

Course analysis GeoN06, autumn 2019

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.

All seven students on the course answered the course evaluation, where they were asked to score different course elements on a scale from 1 (bad) 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, four and five on the five-grade scale. The lectures, exercises, excursions, seminars and project work also get scores of four to five, the fieldwork only scores 5 (excellent). The course literature scores slightly lower, with points from three to four.

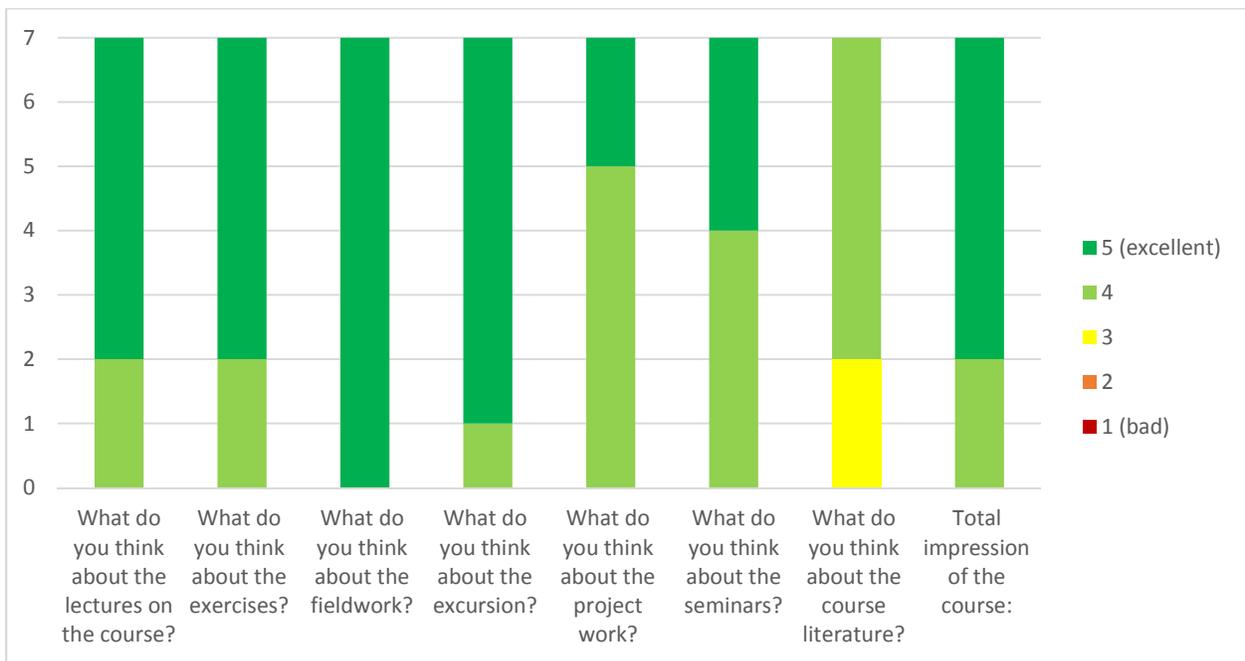


Fig 1: Point scores for the questions on course elements and overall impression.

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

The slightly lower score for the course literature may reflect that the textbooks are not specifically tailored to the course, but covers a larger breath of palaeoecological topics, while some specific areas are not described in the same depth as in the course lectures. Finding a

perfect textbook for the course is difficult, therefore we also supplement with scientific papers that are also discussed in the seminars.

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. 2: Scores for workload and level of the course.

Regarding the workload, all students found it appropriate. The deadlines for the group work and individual reports were deliberately spread more this year compared to the past, which seemed to work better for the students and make the workload more balanced.

As for the level of the course, one found it high compared to their previous knowledge, one too low and the rest good. Considering the diverse backgrounds of the students on this course, it is difficult to match everyone's previous knowledge perfectly, but (also bearing in mind the overall satisfaction with the course) the balance seems to be quite good.

One student expressed a wish for more time spend on lectures and exercises, and less on the the project work. The groups generally finished the project work a bit faster this year than in the past, perhaps because of the smaller size of the class, and therefore relatively more teacher time. There is certainly room for a few more lecture hours (which could include lectures from Ph.D. students in the field of palaeoecology if available, for example an introduction to Diatoms). It should also be possible to increase the time for looking at pollen reference material, as a few students expressed a wish for.

The seminars are a good way to introduce scientific articles on subjects across the course content, as well as to practice presentation skills. Last year, students remarked that they would like more feedback on the presentations, which was therefore implemented next year. Perhaps this contributed to the higher score for the seminars compared to last year.

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 was introduced this year to clarify difficult concepts. This seems to have helped, judging from comments as well as the exam results.

However, students expressed both on the forms and during the last course event that it would also have been good to have a Q&A session close to the exam. We will implement that next year.

The three-day excursion to Småland was adjusted this year, with one less stop on the first day and a new stop at an iron age grave field the second day. The excursion works well and is popular, but it would be good with a bit more active participation by the students in the field. One student suggested making presentations for the areas visited. This is something we will try next year, at least for some of the sites.

In conclusion, we will keep the course outline for HT 2020 much like it was this year, and improve on details where we can.

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Read and approved by the student's course representative:

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