

Course evaluation BIO 250 Palaeoecology, autumn 2017

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 2017 15 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 2017 the course included the course responsible, Anne Bjune, and five 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 last year, the fieldwork and the following laboratory work went well. Following the evaluation from 2016 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. I am not sure how well the groups worked this year. The work should be divided equally among the group members and it is difficult to control this. From the observations during the course it seemed like some worked more than others on the group assignment.

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

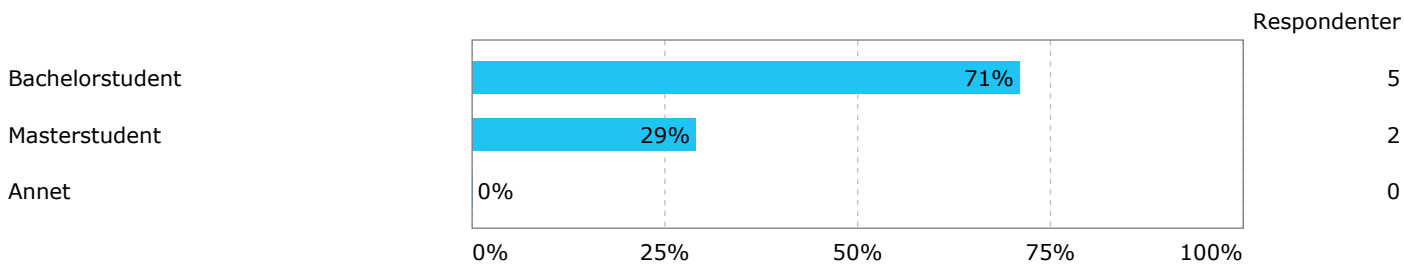
A challenge is that many students didn't show up for the lectures and if they did, they had not prepared for a discussion. For next time action has to be taken to make sure they prepare for the discussions. It might also be a challenge that students registered in this course are doing so many other courses across the faculty that we have lectures at the same time as in Earth Science, Geophysics, or other biology courses. This should be avoided as far as possible.

Reflections

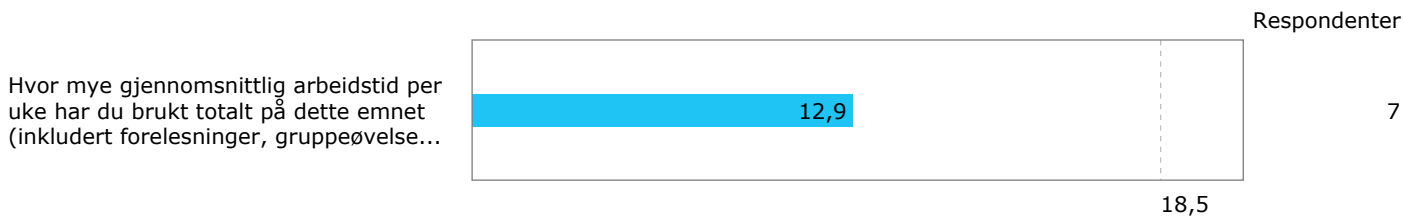
The focus change from details to a more general understanding of the topic palaeoecology seems to work fine. Some adjustments should be used for the coming courses. One idea is that next years field and lab work should build on this years work by using the data acquired in the field and in the lab. We will try to work 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.

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. Students also miss a clearer link to the reading list at the start of the lecture. This could easily be improved for next year!

