

Course evaluation BIO 250 Palaeoecology, autumn 2018

About the course

Bio 250 is a 10-credit course giving the students general knowledge and skills in common methods and proxies used in palaeoecological studies. They should be able to design a relevant palaeoecological study after completing the course.

In 2018 18 students registered for the course and all handed in their take home exam.

Learning outcomes, course content and outline

- Students should be able to define 'Palaeoecology'
- They should appreciate the breadth and diversity of the subject
- They should know how to carry out a palaeoecological study
- They should know how to identify lake-sediment components and their environmental significance
- They should be able to identify different proxies (i.e pollen, charcoal, plant macrofossils, chironomids) and interpret results from the analysis
- They should be able to synthesise their knowledge to make cross-connections between different proxy data and studies
- They should be able to interpret raw palaeoecological data
- Be able to present their own data in a small research assignment
- They should be able to apply palaeoecological knowledge to present and future environmental situations, including conservation and the climate debate

Course design

The course includes different activities – a compulsory three day field course followed by laboratory work in groups. After the lab work has finished, the groups presented their main findings as a poster to the other students.

Teaching is based on lectures given by a variety of lecturers depending on the topic. Not all lectures are lecture only, but also discussions, computer sessions, and student presentations of small assignments. In 2018 the course included the course responsible, Anne Bjune, and four other lecturers. Florian Muthreich assisted during the field course. A normal week had three lectures or contact points – Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

The course syllabus is based on papers, lectures, and discussions taking place in the lectures.

Evaluation

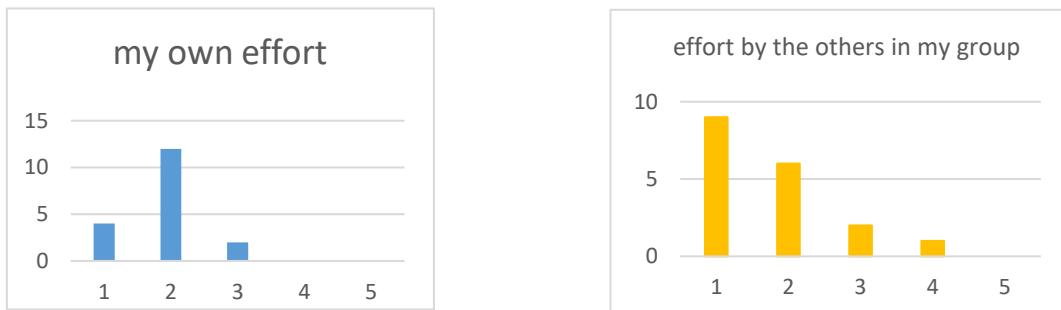
The field course, the following lab work, poster presentation and presentation of a paper is compulsory parts of the course. No grades are given for this. The take home exam is graded A-F.

Evaluation of this year's course

As previous years, the fieldwork and the following laboratory work went well. The groups worked fine and used a lot of time for setting their research question and to make a strategy for their project. Following the evaluation from earlier years we had more time for preparations this year, and also more time for lab work. We also tried to give the students some more background knowledge before the field and lab work started, but this is also part of the learning in the course – starting with almost

no background knowledge and learn how to set up and perform a project. The students liked the field activities; it created a good student atmosphere and got the students to work on relevant palaeoecological topics. The group work went fine, it seemed like the work was divided equally among the group members. After the group work was finished a small informal (anonymous) questionnaire asking about their own vs group effort was sent out and summarized like this;

Your own effort vs the effort from the others in the group? (1=high, 3=medium, 5=low)



The poster presentations and the individual student presentation (of a paper they selected themselves) went fine. They all showed that they had acquired a good understanding of the topics covered by the course.

During many lectures, the students had to prepare for discussion. This went better this year than previous years, but still more can be done to improve this.

