

Course analysis GeoN06, autumn 2023

Course leader: Anne Birgitte Nielsen

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.

A course evaluation questionnaire was handed out in paper form on the last day of the course. All 10 students on the course have responded to the course evaluation questionnaire, most have replied to all questions, two students skipped one question each.

Over-all scores for total impression of the course are high, four to five on the five-grade scale (Figure 1). The lectures, exercises, field work, excursion and project work get scores of three to five. The course literature also gets scores of three to five, but with a somewhat lower average. The literature seminars score 2-5. The most popular part of the course seems to be the fieldwork at Kalvs Mosse.

The average scores are slightly lower than last year, when they were unusually high (shown in Figure 2 for comparison) and this year has a higher spread. This might reflect the higher number of participants in the course this year compared to 2022. However, unlike 2022 and previous years, the students this year had a more similar background, all coming from Geology (either the Quaternary or biogeology tracks), and not from physical geography or archaeology. As previously, the students did represent a mix of nationalities.

Especially for the seminars, scores are lower than last year. The higher number of students meant that every student gave one group and one individual presentation, which gave less opportunity for individual feedback in between the two presentations. Constructive feedback on the seminars should be implemented next year regardless of student numbers, so the learning from the presentations can be maximised.

The point scores, as well as the open text comments reflect that the students are generally still very 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 in Figure 3.

All students found the workload appropriate. The deadlines for the group work and individual reports have been deliberately spread more compared to the past, which seems to work better for the students and make the workload more balanced. Some of the free text comments showed that some students would prefer to have the exam earlier in the course. This would however require finishing both the group and individual report after Christmas break, which would mean a very short deadline for the report. Other students seem to appreciate the longer deadline, and the chance to plan when they do the individual work. But maybe some more advise on the need to plan for the report writing could be included in the course introduction. In previous years, some students have indicated that the workload on the course is too low. It might have helped this year that the teachers placed some more emphasis on the importance of also reading the course literature during the course.

