

Course evaluation template

After the course has ended, the course coordinator fills in this template. The head of department/programme decides whether the template should be supplemented with further information/questions.

Course code 3GB12	Course title Degree Project in Global Health	Credits 30
Semester Fall 2021 – Spring 2022	Period 27 December 2021 – 5 June 2022	

Course coordinator Martin Gerdin Wärnberg and Asli Kulane	Examiner Martin Gerdin Wärnberg and Asli Kulane
Other participating teachers Two teachers per student are grading the theses	Other participating teachers

Number of registered students 29	Number who have not completed the course 2	Number passed after regular session 27
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Conclusions from the previous course evaluation

- Continue to improve the digital support systems for submitting project proposals by prospective supervisors, thesis templates, and thesis grading.
- Improve how project opportunities are presented to the students. Based on the course evaluation we would like to make opportunities available to the students earlier during the fall and as they are submitted to us, rather than compiling them into a list before publishing them for students to see.
- Most importantly we need to mobilize more global health researchers to submit more project proposals to the global health students. Mobilization of projects should start in late August and be followed up with personal contacts with the research groups at the department with global health relevant topics.
- We will encourage main supervisors to identify a co-supervisor in order to broaden the skill set in the team around each student.
- We will modify the contract between supervisor(s) and student to clarify how the team will support the student on matters in relation to: content, method, context, process of the thesis, financing issues for students traveling, forms of communication and the working environment of the student abroad and/or in Stockholm. Through this checklist of questions to discuss during the first meetings between supervisor and student we anticipate better working relationships.
- We also would like to make it mandatory for co-grading teachers (examiners) to review at least two theses to improve their understanding of the level of the theses overall.



- An additional priority area is to improve the recruitment of co-grading teachers, by for example reaching out earlier during the semester.

Description of conducted changes since previous course occasion

- Templates for all submissions were made available very early during the course.
- More sessions were conducted in person or as hybrid sessions.
- We enforced a two thesis policy in the examination process

Method(s) for student influence

We gave students opportunities to participate in the preparation and decisions at course level and also provided verbal feedback continuously during the course. We have been in contact with many students over email/Canvas on specific questions or concerns they had. These contacts have served as a good indicator of the level of progress in learning outcomes for some of the students and provided an opportunity for students to give us feedback on the clarity or lack thereof of guidelines and instructions.

Summary of the students' response to the course valuation

Our response rate to the course valuation this year was almost 70%. The responses were overall positive. A clear majority (85%) of responding students felt that they had developed valuable expertise/skills and achieved all the intended learning outcomes of the course to a large or very large degree. They felt that there was a common theme running throughout the course and that the course promoted a scientific way of thinking and reasoning. A majority felt that we were open to ideas and opinions about the course's structure and content to a large or very large extent. Excitingly, we received many suggestions on how to improve the course further. These suggestions were about clarifying the expectations of supervisors, adding more support for quantitative projects, and revising the wording of feedback during the examination seminar.

The course coordinator's reflections on the implementation and results of the course

It is up to the students to choose their degree project in this course and they may therefore do so based both on the knowledge, experiences and prerequisites that they bring to the master programme and that they acquire during the courses preceding the degree writing course. This is a considerable strength because it allows us and the students to capitalize on a substantial knowledge base instead of starting from scratch. It does however also mean that the process is to a large extent student driven, which does not benefit weaker students.

The process of selecting a master thesis looks quite different among the students. For around half of the students it appears relatively straightforward and by early November they are set in a project. For the other half of students a number of different challenges have been noted: Some students feel unprepared to select a project in early fall and are not contacting supervisors; some want a perfect match of country, topic and methodology and wait out for this opportunity; some are interested in topics where supervisors at KI are scarce; some lose time by waiting on slow or negative responses from prospective supervisors or from funders of travel expenses. At the end of the process, the far majority of students ended up with projects they seemed satisfied with. Establishing good working relationships with their supervisor teams was accomplished for almost all students. However, the process of identifying/selecting a project should be shortened in time and effort.



The course's learning outcomes are centred around understanding the scientific process involved in moving from a research question to a final thesis product. Our methods focus on supporting the students' own scientific process. We attempt to provide ample opportunities for the students to present their thoughts, plans and progress for their peers and us course leaders and also get individual feedback.

The examination is designed in such a way that the form and content are familiar to the students. The submission of the seminar version, followed by a preliminary assessment by examiners after which students revised and finally submitted a final version to be graded, aligns very well with the intended learning outcomes of the course. During this year's examination seminars, a majority of students received comments of improvements to reach the pass level.

The relationship between student and supervisor is very important for the progression of learning of the student. There are many advantages of having a co-supervisor in order to give support on methods, content, study context and the process of the thesis writing. As we have previously noted we should encourage more supervisors to have co-supervisors. We can be more proactive in encouraging students to find new projects if communications issues are apparent early on, to avoid problems later.

The level of ambition is high for many students and supervisors. We should re-emphasize to supervisors that their engagement in supervision should be based in an interest in supporting student's learning process and to complete the thesis. Opportunity of publication of results should be discussed only thereafter to prevent that students are considered as research assistants.

The students that are offered a working space at the location of the supervisor have expressed a high appreciation of this including many advantages for their learning when participating in research group activities. We should more explicitly encourage supervisors to consider this option.

Description of how the course works with quality, research-basis and collaboration with other professions

All GPH faculty were contacted early in the fall term of 2021 to identify and develop potential master thesis projects for students which fall within their current research. The integration of the master thesis project into an existing research group and project provides the most conducive environment for the students to develop their skills and knowledge. We have personal communications with the prospective supervisors to secure the quality and suitability of the thesis project on a need basis. Inter-professional, inter-disciplinary and international composition of the supervisory team is supported.

All thesis projects are posted on Canvas as they are received, and students are to contact the supervisors directly. This process makes the matching of students and project as transparent as possible and is a way to give equal opportunity to all students. As course coordinators we do not recommend individual students to specific supervisors.

Already during the month of September, we met the students and introduced the process of the thesis writing course. The students had the opportunity to ask questions to better



understand the process here at KI. During this first encounter we described the different resources they have at their disposal, but we also described some of the more tacit practices in Swedish academia, such as sending reminders to researchers who might not answer their emails within a weeks' time.

Course coordinator's conclusions and suggestions for improvement

- Continue to improve the digital support systems for submitting project proposals by prospective supervisors and thesis grading. The current system of emailing word templates for grading should be replaced by a system more integrated in Canvas.
- Further automate the process of submitting project proposals and presenting these to students.
- Mobilize more global health researchers to submit more project proposals to the global health students by actively reaching out to other departments.
- Continue to encourage main supervisors to identify a co-supervisor in order to broaden the skill set in the team around each student.
- Modify the contract between supervisor(s) and student to clarify how the team will support the student on matters in relation to: content, method, context, process of the thesis, financing issues for students traveling, forms of communication and the working environment of the student abroad and/or in Stockholm. Through this checklist of questions to discuss during the first meetings between supervisor and student we anticipate better working relationships.
- Improve the recruitment of co-grading teachers, by for example reaching out earlier during the semester.

Views on the course and improvement suggestions from others

Description of how the course valuation has provided feedback internally and to the students

The course evaluation has been presented to the students on the course web.



**Karolinska
Institutet**

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