Course evaluation GEOM11 2019

Introduction

This course evaluation is based on the responses, comments and suggestions made by the students in a course valuation performed the day after arrival from Tenerife (2020-01-16). Additional comments were given in a round table discussion format. During that discussion notes were taken by one of the students.

Student course valuation summary
In general the students think that there is a good balance between lectures, exercises and presentation material (lecture notes etc.). The course is well structured and the content is relevant for the course goals.

Suggestions for improvements are more exercises on radiometric dating and tracing of geological processes through radiogenic isotopes. Exercises between crystallisation processes, phase diagrams and petrography were appreciated. The students were very pleased with teachers’ engagement throughout the course. The extensive introduction and no. of exercises and assignments quickly resulted in a nice “group atmosphere” that enhanced learning through communication between students.

The students are well pleased with the course literature (Winter), although we should bear in mind that it does not cover all parts of the course. Some pointed out that the lectures really helped understanding the course book. Additional material such as videos, links and other resources on Canvas were positive. There was a general opinion that the instructions for the Gran Final could be more detailed.

The students are generally pleased with the teaching methods for the course. One suggestion for improvement is to go through exercises and home assignments. Video lectures are also appreciated. Some also express that thermodynamics might need a little more time. New for this year was multiple choice questions accessible from Canvas that provided self-tests on the content of lectures. This was much appreciated and should be expanded comprising all the lectures.

- The highlight of the course was the fieldtrip to Tenerife, and the students pointed out that many aspects of the course came together during the trip, which was very illustrative for a number of processes. The students would have liked us to remind them that they should read the field guide before the stops, as well as our expectations on their performance during the field trip. Instructions on what stops we plan to do should be specified in advance, and it would be a help to have the field guide printed already during the “Grand Final”. The evening meetings should remain but they wanted them to start a bit later. Some “landslide stops” the last day can be skipped. The newly introduced lava tunnel locality on Tenerife was greatly appreciated and should be kept.
All students that responded the course valuation felt that the course met their expectations and that they are satisfied with their learning outcomes. All students found the course very demanding, but thought this was positive considering the learning outcome and also acceptable since this highlighted already in the course introduction.

The students experienced no harassment during the course.

The main suggestions for improving the course are:
- Clearer instructions for some of the exercises.
- Maybe more group discussions, preferably with lecturer present.
- Upload (video) solutions to home assignments or separate sessions were the lecturers’ go through the answers.
- Continue to develop more flipped classroom style lectures + exercises.
- Expand self-tests with multiple choice questions (accessible from Canvas) comprising all the lectures.

Reflection and summary
The decision, based on the evaluation from 2018, i.e. to separate the written exam from the Gran Final fell out successfully. We experienced through this structural change students were more engaged and focused during the field excursion. Also completing the main assignment “the Gran Final” before the exam and the excursion we found improved the learning outcomes. We thus intend to retain having the written exam relatively early in the course, followed by the Gran Final work that the leads up to a concluding fieldtrip. By this order of activities, students are better prepared for the fieldtrip (through their tasks in the Gran Final), and they need not to worry about the exam, as it should be past them.

The suggestion to produce more video material and more exercises is encouraging and we are positive to this, but note that this will inflict on the time available so this must be balanced. We will also continue to consider more “flipped classroom” style lectures as we think it would enable more integration between exercises and lectures. However, it would also require more preparatory work from the students. This setup would also enable us to provide more quantitative feedback quicker to the students. Single best answer multiple-choice self tests might provide an additional way to assess progress during the course and should be expanded to comprise all lectures. These self-tests can be organised to mimic written exams in both context and form, thereby providing the student with a direct and quantifiable assessment of their progress.

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