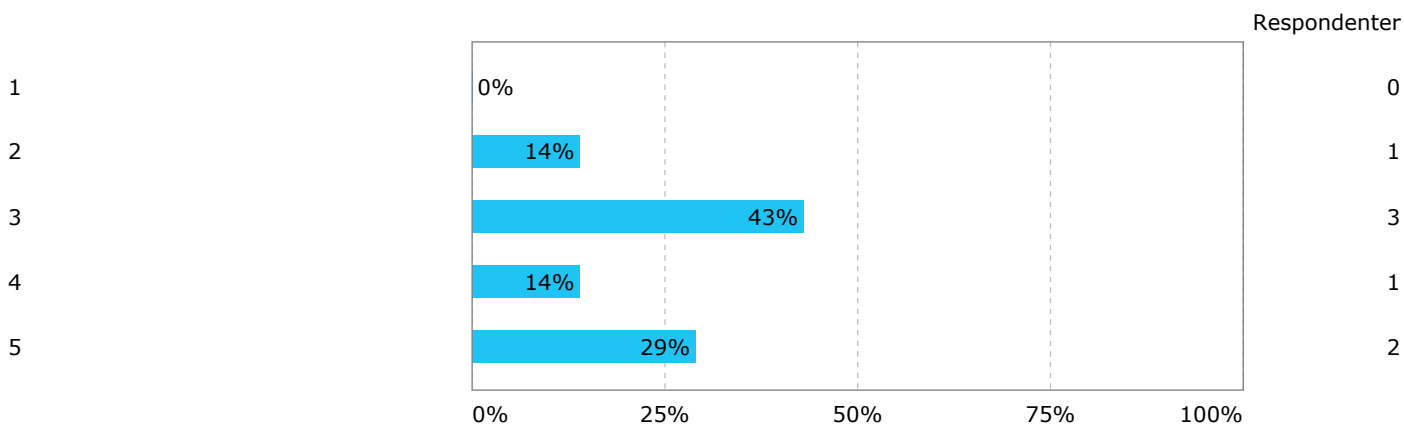
Er du?



