

Report on educational quality 2020

University Centre in Svalbard



CONTENTS

1 SUMMARY	2
2 UNIS REPORT ON EDUCATIONAL QUALITY 2020	3
3 ASSESSMENT OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES BY THE ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS	4
4 LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS	5
EVALUATIONS 2020.....	5
RESULTS FROM THE COURSE EVALUATIONS IN 2020	6
RESULTS FROM THE EVALUATIONS BY GUEST STUDENTS IN 2020	10
RESULTS FROM THE COVID-19 SURVEY	12
STUDENT PARTICIPATION	14
TEMPORARY ACADEMIC STAFF	14
PSYCHOSOCIAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND WORK.....	15
5 MAIN CHALLENGES	15
IT INFRASTRUCTURE	15
PERCENTAGE OF NORWEGIAN STUDENTS AND PERCENTAGE OF PLACES FILLED.....	16
QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM – RESPONSIBILITY AND FOLLOW-UP.....	16
OTHER FACTORS	16
6 WORK ON QUALITY DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION	16
7 CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION	17
BIOCEED	17
IEARTH	17
8 LEARNING FORUM	17
9 INFRASTRUCTURE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING	18
10 LIBRARY	18
11 THE DIRECTOR’S RECOMMENDED PRIORITISATION OF MEASURES FOR 2021/2022	18
12 REPORTING ON THE STATUS OF MEASURES IN 2020/2021 AS OF 31.12.2020	20
13 PRIORITISED MEASURES AND FOCUS AREAS IN 2021 AND 2022	21

Cover photo:

2020 was a good year for sea ice in Svalbard, with stable low temperatures throughout the winter. The marine biologists took regular ice cores throughout the winter. Field assistant Vanessa Pitusi is shown here with an ice core collected in Tempelfjorden in April 2020.

Photo: Janne E. Søreide/UNIS

1 Summary

An annual report on educational quality at UNIS must be presented to UNIS’ board. The quality work is headed by the UNIS Education Committee (ECom) and the Director. This work consists of following up, developing and control the quality of the education provision, as well as focusing on the culture for quality and quality development. The students contribute to the quality work through course

evaluations and representation on various committees and forums. Starting from 2020, students are no longer represented in the management group at UNIS. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was different to other years. UNIS cancelled all courses in the summer and autumn except for the course in the Arctic Nature Guide (ANG) programme. Several courses in the spring semester in 2020 were also cancelled. Courses that had already started when the pandemic began were switched to digital teaching and students who were at UNIS were encouraged to travel home. Several adjustments were made to the learning activities and forms of assessment to ensure successful completion and the best possible quality. A big thank you is extended to students, and staff have done a great job of adapting 2020 to a new everyday life.

Course students and guest students alike evaluated their UNIS relationship in 2020, while a separate COVID-19 survey was implemented among students who stayed at UNIS during the pandemic outbreak in the spring of 2020. The evaluations provide good feedback about the learning environment and teaching despite the challenges related to the pandemic. The perception of the learning environment is also reflected in the feedback from staff with course responsibilities. UNIS has a continuous focus on improving course descriptions and learning outcomes, forms of assessment and calibrating the teaching capacity of the staff and the workload of the students in courses. Although few students provided feedback in 2020 that the workload in the courses was too high, there was some comment about how the workload was distributed over the course period. The feedback in the evaluations does not reveal any special factors associated with the psychosocial learning environment, but the guest student category had a lower level of satisfaction when it came to feeling a sense of belonging to their academic department. The biggest challenge highlighted by students and staff alike was IT infrastructure and platforms for communication. UNIS invested in a lot of new IT equipment in 2020, but training and implementation remains. The IT initiative will continue in 2021. A “Speak up” system for notification and feedback/reporting of non-conformance and the learning environment/work environment for students and staff was established in 2020 and is operational from the spring semester in 2021.