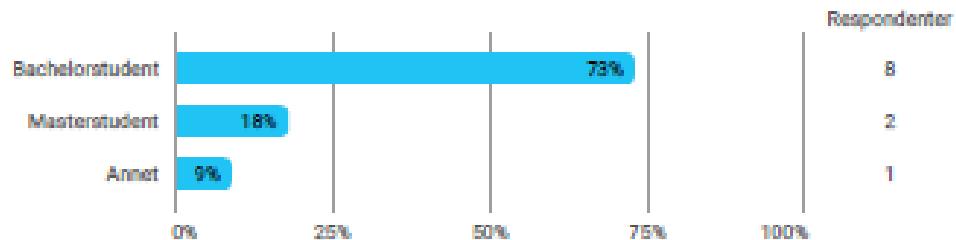
Reflections

The focus change from details to a more general understanding of the topic palaeoecology seems to work fine. One idea is that next years field and lab work should build on this years work by using the data acquired in the field and in the lab. During the field course in 2018 new samples were taken for pollen analysis, these will be prepared during spring 2019 and will be used in the coming course. Samples were also sent for AMS dating which will give us a new data set to work on for the next course.

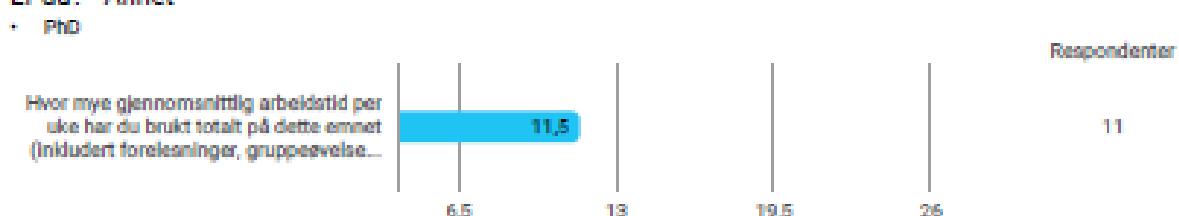
We will try to work further on aligning the lectures and discussions led by different teachers so that we avoid overlap of themes and loss of important topics. This is also mentioned by the student evaluation. One way to overcome this is to use the same data set(s) in our lectures, in the practical work and in the discussions. We will also discuss how to make a better flow of topics, lectures, discussions, and practicals and how to make this all end up in a take home exam summarizing the course.

Comments to the student evaluation(s) – the students seems in general to be happy with the course, especially the practical part. It is mentioned that there could have been more practical work and less overlap between lecturers. More introduction to R is asked for by the students.

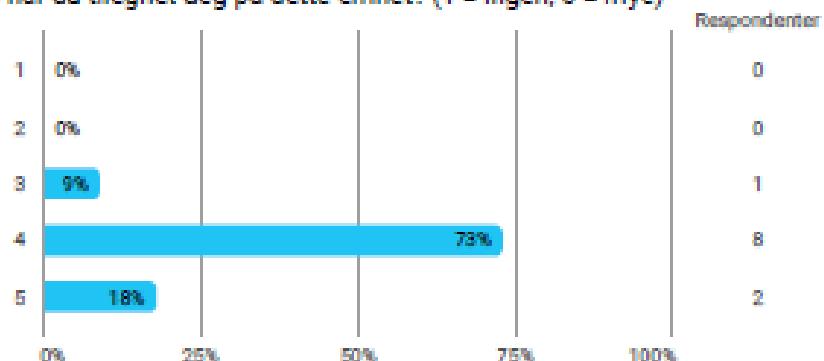
Er du?