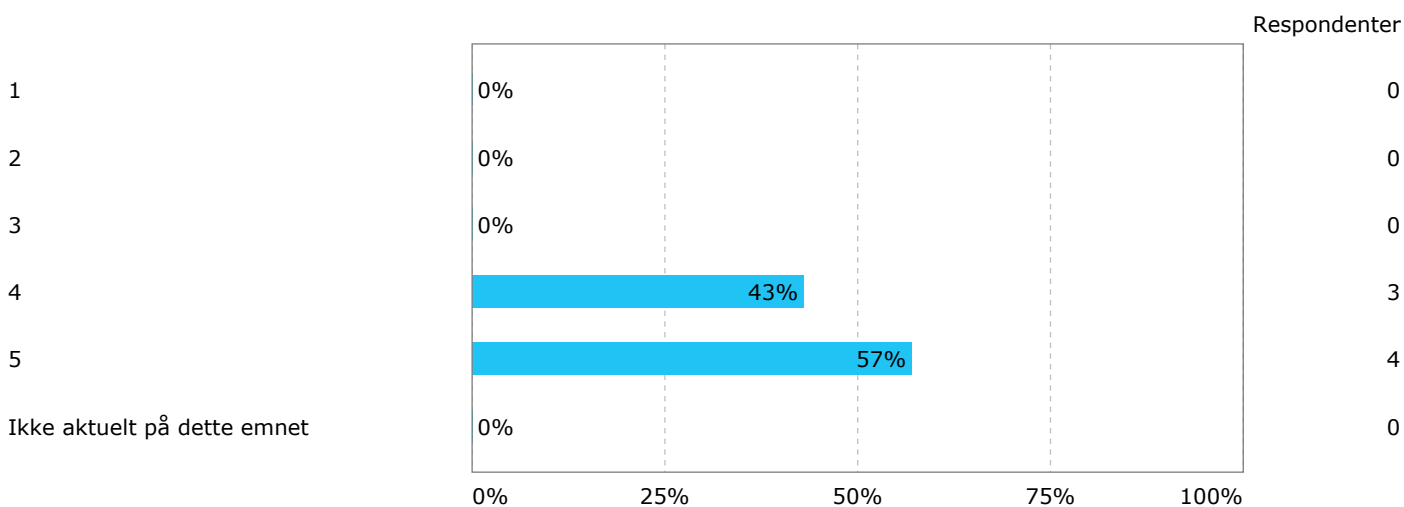
Er du? - Annet

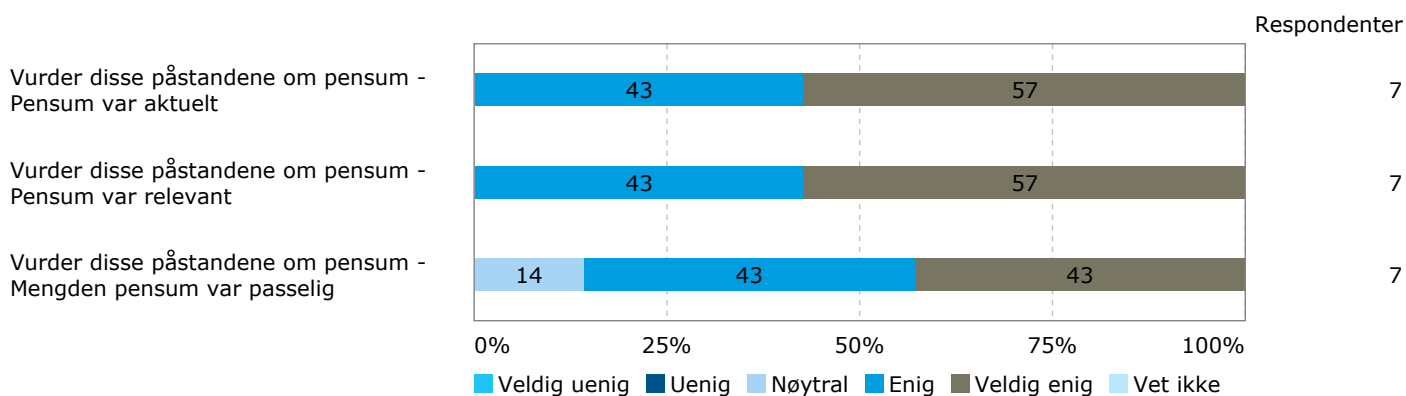
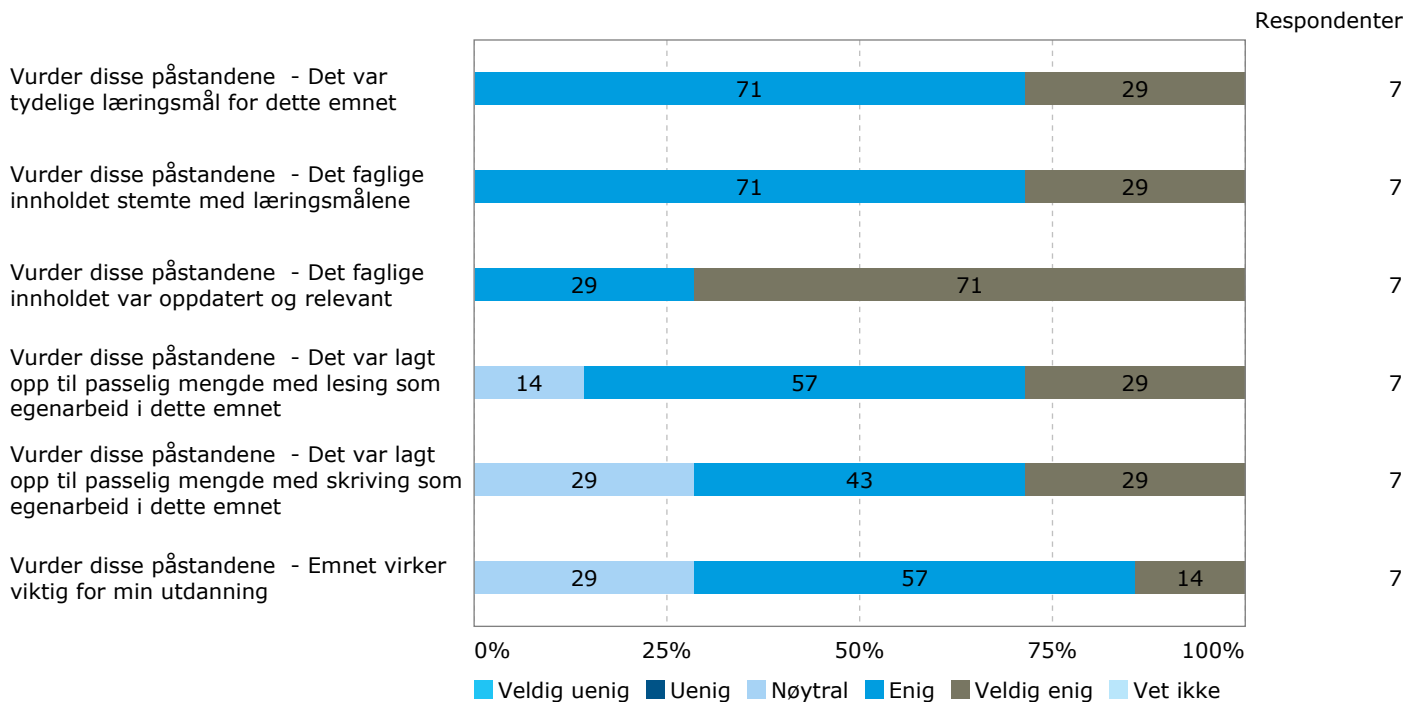


