Course Report AS7005 HT16

Respondents: 1
Answer Count: 1
Answer Frequency: 100.00 %

. Teacher

Teacher

Claes-Ingvar Björnsson

. Number of students who took the exam

Number of students who took the exam

12

. Number of students who passed the course

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11

. Description of changes since the previous time the course was given.

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This was the 6th time the course was given. It is a basic course so not much has changed through the years; for example, the same course literature has been used. The changes that has been done are of two kinds: (1) Continuous updates of the aspects that are directly related to the research front. (2) The scope of the course has been narrowed down a bit in an attempt to focus on the most important issues; i.e., more of the less central parts have been left to the student.

. What are the course's strong points according to the students (summary based on the numerical results as well as their free text answers)

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In general the course got favourable comments like "interesting", "useful", "well structured", "gave a physical understanding" etc.

. What are the course's weak points according to the students (summary based on the numerical results as well as their free text answers)

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There are three aspects that stand out: (1) The book is not regarded to be pedagogical and its notation is not consistent. (2) The aims of the course are not as clear as they could be. (3) The exam contained problems that were not like those dealt with in the lectures or in the problem solving sessions.

. The teacher's analysis of the course

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I see a few problems with teaching this course: (1) The back-ground knowledge of the students vary a lot. (2) The course covers a broad range of topics. Although the various topics actually are rather closely related it is sometimes hard to see this if ones back-ground is rather limited. This may be one reason for some of the student to perceive the aims of the course as rather diffuse. (3) It is clear that several students are used to just reproduce things said in the lectures/course book or find the right formula for solving a problem. The exam contains a few "understanding" questions; i.e., they concern physical situations not dealt with directly in the lectures but where all the necessary physics has been discussed in the lectures. It is not always easy to convince students that such questions are fair, although I emphasize in the begin of the course that questions like this will turn up not only in the problem solving sessions but also on the exam.

. Conclusions as well as suggestions for improvements

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On the whole, I think the course is well perceived by the students. Much of their concern stems from the course book, which is a standard reference in astrophysics, i.e., a cook book for researchers. The transition from "school-books" to more research related books/journals has to come at some point. Personally, I think the master level is an appropriate time for this. Naturally, this is an issue that can and should be discussed.