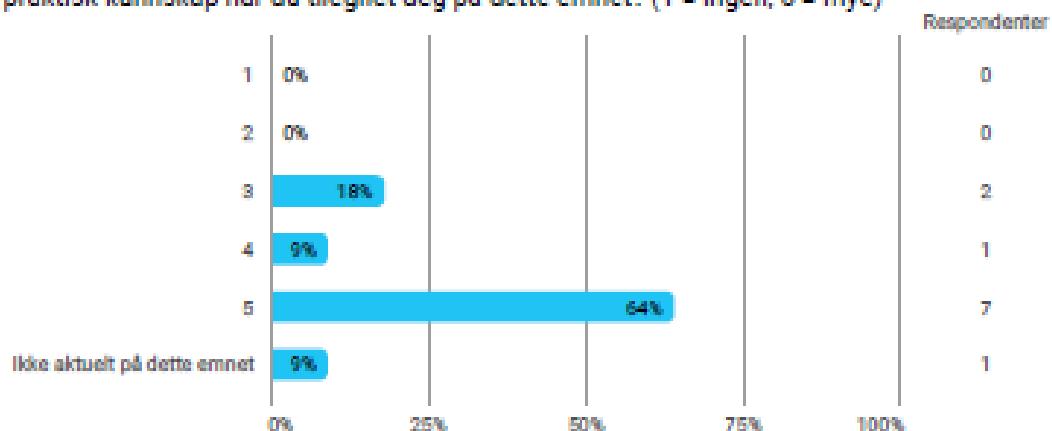
Er du? - Annet

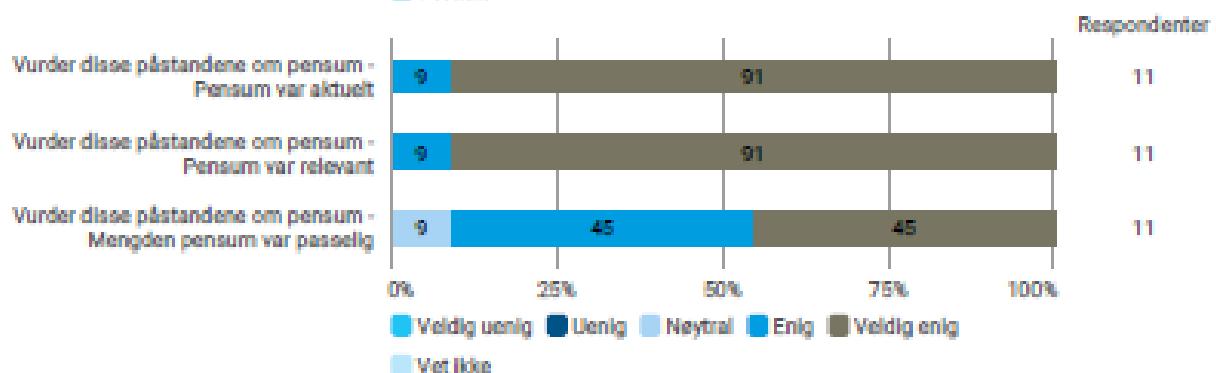
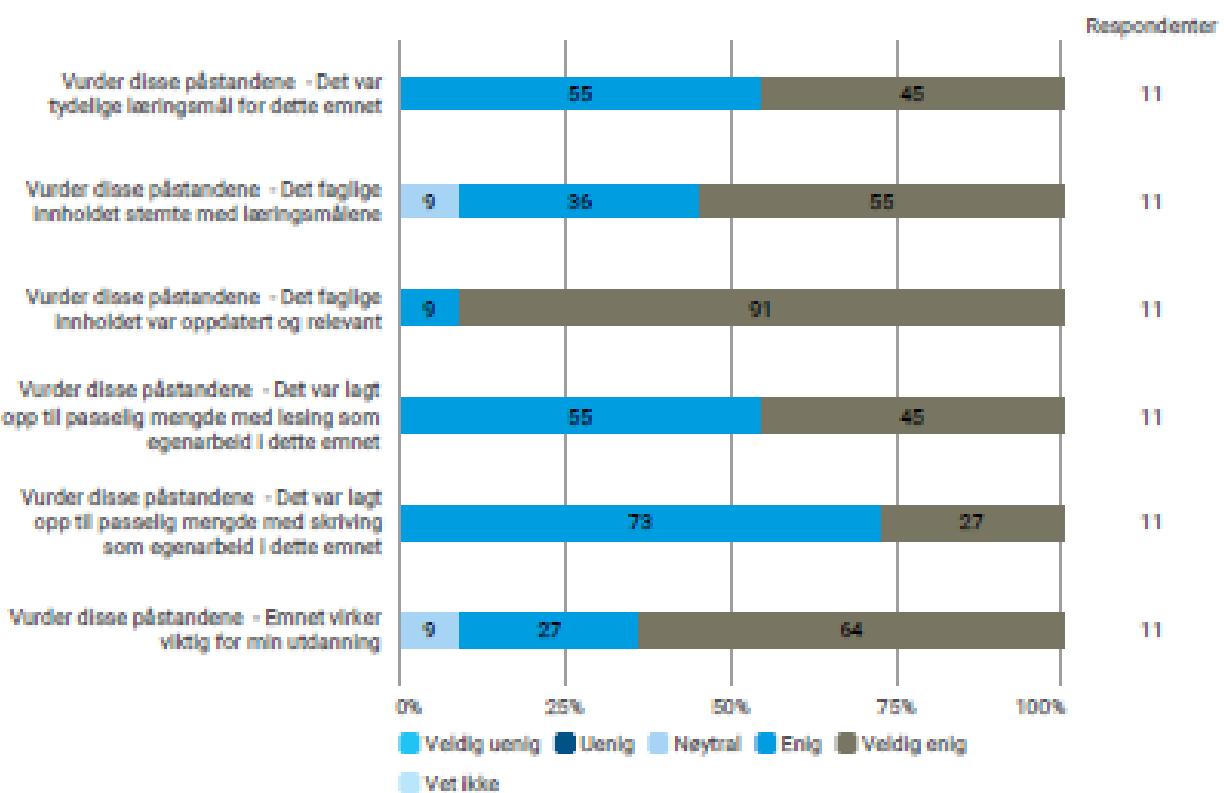