There is major focus on the systematic quality work in the organisation. The status and follow-up of measures in the report on educational quality are reported twice annually, while the quality assurance system will be revised owing to changes in the legislation and regulations, as well as to further improve clarify responsibility in all parts of the organisation. iEarth and bioCEED have been important contributors in the work on educational quality and quality development. Moreover, UNIS’ educational provision is believed to be relevant and of interest to the applicants. There are good applicant figures and academic results, and UNIS experiences major interest from the media and the outside world. However, in the years ahead, there should be greater focus on the interfaces with the local community and working life relevance.

Based on the feedback from students and staff, the academic results and work on educational quality in the organisation, the quality of education and the focus on this is considered good at UNIS.

2 UNIS report on educational quality 2020

UNIS’ board is responsible for the quality of education at UNIS. Findings, experiences and status are stated in a list of measures and included in budget processes and the development of UNIS’ course portfolio. The report on educational quality assesses the work and developments involving quality at UNIS in 2020. The report consists of results from evaluations, brief reports from sections working on educational quality and input from various departments at UNIS. The report also includes the status of measures in last year’s report, as well as a list of new measures for 2021/2022. These are based on the Director’s assessments and prioritising of input from the organisation and in the student evaluations. Based on changes in the legislation and regulations for higher education, it is natural to initiate a revision of the quality assurance system at UNIS. This work was not started in 2020.

3 Assessment of strengths and weaknesses by the academic departments

The academic departments have contributed to the report on educational quality and the list of measures through course evaluations, participation in ECom and written contributions. UNIS is dissatisfied that only 65% (11 of 17) of the staff who ran courses in 2020 evaluated their course. In comparison, 73% of the staff with course responsibilities completed midway or operational evaluations during the course. In this way, simple adjustments could be made for the course in the current year. UNIS is satisfied that many have done this type of evaluation. In 2020, many staff with course responsibilities had to switch to digital teaching while still taking care of the physical and psychosocial learning environment, learning activities and fieldwork via digital platforms. This was challenging, and a great effort was made by many parts of the organisation to succeed in the best possible way.

Several staff emphasized that cancelling all courses in summer and autumn 2020 was a wise decision. They also pointed out that this type of decision should be made as early as possible to avoid opening courses for application and directing staff with course responsibilities to plan for running their courses when there was a high probability that all or many courses would be cancelled. However, this refers to the fact that because UNIS tried to achieve as much as possible, under great unpredictability, the decisions had to be made as late as possible.

Strengths and weaknesses:

Positive feedback was given about the collaboration with all the support departments. A total of 91% of the staff with course responsibilities believe the students have good or very good English language proficiency and perceive that there was a good learning environment in the course they taught. Moreover, 64% believe that the academic background of the students was good, while the remainder classified this as “not relevant” or selected “neutral”. Calibrating the level of knowledge at the start of the course was listed as a measure in the previous report on educational quality and will remain on this year’s list of measures as this has not been addressed. The upgrade of the IT infrastructure at UNIS is highlighted as especially positive. The fact that, through extraordinary efforts, the IT Department quickly put Microsoft Teams in place during the close-down of UNIS made the new everyday life somewhat easier for everyone.

However, staff with teaching responsibilities still pointed to the IT infrastructure as an obstacle to providing good teaching. This applies to software, computers/smart boards/screens and which platforms were available for communication with the students. This became especially clear when a lot of teaching and communication needed to be done digitally. Consequently, the lack of a learning platform became extremely visible, especially in relation to communication with the students. However, Microsoft Teams was a temporary and adequate replacement for this in the spring semester in 2020. A lack of training in the use of new IT systems and software, as well as the availability of facilities at UNIS, are also key factors that are described as challenging. Furthermore, some staff pointed out that there are still some inefficient routines, e.g. moving hours in the scheduling system at UNIS.



Photo 2: New inventory in the computer lab, computers, tables, and chairs, as well as new smart boards and screens in the classrooms.

The academic staff are pleased that the guest student category was followed up during the pandemic and that UNIS provided financial support to parts of this group to spend as much time as possible at UNIS in the autumn semester in 2020. However, some criticism was directed towards the fact that guest bachelor and guest PhD students did not receive the same financial support despite credit production from these groups also being included in the student statistics for 2020. Some departments believe that UNIS' decision not to extend the role as vice-dean for education was a weakness and shows a lower degree of ambition related to the quality of education.

