Semester evaluation Autumn 2012

Development and International Relations (DIR)
European Studies (ES)
Specializations (CAS and LAS)

Course work and project work

This evaluation is based on the electronic questionnaires conducted by the School of Culture and Global Studies. Students from the DIR and the ES programs also consist of two specializations, i.e. Chinese Area Studies and Latin American Studies. Questionnaires cover questions regarding the course blocs for the two masters programs, the two specializations, as well as the non-ECTS course lectures.

The general collective feedback from the questionnaires is fairly positive despite a few individual or specific criticisms. The student representatives from the Study Board also expressed a similar view on behalf of the whole student group. The limitation of the assessment lies in the fact that the number of students participating in the questionnaires is rather low: only 37% of 123 students for DIR, and 43% of 42 students for ES.

General assessment
Regarding the course series for DIR, ES, CAS, LAS, one specific comment is that the percentage of questionnaires to answer questions regarding some specific course assessment is low and also various with some course series having more answers than others. Comparing with the previous semester, the general picture and situation of the assessment is improving steadily.

Course assessment
The overall assessment on the entire course work is fairly positive because the students find the subjects taught in the course series very interesting and engaging. The majority of the questionnaires views that the level of the course series and the reading materials are suitable and balanced. But some comments also show rooms for improvement at various points.

However, there is still one general problem, that is the “objectives and requirements of the courses” regarding some courses (fx. Political Change and Development Theory, and IR course, and external role of the EU) are NOT very clear to many students, and the data show that there is comparatively high percentage of students who thinks that the objectives of the courses need to be further clarified. And there are many debates and feedbacks in the comments that need to be discussed among the course teachers.

Some critques from the students are directed at the course of “regional integration” in which the focus is too much centered on Europe and EU experiences. The study board chairman and the coordinators agreed to address this issue by extending “regional” integration lectures to other parts of the world.
**Specialization – Chinese area studies and Latin America Studies**

The most positive assessment is on the Chinese area specialization and fairly positive on the Latin American specialization. The overwhelmingly positive assessment covers all aspects of the assessment, i.e. literature, tasks, learning, objective, level, ....). This is to say that, as to the quality of the teaching, virtually no student expresses any dissatisfaction at the courses of “Chinese Area Studies”. There are some different opinions on some aspects of the Latin America Studies course.

**Other teaching activities (both for DIR and ES)**

Most questionnaires also find the Aalborg model of Problem-Based Learning and the “method/methodology” course, albeit not an ECTS-based course, is seen as a necessary input to the study programs. Some students wish to have more guest teachers from foreign universities and public civil servants to do some guest lectures,

**Project work assessment**

Student attitude toward group project is varied and mixed with satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and some project groups got “divorced”. Historically speaking, this is not an abnormal situation. But the teaching staffs need to make further effort on training student to work effectively on project work.

There is a clear need to inform students the relationship between study activities in the semester. Some students want to have a non-EU approach to different views. And other students wish to have the group-formation earlier than it was planned and want to see the group-formation process more purposefully. Although the majority of the students assesses the group project work positively, there is a certain percentage of students thinks it otherwise. This situation is similar to the supervision process as well. Most students are satisfied with the working relations between supervisors and students, and with the professional assistances received from the supervisors. And, most students feel that their problem-learning and –managing capacities are further increased and AAU’s PBL model has played a positive role raising their skills and capabilities.

For the 9th semester (internship or study abroad), only one or two students answer the poll, so there is not so much to say.

Administratively speaking, some students still find it hard to manage Moodle system including information flowing, different forms, registrations, classroom changes, and etc.

**Lessons: areas that have been improved or that need to be further improved**

One of the most serious problems in the autumn semester of 2012 is the examination situation. Due to the health problem of some staff members, the marking process was much delayed, which raised a strong criticism from the students. Some students are not satisfied by the forms of the examinations (3-hour sit-in exam, and 48-hour exam).

One recurrent remark has been that the objectives and requirements of courses should have been adequately communicated at the beginning of the term. The board of studies both the previous and the current one have begun to address this problem by revising the syllabus and making content and aims of
each course much more explicit in the Moodle System. Another previous critique was that the literature for the lectures was often uploaded rather late. Now, the Study Board has implemented a specific deadline for all teachers to upload their recommended reading materials 10 days ahead of the new semester (Aug. 20 for the Autumn Semester and Jan. 20 for the Spring Semester). Also previously, some critiques pointed out the fact that in some course series the cohesion between the lectures given by different teachers was insufficiently explained. This problem has been addressed by making one teacher “course coordinator” for one specific course series, and the coordinator of this course will coordinate the coherence of the lectures.

Despite of some criticism (including individual complaints) from the students regarding examination and course issues, the general positive assessment is also due to another learned lesson, that is, a quick approach to any problem taking place either in teaching and supervision. Constant dialogues between the SN chairman and the coordinators, and between the coordinators and the teachers have been undergoing in order to build mutual understanding. The SN meetings have been able to work with School and make quick and effective decisions, while the chairman and the coordinators are able to maintain certain principles and implement what has been agreed.