Hvor mye teoretisk kunnskap har du tilegnet deg på dette emnet? (1 = ingen, 5 = mye)

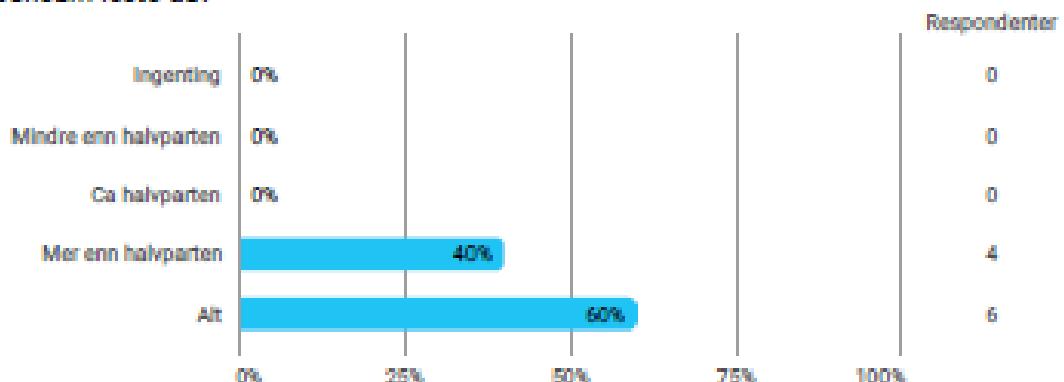


Hvor mye praktisk kunnskap har du tilegnet deg på dette emnet? (1 = ingen, 5 = mye)

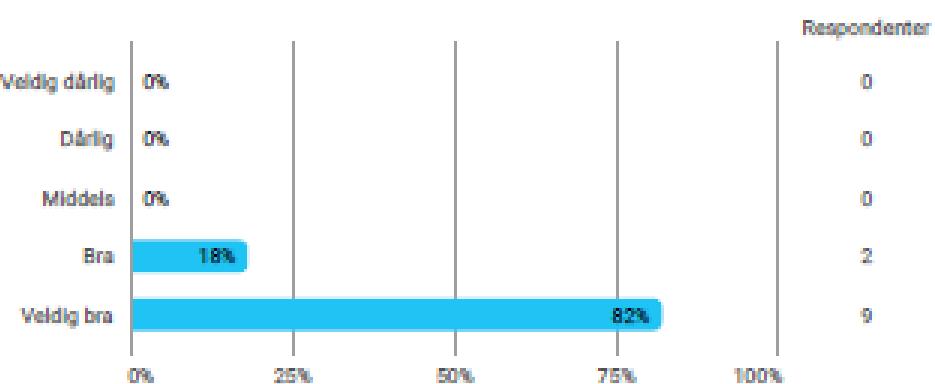




Hvor mye av pensum leste du?



