Semester Evaluation Spring 2015

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

(GRS - Global Refugee Studies will make its own summary of evaluation)

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, the DIR respond percentage is 52 while the ES percentage is 50. Regarding the other three evaluations – semester evaluation, project supervision evaluation and education evaluation, the respond percentage is only 37 (out of 153 possible respondents).

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 focus of criticism
One of the most serious criticisms was directed towards the course of Project Management. Many students use very harsh and negative words of criticism. The two heads of the School and the Department were informed of this situation. The DIR coordinator is to convey the situation to the course responsible person.

One particular acknowledgement
The course – theories of social sciences and methodologies – has received a large percentage of positive assessment. This indicates the fact that students begin to see the values of this course in relations to their project writing, especially to their thesis writing.

Another noticeable improvement is the course of International Political Economy. There is an overwhelming increase of positive assessment on this course comparing with the previous years.
Students spending fewer hours on studies!
The number of working hours per week that students spend on their studies is not very satisfactory. More than half of the respondents acknowledge that they only work for 20-30 hours per week (30%), and only about 30% work between 30-40 or more hours per week, and even about 25% of students spend 10-20 hours on their studies.

General 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. But for some course, the percentage of this criticism is declining. For example, in the ES course “EU Politics and European Political Economics”, and “EU institutions”, 43% and 50% of the respondents answer “more or less”, instead of “yes” to the question of understanding the objective of the course. Although the answer is not negative, it shows that further effort needs to be made to improve the situation.

The newly added course “Globalization, Rising Powers and Emerging Markets” seems to achieve its success. The overall assessment of this course is very good. Off course, the individual comments from the students show rooms for further improvement.

Specialization – Chinese area studies, Latin America Studies, and Global Gender Studies
The Chinese area specialization has again enjoyed the most positive assessment throughout the different questions regarding literature, tasks, learning, objective, level. The Latin American specialization is also fairly positive, except some points where students are divided over the level and extent of the course. The Global Gender Studies also enjoys a rather positive assessment especially with regard to the level, objective and extent of this course.

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

Semester and education program evaluation
Based on the evaluation result, the overall picture of the spring semester 2015 is fairly positive. The group formation process and group-working assessment by students themselves are much more positive than those in the previous years. There are still different attitudes towards individual vis-à-vis group project work

Most of the respondents are very satisfied with this semester. Many students claim that they have learned a lot. There are also some minor critical comments on the forms of examination in this semester (pass-fail, or on the basis of participation percentage). 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.
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 students (37%) who are not satisfied, which needs our attention.

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

Based on the assessment, it shows that the Study Board has made the correct decision to revise the DIR program syllabus and added a new course on “emerging powers and emerging markets” in order follow the global development process and the transformation of international political economy. This new course has clearly achieved its initial success according to this assessment.

One of the remaining challenges is how to increase the percentage of “good understanding” on the objectives, the contents and the extent of the courses.

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, which is absolutely indispensable for keeping constant exchanges with the students.