Hvor mye teoretisk kunnskap har du tilegnet deg på dette emnet? (1 = ingen, 5 = mye)

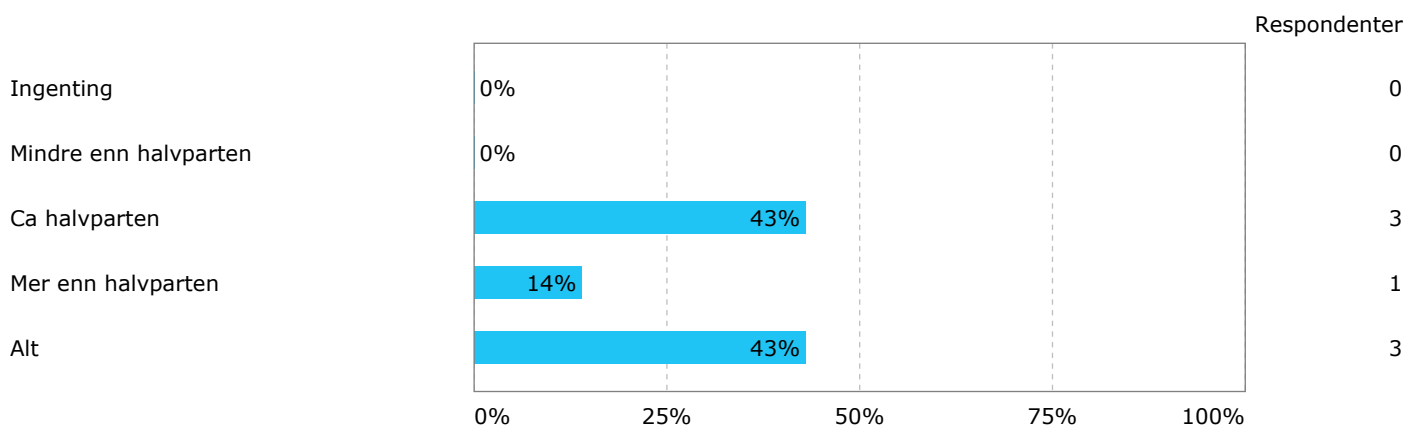


Hvor mye praktisk kunnskap har du tilegnet deg på dette emnet? (1 = ingen, 5 = mye)

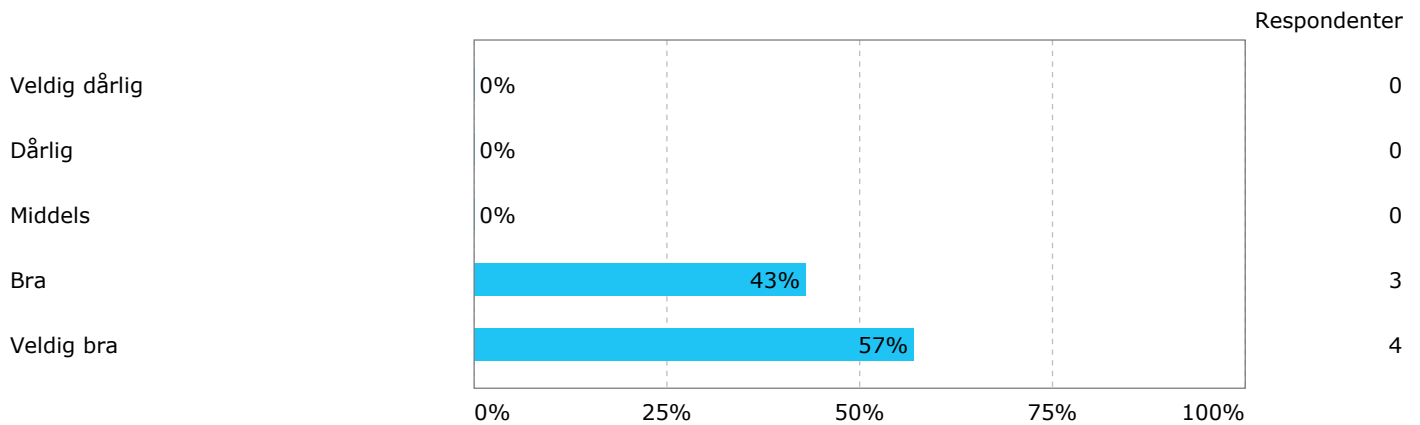




Hvor mye av pensum leste du?