Hvordan vil du evaluere emnet som helhet?



Hva likte du mest med dette emnet?

- practical experience, discussions
- The best thing was the friendly atmosphere and group discussions that took place. I also really enjoyed the field trip as it was a lot of fun and enabled me to get to know the other people on my course as well as being an amazing location! Anne is a great lecturer :)
- I really enjoyed the practical approach
- The hands-on experience and the interactive studying.
- Practical tasks, fields, labs, group works, guests, learn new programs
- Vi fikk god opplevelse i å utføre praktisk arbeid og å finne/bruke forskningslitteratur.
- Fieldwork, labwork
- It was very interactive and practical
- The trip and the work in the lab after
- Field trip

Hva likte du minst med dette emnet?

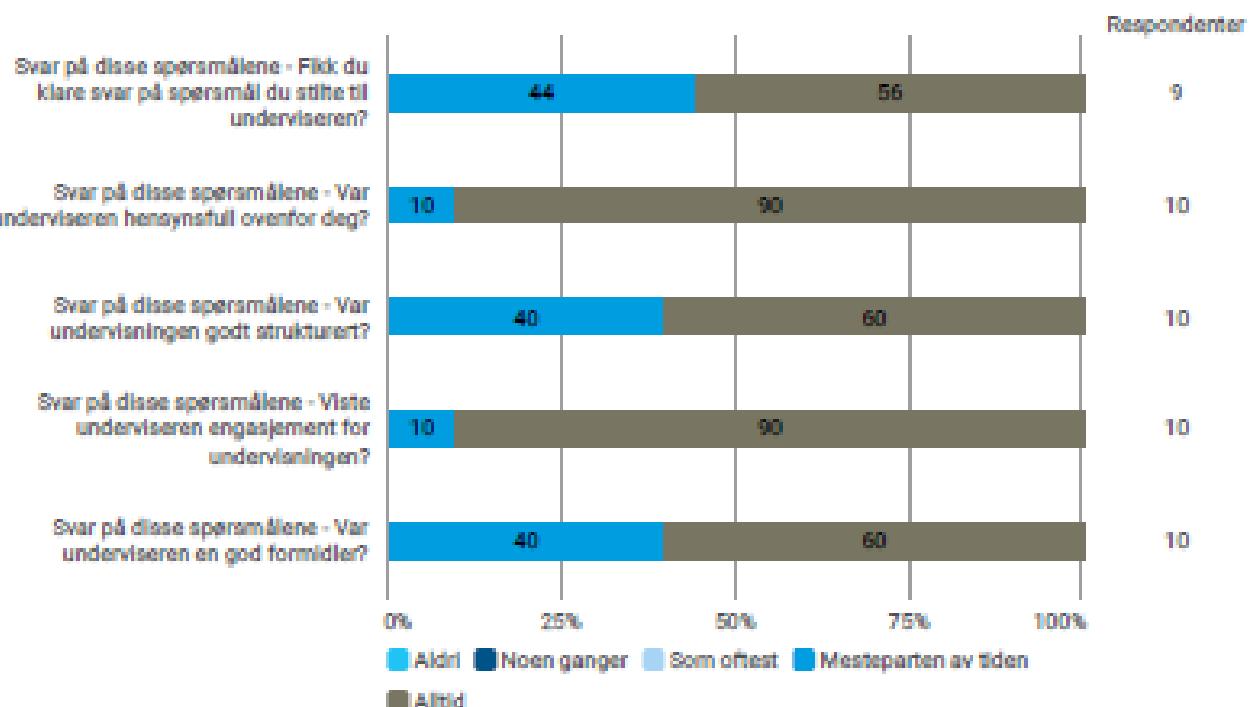
- I can't think of anything bad about the course
- It could have been a little more organised regarding lecture times and lecture topics.
- I wanted to have more
- groupwork
- Nothing
- R programming

Har du forslag til hvordan emnet kan forbedres?