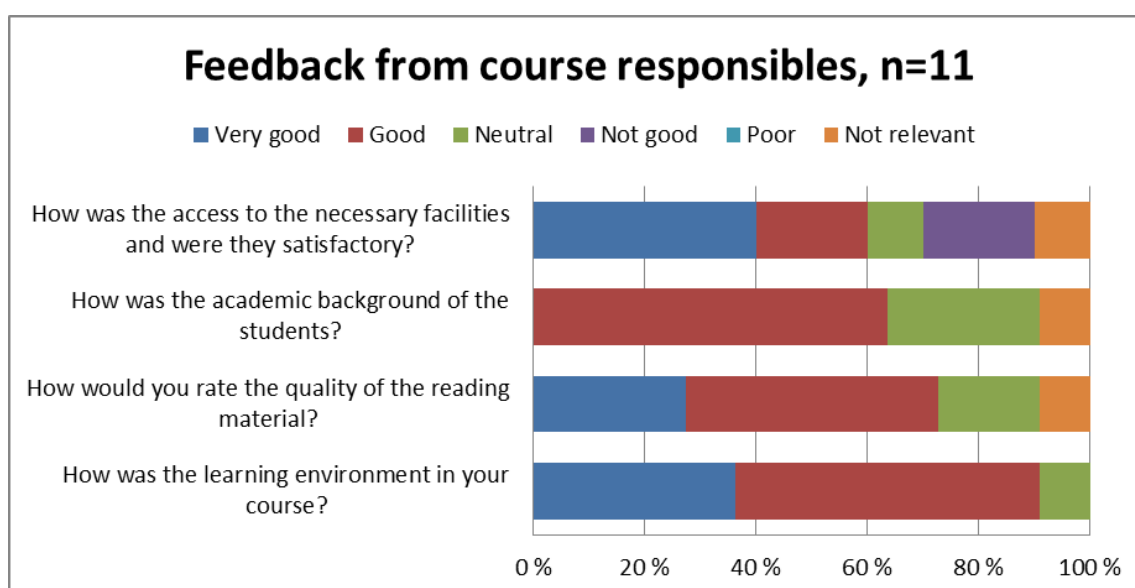


Figure 1: Some of the feedback staff with course responsibilities gave about their student groups in 2020.

4 Learning environment for students

Evaluations 2020

Owing to COVID-19, UNIS cancelled all summer and autumn courses in 2020 except for the course in the Arctic Nature Guide (ANG) programme. A small number of the spring courses (17) had already started or were completed when the pandemic began and are consequently the only courses that constitute the student statistics and course evaluations for 2020. UNIS started using a new electronic course evaluation form in the spring semester in 2020. The form is based on an evaluation system

developed by Ramsden ¹(1991) including some unique questions relevant for UNIS. The evaluation now mainly consists of statements for the students to respond to on a scale from “fully agree” to “fully disagree”, or neutral. The form also directly requests the student’s experience of how skills, competence and knowledge have been acquired, as well as addressing workload, safety training, learning environment, support functions and UNIS in general. The form also contains free-text comment fields. In 2020, UNIS also introduced an annual evaluation among the guest students (at bachelor, master’s and PhD level). This evaluation provides guest students who had an active contract for all or part of the year with the opportunity to provide feedback on everything from learning outcomes, supervision and support functions to their overall satisfaction with their UNIS affiliation. A separate survey specifically about COVID-19 was also sent to all course students and guest students who were present at UNIS in the spring semester in 2020 and thus were directly affected by the pandemic, e.g. by returning home, switching to digital teaching and working from home and cancelled field work.

Results from the course evaluations in 2020

The response rate of the student evaluations in 2020 was lower than normal, 64% (see Table 1), which can be explained by the fact that we were prevented from having physical evaluations at UNIS, which is the normal practice. Several of the courses were evaluated after UNIS was closed and the students had travelled home.

