Semester Evaluation Spring 2014

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 the questions regarding the course blocs for the two masters programs, the two specializations, as well as the non-ECTS course lectures. The collected evaluation data were also sent to the coordinators of DIR, ES and the specializations.

For this semester, both the DIR and ES number of feedback is comparatively lower than that of the previous semesters. Regarding the course evaluation, 82 DIR respond (49%), 22 ES respond (45%). Regarding the project supervision and semester assessment, DIR respond (33% of the total), ES respond (23% of the total).

General assessment
The general collective feedback from the questionnaires is fairly positive despite a few individual or specific criticisms. Comparing with the previous semesters, the general picture and situation of our studies, seen from the assessment, is improving steadily. The overall assessment is seen as positive because almost all answers fall into the middle two categories: “agree” or “neither agree nor disagree”, with small percentages referring to either “totally agree” or “totally disagree”.

One particular attention
However, one particular attention that the Study Board needs to pay is the gap of the assessment between courses. The IPE course, the LAS and CAS specialization receive a clear overwhelmingly positive assessment from the student. On the contrary, the course “Globalization and Challenges to Development Process in Third World” has received a dramatic majority of negative assessment. Some students use very harsh words of criticism. The two heads of the School and the Department have helped to deal with the issue very proactively.

The number of working hours per week that students spend on studying is not very satisfactory. More than half of the responds acknowledge that they only work for 20-30 hours per week (38%), and only about 33% work between 30-40 or more hours per week.

Course assessment
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 answers to the questionnaires also show rooms for improvement at various points. Still, there is a percentage of students claiming that “course objective” of some courses is not communicated clearly.

Therefore, there is one general problem – a recurrent one - that is the “objectives and requirements of the courses” regarding some courses is still seen as NOT being communicated clearly in the views of some responds, 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 of the evaluation that need to be discussed among the course teachers.

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 few responds expressed dissatisfaction against these two courses. About 10% of the response occupies “disagree” on the different questions.

Other teaching activities (both for DIR and ES)
The Simulation Game is assessed very positively. And most students find it useful and valuable.

Project work assessment
Student attitude toward group project used to be varied and mixed with satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The overall picture is quite positive and most students are satisfied with the supervision process. There is also quite a number of “no meaning” respond – neither agree or disagree.

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.

Semester and education program evaluation
Based on the evaluation result, the overall picture of the spring semester 2014 is fairly positive. The group formation process and group-working assessment by students themselves are more positive than those in the previous year. Comparing with the previous year, the number of individual project has fallen dramatically.

What is important is that the majority of the students agree upon the statement that they have benefited concretely from the PBL-model of education.

However, students are satisfied by the fact that they have been informed substantially regarding the various study activities and their interconnections, but they are divided on the issue of receiving practical information (forms, rules and regulations, etc.) including the criticism on moodle. Most students are satisfied with the physical conditions and facilities of teaching environment, but there is also a relatively high percentage of student (37%) who are not satisfied, which needs our attention.
Lessons: the areas that have been improved or that need to be further improved

Learning from some complaints from the students with regard to the 48-hour examinations in terms of unclear formulation of the examination questions and the inconvenient submission timing (9.00 am to 9.00 am). The SN has made the necessary follow-up amendments to this semester’s written examinations: submission from 10.00 am to 10.00 am, and examination questions will be read by more colleagues for avoiding misunderstanding. More clear examination guidelines are being formulated.

Most importantly, the Study Board has revised the DIR program syllabus and added a new course on “emerging powers and emerging markets” aiming to follow the global development process and the transformation of international political economy. This new course will start in the spring of 2015. Another revision of the syllabus is to divide political and economic theories into two separate courses.

Now, the School has implemented a specific deadline for all teachers to upload their recommended reading materials 10 days ahead of the new semester (Aug. 15 for the Autumn Semester and Jan. 15 for the Spring Semester).

Despite of some criticisms (including individual complaints) from the students regarding examination and course issues, the general positive assessment is also due to the improvement derived from another learned lesson, that is, a quick reaction to any problem that is related to teaching and supervision. Constant dialogues between the head of the department, the head of the school, the SN chairman and the coordinators, and between the coordinators and the students/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.

The two program coordinators are holding one “Dialogue with the coordinator” meeting for each semester.