Hvordan vil du evaluere emnet som helhet?



Hva likte du mest med dette emnet?

- the practicals, the excursion, the experts on topics, up-to date with reading material and presented studies
- practical activities
- The field trip was so much fun and so educational! Also having guest speakers was interesting to gain new perspectives
- Field trip
- the lab work and the essay exam
- The ability to work practically in the labs.
- Feltkurs

Hva likte du minst med dette emnet?

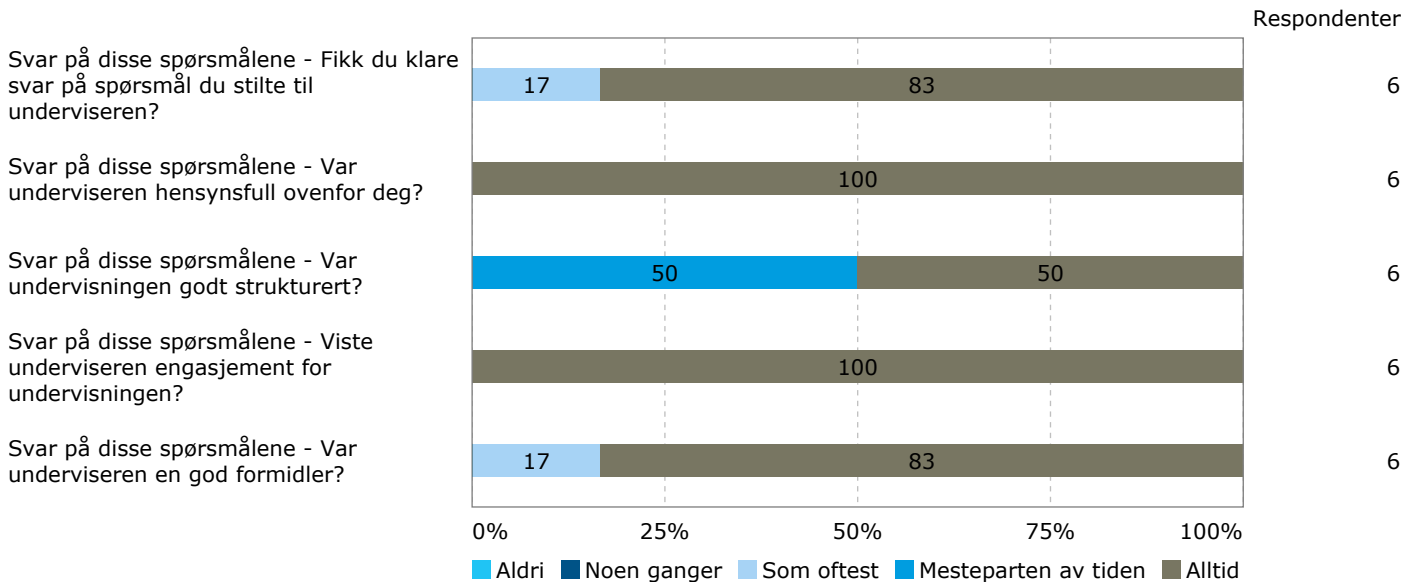
- (worst is too strong, but improvable)it could have been less repetitive at times, a clearer concept behind some of the lectures, I was missing page numbers on the presentations
- some lectures were boring
- There was nothing bad
- the lectures
- There should maybe be a greater focus on multiple proxies other than just pollen. For example being able to chose between proxies for the practical field course would have been great.
- Framføring av artikler

Har du forslag til hvordan emnet kan forbedres?