Strengths and weaknesses:

Despite a response rate of 64% and the situation related to COVID-19, the course students provided a lot of positive feedback, especially about field work, safety training, learning environment and course coordinators/lecturers. Criticism from students focuses mainly on IT infrastructure, including platforms for sharing, collaboration and communication. There were also some comments about guest lecturers, e.g. that some of these lectures should be able to be held by the course coordinator and not require an external lecturer being flown in. However, guest lecturers were also highlighted as a strength at UNIS, which provided motivation because the students met specialists with expertise in their field. The workload and how this was distributed throughout the course period was also highlighted as an area with potential for improvement in several courses. The students were also critical of the way COVID-19 was dealt with at UNIS, including the students being encouraged to return home immediately, the transition to digital teaching and how the communication between UNIS and the students was handled. Changes in the form of assessment were generally well received, but several commented that they found the 24-hour home examination challenging.

Table 1: The response rate of evaluations carried out in 2020, with figures from 2019 in brackets where these are available. The COVID-19 survey involved all students who had physical presence at UNIS during the pandemic outbreak in spring 2020.

	Course students (spring courses)	Course coordinators	Guest students with active contract	Guest students physical presence	COVID-19 survey
2020	64% (75%)	73% (53%)	48%	30%	43%

Teaching, assessments and failure rate

The teaching in 2020 received good feedback. The courses implemented during the pandemic received somewhat more mixed feedback, but comments in the free-text fields showed that the students understood that it was difficult to implement field-based courses under the prevailing conditions. Some courses cancelled field work and replaced this with digital field work involving videos and experiences from previous years. Others had just completed the field work when the

¹ Ramsden, P. (1991) A performance indicator of teaching quality in higher education: The Course Experience Questionnaire. *Studies in Higher Education*, 16(2), 129-149.

pandemic began. Many students commented that they appreciated everything that was done to comply with the course descriptions in the best possible way and that a suitable form of assessment was arranged.

The reorganisation of the teaching led to several courses changing the form of assessment and/or grading scale to pass/fail in the spring semester in 2020. Changes were made for a total of 13 courses and mostly concerned switching from a supervised written examination to home examination or oral examination. Weighting between various parts of an examination were also changed and some assessments were removed. Exemptions were generally granted from field work and compulsory activities, but alternative solutions were also offered. The average grade awarded in courses that utilised the grading scale from A-F at UNIS in 2020 was B. The failure rate was 3%. Although this is low, it is still somewhat higher than in previous years (1%). The voluntary, general course SH-201 *The History of Svalbard* was the main reason for the increase. This course was completed before COVID-19 hit Norway, and no clear, immediate reasons have been defined to explain the result or indicate that this will be a future norm. All courses except one completed final evaluations in the spring semester in 2020. Some courses such as SH-201 *The History of Svalbard*, AGF-216 *The Stormy Sun and the Northern Lights* and AS-101 (the safety course) did not receive all the standard questions in the form because this was not relevant. Consequently, the number of responses in the results and figures below varies between 156 and 233. All results are stated in percentage terms.

Academic background and relevance of UNIS courses

The students' reflections on the relevance of UNIS courses for their future show that 61.5% believe that the courses they took at UNIS were relevant or very relevant for their future careers. Moreover, 77% believed their academic background was very good or good enough to take the UNIS courses.

Clear goals, workload, learning activities and constructive alignment

The students were generally satisfied with the relevance of the learning activities in relation to the learning outcome, the objectives for the course and what was expected of them (Figure 2). The workload received mixed feedback and 60% fully agree, agree or respond neutral to the statement that the volume of work made it impossible to comprehend the content thoroughly (Figure 3). When it came to teaching, lecturers and teachers and feedback from lecturer(s), approx. 80% responded that they fully agree or agree that the lecturers motivated the students to do their best, provided helpful feedback and were good at explaining.

