

3-year subject evaluation

Subject: BIO332 Introduction to Phylogenetic Methods

Semester and year for completed subject evaluation: fall 2023

Name of subject manager(s): Dimitar Dimitrov

Describe and justify pedagogical choices in the subject, reflect on the student's learning as a result of these choices.

The teaching consists of a mixture of lectures and practical exercises and the examination is in the form of a home exam assignment. For the exam students must use the skills that they have learned during the course and show that they understand the theory behind them by interpreting the results that they obtain. Exam should be handed in as a written report.

The topic covered by the course is often entirely new to the students and therefore there are no prior knowledge requirements. However, because the course is offered for both master and PhD students, there is often a wide range in students' prior knowledge and practical skills. Therefore, it is important to provide good support to students that have less prior knowledge in order to keep them on track during the course. At the same time, it is important to engage students and keep all of them interested and contributing themselves. The examination is as a take-home exam, and this combined with the heterogeneous student population requires more flexibility allowing for the implementation of slightly different requirements for PhD students following the UiB rules. Therefore, a great effort is made to ensure that students understand well the topic and familiar with the methods, both in terms of theory and practice. During the practical sessions each student is followed up to ensure that everyone is able to complete all exercises and learns how to perform the tasks autonomously.

Follow-up of previous evaluations.

There are usually between well above 20 students registered on the course each year. Because the course is also included in the ForBio research school curriculum, a number of these students come from other institutions in Norway and abroad. To make sure that non UiB students can also provide feedback ForBio also sends students questionnaires each year. Unfortunately, the response rate to the student evaluations is low, but those who respond are largely satisfied and believe that the teaching has increased their knowledge of the subject and gained new skills. Unfortunately, there have been a couple of cases over the years where students struggle with some exercises due to lack of computational experience.

Student evaluation and other evaluations that are relevant to the subject.

In general feedback is positive but usually few students answer and sometimes the feedback is very contrasting. The students often request more explicit descriptions of exercises, and I am continuously working on improving this according to the feedback. Often students require more breaks and find the course very intensive. Because the course is also offered to non UiB students it is compressed in one intensive week where students are required to dedicate a lot of hours every day. But efforts are made to provide sufficient breaks and alternate theory and practical exercises to avoid overload and fatigue.

Experiences from others who contribute to the teaching of the subject, both students and staff.

There are two co-lecturers, and both are very positive and happy to continue their contribution to the course. The students also highly appreciate the involvement of other teachers and the additional opportunities to talk to researchers working on relevant topics.

Pass percentage on the subject.

There have been no students who have failed the course in the past three years.

Any peer review.

Not applicable

Assessment of conformity between the course's learning outcome description and teaching, learning and assessment methods.

There is a good match between the specified learning outcomes and the content of the course.

Assessment of whether progress and planning for the subject is in accordance with the set objectives for the subject and programme.

Progress is considered adequate.

In those cases where practice or work relevance is associated with the subject, it must be evaluated whether the scheme works satisfactorily.

Not applicable