Term evaluation Spring 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. About 40 students participated in the evaluation, and the percentage in relation to the total number of students is low. Questionnaires cover questions regarding the course blocs for the two masters programs, the two specializations, the simulation game as well as the non-ECTS course lectures.

General assessment
The general collective feedback from the questionnaires is rather 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 20% of 179 students for DIR, and 27% of 44 students for ES. The percentage is even lower concerning some specific questions, for example, for the DIR program some questions have 30 participants/answers, while others have 20 participants/answers; for the ES program, some have 12, while others have only 4. The lowest participation is the non-ECTS courses, such as African-EU, and the language courses.

Course 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.

The overall assessment on the course work is fairly positive because the students find the subjects taught in the course series very interesting and engaging, and they feel that the learning objective and learning process have been achieved. The majority of the questionnaires views that the level of the course series and the reading materials are suitable and balanced. But some questionnaires also show rooms for improvement at various points.

Most course series by the ES program, for example, EU Law, EU Institutions and Policies are assessed to be positive (9 participants)

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 expressed dissatisfaction at the courses of “Chinese Area Studies”.

Other teaching activities (both for DIR and ES)
Most questionnaires also find the Aalborg model of Problem-Based Learning and the Simulation Game inspiring (although tough for some of the international students and others who are not used to it before). There is also a separate assessment on the Simulation Game activity, where most students find it useful and valuable.

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 we need to make further effort on training student to work effectively on project work.

The project assessment is more directly related to individual supervisors. In most cases, students are satisfied with the working relations between the supervisors and students, and with the professional assistances received from the supervisors. However, in some particular cases, some individual students/groups are very unsatisfied with the unfairly “limited” number of supervision meetings. In other words, one or two supervisors were too busy with their external research activities to concentrate on their student project works. This situation needs to be taken care of more seriously in the new semester.

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

One recurrent remark has been that the aims and contents 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.

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.