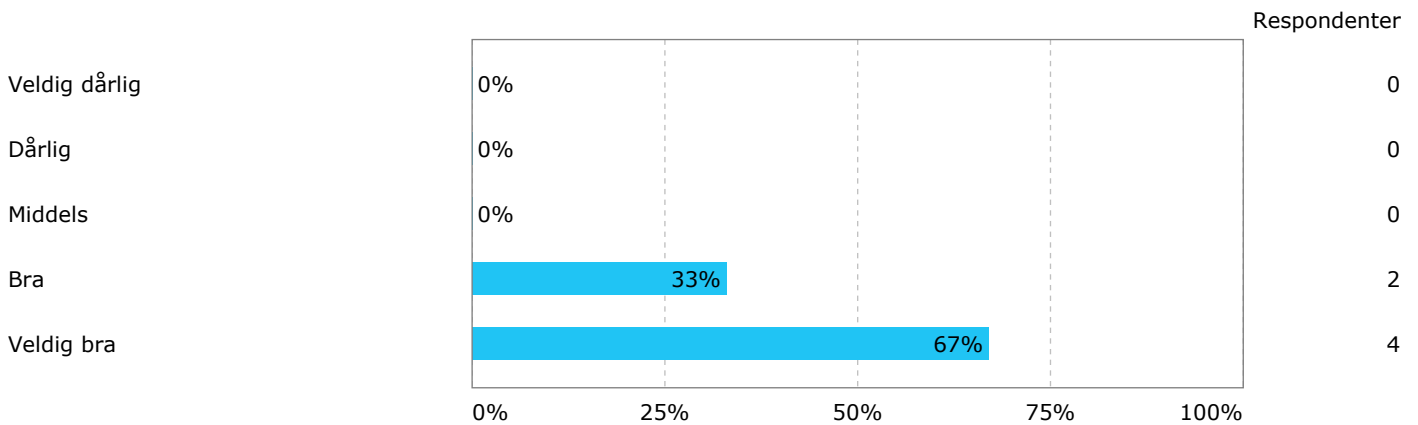
- an overview of the topics that are going to be covered that lesson in beginning of the lecture and the structure of the lesson, explicit suggestions towards the reading list (as Florian did), when repeting content maybe referring to that lesson, some explanation for c2 and pollen identification before lab sessions :)
- nope it was really good!
- The more practical work the better. Hands on expereince can be just as or even more valuable than theoretical knowledge sometimes

Tilbakemeldinger på organisert praktisk undervisning?

- maybe a lecture on how to identify pollen/charcoal and how to process data prior to lab practical, information on structure, procedure and expected outcome of fieldwork, labwork and groupwork
- I would prefer to have better knowledge before field trip
- Lygra was such a good trip for getting to know coursemates and learning the practical skills that we talk about for the rest of the course, it was great timing at the beginning of the term and a fun location
- Feltkurset var veldig relevant, spennende og godt arrangert. Var også veldig fint å ha fri tilgang på laben etter feltkurs. Veldig nyttig.



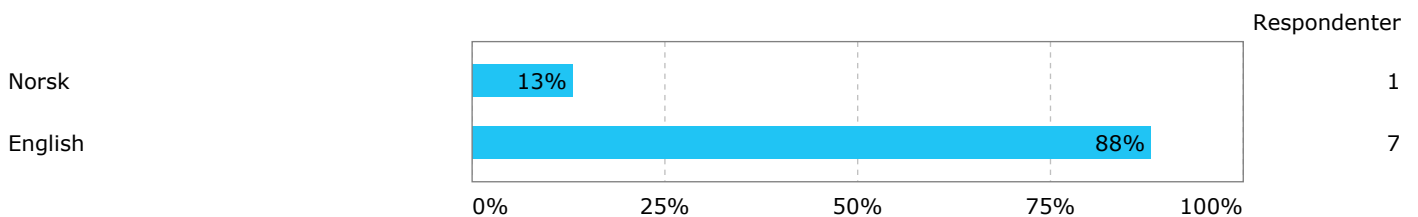
Hvordan vil du totalt sett evaluere underviseren(e)?



Har du forslag til hvordan underviseren kan forbedre sin undervisning?

- maybe present the structure of lecture in advance to make it easier to follow and to show explicitly the connections between lectures/referecing to previous lectures
- less lectures done by other instructors

Språk



Samlet status

