

Course analysis (course evaluation) 2025

Course code 5MT015	Course title Applied Communication / MTLs program	Credits 6
Semester (VT/HT-yr) HT 2025	Dates 1 September 2025 – 16 October 2025	

Course Director Peter Swoboda	Examiner Peter Swoboda
Teachers in charge of different parts of the course Peter Swoboda, Charlotte Gottfries, Erik Mattsson, Henrik Ahlenius, Anki Östlund, Jenny Valcke	Other participating teachers N/A

Number of registered students at the 3-week check 34	Number passed at final course day 34	Response frequency course valuation survey 25/34 (73.5%)
Other methods for student influence (in addition to the final course valuation/survey) Regular feedback sessions; at the end of the course – feedback and discussion session (course council), at the end of the KI course program – feedback and discussion session		
Feedback reporting of the course evaluation results to the students Through the open course web site and through the course web site in Canvas		

Note that ...

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

The analysis was communicated to the education committee on the following date: May 2026
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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 four so-called soft skills – read, write, talk or present, and reflect on ethical issues – with no necessary, 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 in the academic year 2023:

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. Since then, the teachers have tried to keep the impact on quality to a minimum (whereby, the expectation is that the ripple effects of these changes will take a few years to peter out).

The course was, again, given intercalated with a parallel course, MGG. This was well received and appreciated by the students and allowed for a better and more in-depth flow of the teaching material presented to the students (“things have time to sink in”). The *en bloc* format from the previous years led to more stressful peak-time experiences for the students and was therefore abandoned.

We continue to integrate, now in three sections (writing, talking, poster) the use of international PhD students as teaching assistants (TAs). This was very well received by the students, as it diminishes the “distance” between teacher and students and improved feedback and interactions. For the upcoming course installments, we intend to use TAs (2-3) throughout all sections of the course, if possible.

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

For the second time now, we included at the beginning of the course group and team building sessions (2x 3h), both theoretical and practical, that lay out for the students their brand-new situation as master students in a foreign country, which helps them ease into it: together with a specialist 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 loosely be connected to biomedical themes. This addition was generally well received, yet needs further tweaking and adjustment, so that it integrates better with the general KI introductory week for international students (the week before course start) and the rest of the course itself.

We stretched out the examination parts of the course into two major parts (first block: write and talk; second block: poster and ethics) 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 reasonably well and was well appreciated by the students but needs further tweaking in conjunction with the parallel course, MGG.

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 and preparation to the entire MTL program, particularly regarding practical study, work tasks, and activities working in groups. The four main 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 always 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 typically very heterogeneous). According to the student survey these four “communication topics” were well interconnected in this course, while certain improvements are still needed regarding the intercalation with the parallel course, MGG.

Most students find the course and its contents necessary and very useful, as it prepares them well for the upcoming communication tasks of the MTLs master program and for their future careers in the life sciences and in the biomedical research field. 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 at KI laboratories.

As is apparent from the attached student survey, the evaluation terms “fulfilled to a large extent / very large extent” or “very good” or “agree / totally agree” are the options chosen very 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 small group 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. This was, again, very well received by the students.

The students are exposed to and trained in cross-value topics and skills that are highly relevant and necessary for the remainder of the MTLs master program and their future careers. These so-called “soft science” topics are at times under-valued and under-represented in other “hard science” (research and data driven) courses and training sessions.

The integration of frequent (formative) feedback and discussion elements (e.g., student-to-student, work tasks involving international PhD students as TAs 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 workplaces.

The combination of group work with lots of peer-to-peer interactions fosters that students take their learning goals and their actual learning activities into their own hands (they do things by their own initiatives) together with highly accessible TAs and teachers, makes for an effective learning environment that students enjoy being part of.

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 the online ethics parts (MOOC) and the writing section were a bit less appreciated by the students as opposed to in previous years. The practical aspects (timing issues, setup of lectures and group work) will need to be fine-tuned and improved together with the topic-responsible teachers for 2026 and beyond.

A continuous “weakness” of the course is that it runs intercalated and in parallel with another course, MGG. This in turn means that even slight changes and adjustments of either course can have

larger (than necessary) ripple effects not only for the course itself but also the parallel course, MGG. This issue needs continuous attention to even small details and ... “not every year we get it right”.

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 5MT015, and in part with some of the (section) teachers. This in-person meeting was prepared and carried out with written and oral feedback and input possibilities. Student input and feedback, and the discussions from that end-of-term meeting are then integrated into this course analysis report.

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 input and feedback elements and the use of international PhD students as TAs, we will expand and even more strongly anchor these elements into the entire course in 2026. The goal is to strengthen the (practical) work by students, while it is still ongoing (formative feedback) and thereby improve the “final products” (an abstract, a talk, a poster, an essay) which serve as the examination and assessment points. This will be organized and carried out by the course director.

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 of the course, we introduced group and team building sessions (2x 3h), both theoretical and practical, that lay out for the students their brand-new situation as master students in a foreign country, which 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 element still needs tweaking, to optimize both new internationalization topics and overlaps with the KI introductory week happening just one week before term start. This will be organized and carried out by the course director together with the section teacher.

Smaller practical issues:

For group work we will try to – when possible – reduce group size even further by one person per group (e.g., from 4 to 3 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/or by the individual section teachers.

In this course we use scientific papers as “workhorses” for presentations in different forms (writing, talking, poster). Given student feedback, we will experiment with the students themselves choosing the papers to present instead of the teachers providing these papers. The choice of papers needs attention regarding “even quality” of papers used in the course. This will be organized and carried out by the course director and/or by the individual section teachers.

All forms of feedback provided to (and by) the students could – according to this year’s survey results – be a bit more in-depth, critical, even “harsher”, and thereby, less formalized. This will be carried out by the course director and/or by the individual section teachers and will need a tactful and sensitive overall approach to the matter at hand.

As part of a KI-wide effort, the course director will pay attention to stepwise introducing and integrating small parts of the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* into the course teaching materials (all sections), as they fit into the overall course topic. We will start with SDG 3 “Good health and well-being”, for example, by connecting scientific papers to be presented with discussions, or bioethical materials with SDG 3. The idea is to do that not only for this course, but also “as a theme” for the other, follow-up courses of the MTL program at the KI.

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