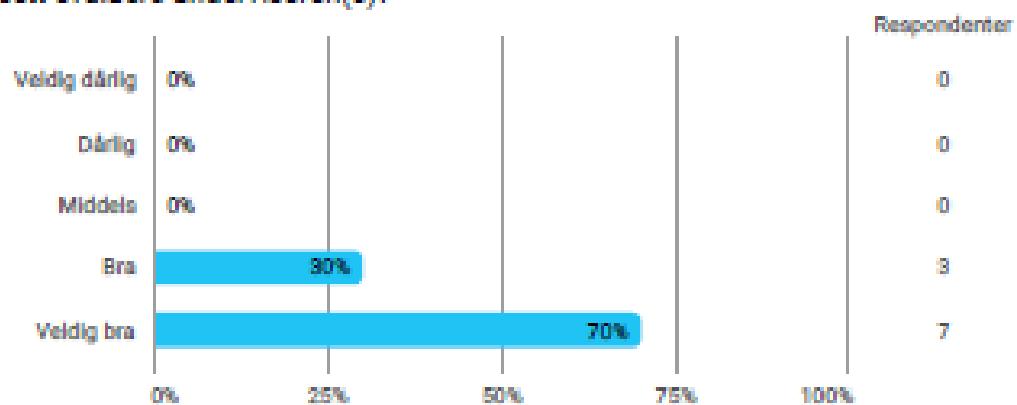
- The one thing that could be improved from my point of view is having more assessments that are more spread out, so that for example the final take home exam is worth less and there is less pressure for any one assignment. For instance the individual presentation that we did on a paper could have been graded.
- Maybe doing a follow-along R session where the professor introduces R and everyone follows along an exercise on their own computer with the professor projecting how he/she is doing it.
- Our R knowledges were not sufficient to follow some guest's tasks...
- More planned groupwork.
- give an introduction to R for those who have never used it
- Perhaps make the R programming more entertaining and accessible

Tilbakemeldinger på organisert praktisk undervisning?

- Maybe to go over the most characteristic properties of each pollen species in group before looking to them individually
- I really liked the practicals and would have enjoyed doing more of them!
- The practicals for the Lygra field project were very enjoyable. The R practicals could have been more helpful if there was an intro to R lecture.
- well organized
- thank you
- Feltkurs/gruppearbeid/etc føltes relevant og vi fikk god oppfølging.
- It was good
- the field work and lab work were fun and I learned a lot. I liked having a project for a longer period, because you get really involved
- All practicals were well structured and organised, some of the field work felt like there was little reasoning for it



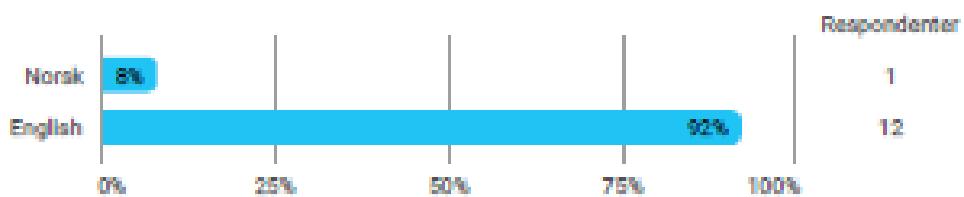
Hvordan vil du totalt sett evaluere underviseren(e)?



Har du forslag til hvordan underviseren kan forbedre sin undervisning?

- I have no recommendations!
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- In my opinion, you could ask more from your students and be more demanding in order to bring out the best of your students. When it is too easy, most of the students take it not seriously and become a bit lazy.
- I want to say that you are a great teacher, full of passion and motivation, perfect for small classes with a interested audience.
- Some of the guest instructors were messy in the teaching, and one didn't learn anything from the lecture.
- They could be more assertive, I think we would have been happy to do more work if the instructors had asked

Språk



Samlet status

