

## Course analysis (course evaluation) 2023

<b>Course code</b> 5MT011	<b>Course title</b> Applied Communication / MTLs program	<b>Credits</b> 6
<b>Semester (VT/HT-yr)</b> HT 2023	<b>Dates</b> 28 August 2023 – 21 September 2023	

<b>Course Director</b> Peter Swoboda	<b>Examiner</b> Peter Swoboda
<b>Teachers in charge of different parts of the course</b> Peter Swoboda, Charlotte Gottfries, Peter Lind, Henrik Ahlenius, Anki Östlund	<b>Other participating teachers</b> N/A

<b>Number of registered students at the 3-week check</b> 29	<b>Number passed at final course day</b> 29	<b>Response frequency course valuation survey</b> 18 / 29 (62%)
<b>Other methods for student influence</b> (in addition to the final course valuation/survey) Regular feedback sessions; at the end of the course program – feedback and discussion session		
<b>Feedback reporting of the course evaluation results to the students</b> Through the open course web site and through the course web site in Canvas		

### Note that...

The analysis should (together with a summarising quantitative summary of the students' course evaluation) be communicated to the education committee at the department responsible for the course and for programme courses also to the programme coordinating committee.

The analysis was communicated to the education committee on the following date: February 2024  
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### 1. Description of any changes implemented since the previous course occasion based on the views of former students

Overall, the course stands well "as is": it teaches so-called soft skills – read, write, talk and present, and reflect on ethical issues – with no immediate or direct connection to biomedical research and science as such. We compensate for this "principal lack of connection" by using scientific literature for assignments, while the bioethics part relates to (cases in) research and biomedicine.

The course underwent major changes from the academic year 2022 to 2023, as follows:

To make space for an additional course in Biostatistics within the MTLs program, the course was shortened from 7 to 6 credits, which necessitated keeping the core course topics, while at the same time limiting some theoretical details and practical exercise course parts. This was noticed by the students, but the teachers team kept the impact on quality to a minimum.

The course was given *en bloc* instead of being intercalated with a follow-up course. This was well received and appreciated by the students and allowed for a compact and stringent flow of the teaching material.

We introduced in one section (poster) the use of an international PhD student as a teaching assistant (TA). This was very well received by the students, as it diminishes the “distance” between teacher and students and improved feedback and interactions. For the next term we intend to use a TA throughout all sections of the course.

We introduced peer-to-peer (student-to-student, student-to-TA) feedback sessions (poster, ethics) to improve the process and quality of ongoing group work and ongoing examination tasks (poster production and essay writing), which resulted in higher-quality “final products” (posters and their presentations, ethics topic-based essays) as examination tasks.

We stretched out the examination parts of the course over the last ten days of the course to minimize stress situations for the students = not all four course subjects were examined at the same time at the end of the course. This worked out very well and was well appreciated by the students.

## **2. Brief summary of the students’ evaluation of the course**

*(Based on the students’ quantitative responses to the course valuation and key views from free text responses. Quantitative summary and any graphs are attached.)*

Overall, the students consider the course contents of excellent value and a very good introduction to the entire MTL program, particularly regarding practical study and work tasks and team building activities. The four course sections (rhetorics, scientific writing and reviewing, poster production, philosophy of science and bioethics) are considered very important aspects and tools for the student’s future activities. Whereby “*how much of it and which depth is needed in this course*” is a matter of how well an individual student has already been exposed to a given topic in his/her previous bachelor studies (the student’s backgrounds are quite heterogeneous). According to the student survey the four “communication topics” were well connected and intercalated in this course.

Most students find the course and its contents necessary and very useful, as it prepares them well for the upcoming communication tasks of the MTL master program and for their future careers in the life sciences and in the biomedical research arena. This is also evidenced by individual, personal feedback one receives as a teacher one-to-two years down the line, when these first-year master students carry out their second-year master thesis work and/or start their PhD student tenures in laboratories.

As is apparent in the attached student survey, the evaluation terms “fulfilled to a large extent / very large extent” or “very good” are the options chosen most often by the students.

## **3. The Course Director’s reflections on the implementation and results of the course**

### ***Strengths of the course:***

The course is organized so students get the opportunity to study and work practically in team settings and thereby get to know each other at the very beginning of their master-level training and when they come to Stockholm for their studies. The students are exposed to and trained in cross-value topics and skills that are highly relevant and necessary for the remainder of the MTL master program and their future careers. These so-called “soft science” topics are sometimes under-valued and under-represented in other “hard science” (research and data driven) courses and training sessions.

The introduction of additional feedback and discussion elements (e.g. student-to-student, work tasks involving an international TA from the biomedical field) was very successful and underlines the overall communication topic of the course with a clear focus on the future of the students in biomedical research and related work places.

### ***Weaknesses of the course:***

The fact that the course is built up on four – in parts separate – communication topics can make the course appear a bit disjointed. This issue needs to be communicated continuously to the students and attended to by the teachers, so that the direct and indirect value of the overarching topic of “communication” in a scientific setting is always appreciated.

This year – likely because of the course reorganization – the online ethics parts (MOOC) and the writing section were a bit less appreciated by the students as opposed to in previous years. These practical aspects will need to be fine-tuned and improved together with the topic-responsible teachers for 2024 and beyond.

### **3. Other views**

The course consists of four main sections (rhetorics, scientific writing and reviewing, poster production, philosophy of science and bioethics): during and at the end of each section individual, mostly oral feedback possibilities are available. The first term of the MTLs program concludes with a joint feedback and exchange meeting between all the students and all the course directors, including SMT011, and in part with some of the teachers. This in-person meeting was prepared and carried out with written and oral feedback and input possibilities.

### **4. Course Director’s conclusions and any suggestions for changes**

*(If changes are suggested, state who is responsible for implementing them and provide a schedule.)*

Based on the successful outcome of additional feedback elements and the use of an international TA, we will enlarge and more strongly anchor these two elements into the entire course in 2024. This will be organized and carried out by the course director. The goal is to strengthen the (practical) work by students, while it is still ongoing and thereby improve the “final products” (an abstract, a talk, a poster, an essay) which serve as the examination and assessment points.

We will introduce / re-install a course council. This will be organized and carried out by the course director. The goal is to improve the communication channels between students and teachers combined.

For group work we will try to – when possible – reduce group size by one person per group (e.g. from 5 to 4 for the poster section) to increase and improve group work participation in all aspects of a given task, but still foster group work as such. This will be organized and carried out by the course director and by the individual section teachers.

This course is the very first course of the MTLs master program, with a majority of 70-80% (and beyond) being from outside Sweden = a very international group of students. At the beginning (and in the middle?) of the course, we will introduce a group and team building session (2-4h), both theoretical and practical, that lays out for the students their brand-new situation as master students in a foreign country and helps them ease into it: e.g. together with specialists from the KI section LIME on the topic of “*Glocal University*” issues or “*English as lingua franca*” etc. This is intended to be in line with the overall communication topic of the course and will be connected to biomedical themes. This will be organized and carried out by the course director.

**Appendices:** Course Evaluation report filled in by the students of the course (the full version, which includes individual text-based comments by the students).

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