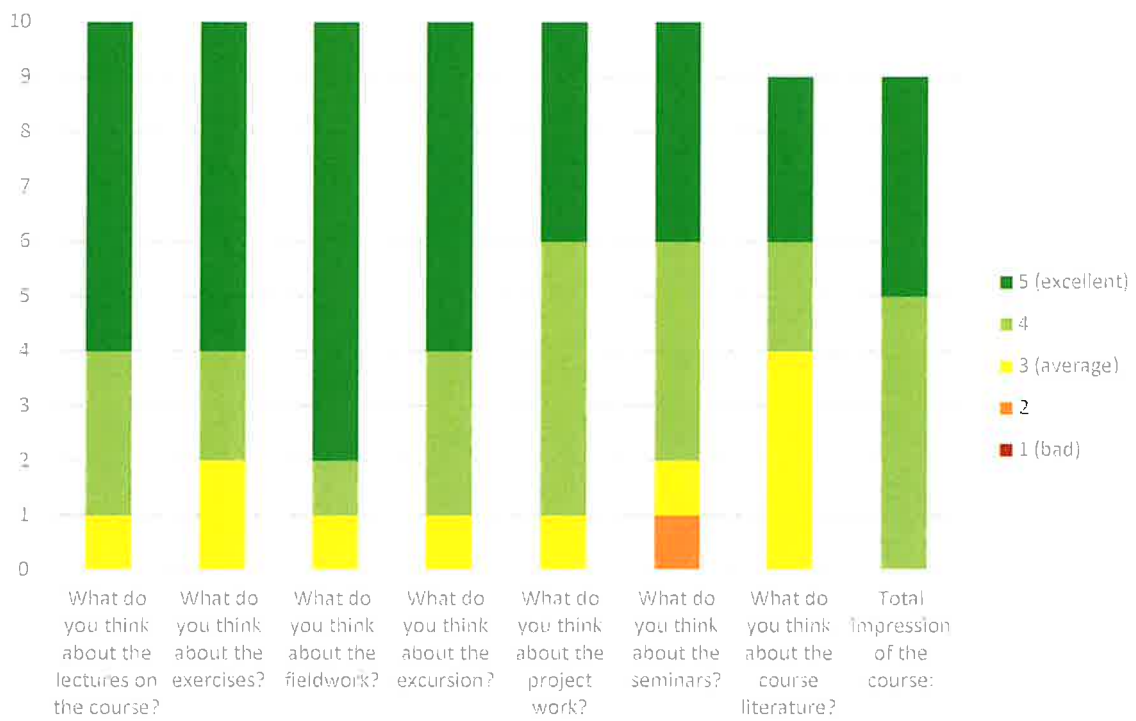


Figure 1: Point scores from the course evaluation questionnaire

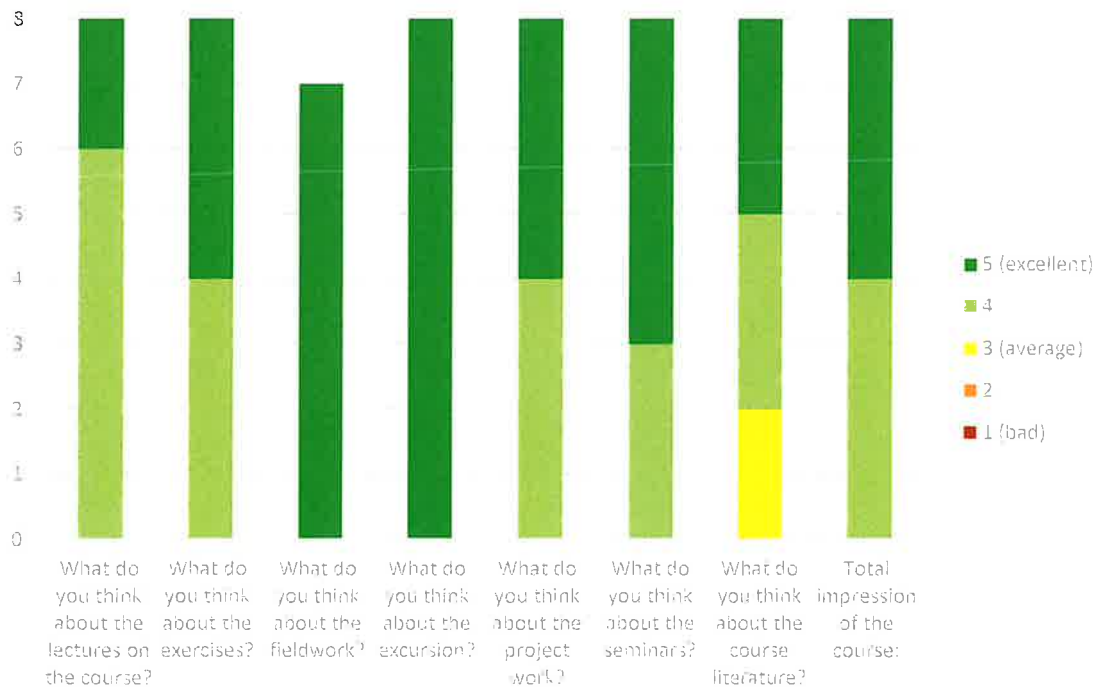


Figure 2: Points scores from the HT 2022 course evaluation for comparison.

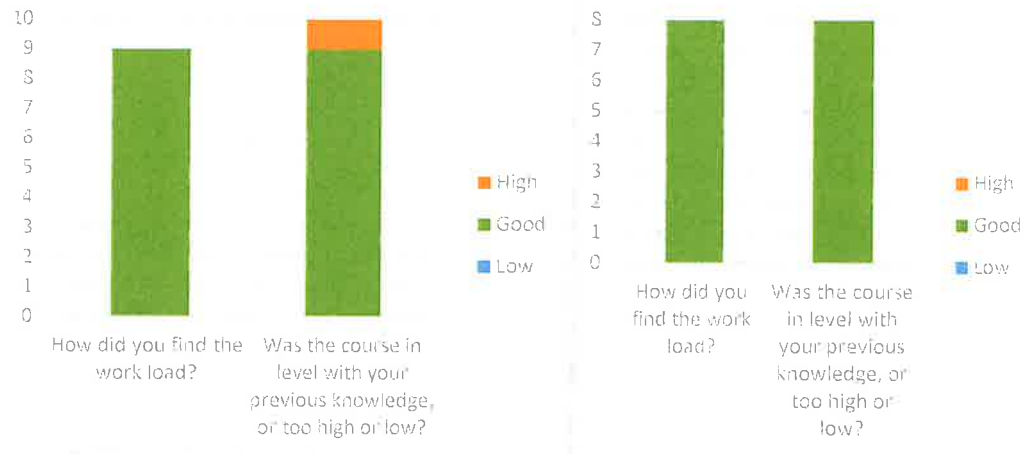


Figure 3: Scores for workload, previous knowledge from HT 2023 (left) and HT 2022 (right)

As for the level of the course, one student found that it was high, the rest found it appropriate. One potential worry with the course is that the content might overlap too much with previous courses in the geology programme, as a result of making it possible for students of other backgrounds to be able to follow. However, judging from the scores and comments, this does not seem to have been the case this year.

Some useful ideas can be gained from the students' free text comments in the surveys. For example, several students did not see the palaeomagnetism as important, because there were no questions on this topic in the exam. This is maybe something we should consider changing. There were also comments that the excursion was long and could maybe be condensed to two days. Some years ago, it was a two-day excursion, but considering the rather long driving time, combined with the short hours of daylight, this made it difficult to have enough time in the field. Also, other students commented very positively on the excursion. However, the length and number of stops can always be taken into consideration.

Overall, the free text comments, like the point scores, were mostly very positive. In conclusion, we will keep the course outline for HT 2023 much the same as it was this year.

Lund, 2023.02.07

Anne Birgitte Nielsen, course coordinator

Valérie Raas, student course representative