

Course report, Marine Microbial Ecology, autumn semester 2020

1. Description of any changes since the last time the course was given

RF: This is the first time the course was offered, so this does not apply.

2. Positive things about the course according to students (summary based on both quantitative data from evaluation and the students' text answers)

RF: Students ranked the guest talks, various didactic and assessment methods (lectures, guest talks, reading, exams, quizzes, student symposium), and course content as positive aspects of the course.

3. Things about the course that could be improved according to students (summary based on both quantitative data from evaluation and the students' text answers)

RF: Students criticized the course organization and required reading as areas for improvement. More specifically, some students failed to see the connection between the topics covered and felt that the required reading was too time consuming. Communication was criticized in particular as it related to the schedule and course reading; students wanted more guidance and clarification on how to read the scientific literature. One suggestion was less reading and more lectures. Some requested the final exam before the Christmas Break, others have requested more time for preparing an essay. Guest talks were also criticized as too much and not related to the course content. Finally, some students felt unprepared for the essay-based exams.

4. Teachers' analysis of the course

RF: In general, the course online worked well, it was challenging for the planned laboratory practicals and some had to be cancelled and/or modified to a point that it was difficult to relay the practical information in an informative way. The guest talks were an added bonus, and a good platform for discussion which can be improved in the future course offerings (see #5). Assigned reading was not as beneficial as anticipated, and was less independent than expected. For example, students required more guidance on what they need to read and

understand, and expected lectures to review the reading, while assigned reading was intended as background for the lectures.

SLG: I think the course worked well. The planned course was aligned between the expected learning outcomes, the exams and the lectures. It seems that maybe loading the content a bit less would be beneficial.

Based on the students comments we have decided to give the course an improved organization by adding:

- 1 workshop about plagiarism in the beginning of the course*
- 1 workshop about how to read scientific literature in the beginning of the course*
- Include information about the structure of the course in the introductory lecture. Introductory lecture will also include information about the evaluation criteria.*
- Include a 1 day per week learning activity in which students will work in the accommodation of knowledge and the drawing of mental maps. In these learning activities we will also have discussions and build knowledge together.*
- Practicals will be limited to 1 time per week. If pandemic allows one of these practicals will be a day to visit research facilities in the area*
- Guest lectures seminar will be limited to one guest per week*

5. Conclusions and suggestions for changes (if any)

RF: Assigned reading could be encouraged more if it was assigned and used in weekly/bi-weekly discussions, where small and/or large group discussions can be organized to talk and review the main points. Moreover, a bit of effort on the time-management in the course structure and communicate to the students that the assigned reading is given at the first of the term so they can plan accordingly

RF: Plagiarism was encountered in the first exam, indicating that a plagiarism workshop should be included in the first week to inform students earlier on in the course.

RF: Workshops, labs and tutorials should be reviewed in content, and modified for in some cases more alignment with the learning goals.

Several students criticized the lack of preparation for an essay-type exam. However, there were at least 4-5 opportunities of assigned writing and return of feedback (by peer and/or teachers) during the course. These were assigned for the purpose of assessing the learning

content and also as an opportunity for the students to practice and train in communicating science. Perhaps this needs to be explicitly stated in the assignment: "this will be a training exercise in writing science for exams".

Guest talks-can be reduced in number and used for discussion.