

Course Evaluation BMED330 Cell communication and intracellular signaling, spring 2011

Background

Spring 2011 was the first time that the master course was given. It replaced a number of individual courses that has dealt with different aspects of cell signaling.

Building on the concept of covering some central themes in eukaryotic cell signaling a course plan was assembled with the theme to cover signaling from the cell outside to the cell inside (i.e plasma membrane to nucleus). The themes selected also capitalized on the local expertise at Department of Biomedicine with lecturers doing active research on areas including cAMP signaling, steroid hormone receptor-related research, neuronal signaling, extracellular matrix and integrins.

Evaluation of teaching

Teaching was in lecture form were different themes of cell signaling were covered. A challenge was to inform all the teachers about the concept of the course, but this seems to have worked well.

Pensum

Pensum focused on lecturers and wherever possible corresponding parts in a the book in Molecular Biology of the Cell. Some areas are not covered extensively in the book and therefore the lectures served as the major information source. Several students did not attend the lectures on a regular basis.

Exam: Written format in the form of essay questions. Exam was give in English.

Grades: were centered around C, a few B's but no A .

One plausible reason for low grade average is to be found in all students not attending lectures.

Since this was the first time the course was given, no earlier exams were available to students to see the extent of detail required; this is another source for low grade average,

26 students had registered to the course. At the fist exam 25 completed the exam, of which 20% obtained an F. At the re-exam 4/5 obtained passing grade.

Teaching facility was in seminar room at Haukeland hospital. The room was on the small side for this size student group,

An electronic course evaluation was available on internet and worked well. 60% filled out the electronic questionnaire.

To summarize the comments from the electronic course evaluation:

Course content: majority found that material was average to difficult

Pedagogical level :majority found that it t was average to high

Amount of work: majority found it average to too much

The course evaluation also revealed that individual teachers had used the lecture time to inform about their research. This has been pointed out that it is not allowed during these lectures.

Individual teachers were criticized for not being organized, these lecturers will be contacted and course organizer will follow this up.

Several students complained about lack of summarizing lectures. Due to factors beyond control of course organizer (sudden maternity leave) , two summarizing lectures aimed at giving an overview was not given as planned.

The format of "question time" before exam was criticized. The time set aside for asking questions did not work optimally since students had delivered few questions beforehand and few teachers showed up. This is an important element that needs some other format in later courses.

During spring 2012 Donald Gullberg is on sabbatical and some of these measures will have to be taken by the deputy course organizer.

Summarizing statement

Overall the course worked well, but for future courses it will be important to continually "synchronize" the lecturers and make the concept of the course clear.

Future improvements

It might be worthwhile to consider literature seminars where students are handed out central review articles related to lectures to read and summarize.

San Francisco 2011-09-21

Donald Gullberg, course organizer