Some practical elements were carried out on site at the beginning of the semester, but computer exercises and the final part of the project work were entirely distance based, and suffered, partly because restrictions were put in place at short notice, so not all elements were ideally planned for distance based teaching.

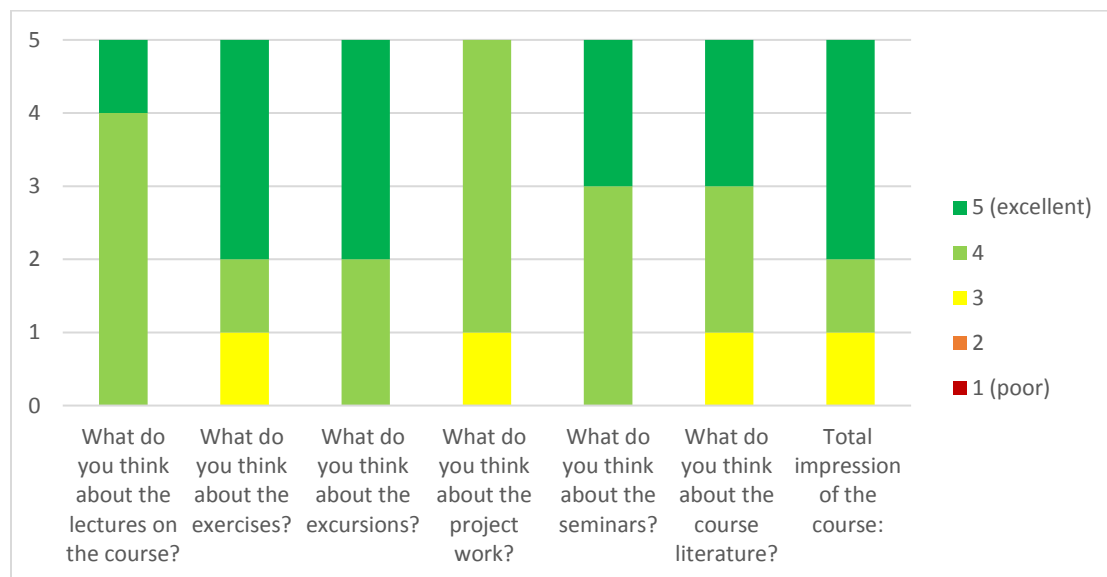


Fig 1: Point scores for the questions on course elements and overall impression.

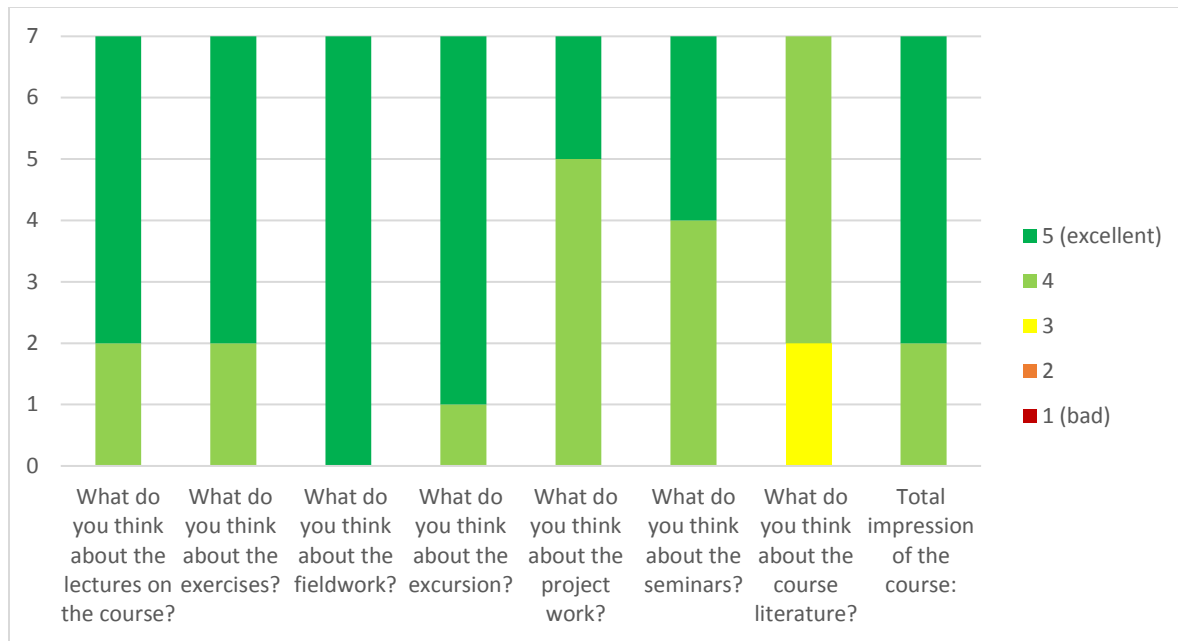


Fig 2: Point scores for the questions on course elements and overall impression from 2019.

As well as the scores, the difficulty experienced with online teaching in especially the computer exercises and the group work are also reflected in some of the free text comments. The literature seminars however worked as well online as they usually do in the classroom. The seminars are a good way to introduce scientific articles on subjects across the course content, as well as to practice presentation skills.

The point scores, as well as the open text comments reflect that the students are generally still happy with the content and overall structure of the course, which we will therefore maintain next year.

In addition to the above questions, the students were asked to score the level of the course (compared to previous knowledge) and the workload as low, appropriate or high. The results are shown below:



Fig. 3: Scores for workload and level of the course.

Regarding the workload, most students found it appropriate, and one thought it could have been higher. The deadlines for the group work and individual reports were deliberately spread more this year compared to the past, which seems to work better for the students and make the workload more balanced.

As for the level of the course, especially considering the diverse backgrounds of the students on this course, the balance seems to be quite good.

A new lecture was introduced about diatoms this year. This proved popular, although some students commented that there was perhaps a little too much detail in the lecture.

The subjects of cosmogenic radionuclides and radiocarbon dating have in the past proved to be somewhat difficult for some students. Therefore, a Q&A session has been introduced to clarify difficult concepts. This seems to have helped, judging from comments (only one student commented that this is a difficult subject).

The usual three-day excursion to Småland was adjusted this year to two one-day excursions due to the pandemic. The excursion still works well and is popular, but it would be good with a bit more active participation by the students in the field, which was difficult due to the shorter time available. Next year, we will try having the students prepare short presentations for some of the areas visited. And hopefully we can go back to the longer, overnight form.

In conclusion, we will keep the course outline for HT 2021 much like it was this year, but hopefully all teaching can be on site, and if not we will at least be better prepared for the online elements.