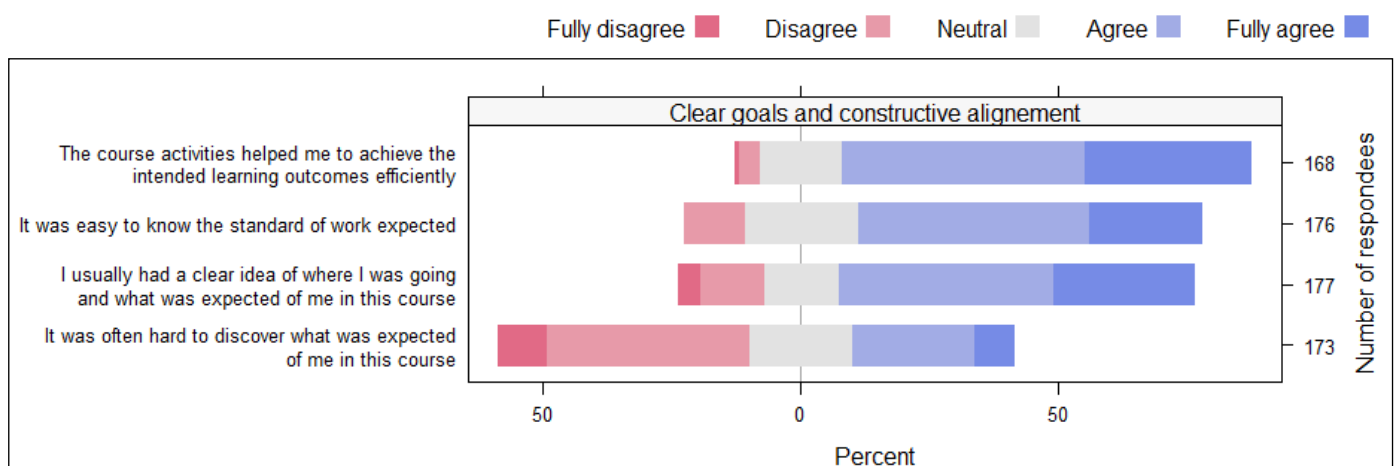


Figure 2: The students' perception of how easy it was to understand what was expected of them and that the learning activities and goals were appropriate for the course(s) they took.

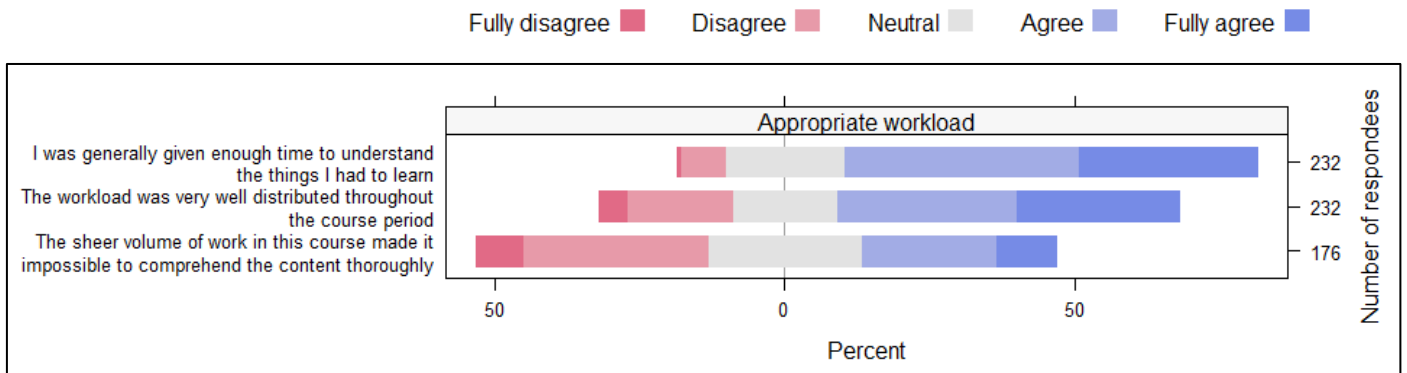


Figure 3: The students' perception of the workload and how this was distributed throughout the course period.

Learning resources, skills acquired and safety training

The students believe some of the learning resources have potential for improvement. This mostly related to the IT infrastructure, but the library also received varied scores in this category. The learning environment and sense of belonging at UNIS both score highly. The students believe that the course content was in line with the course description and that the course materials were relevant and up to date (Figure 4). Roughly two-thirds of the students fully agree or agree that they developed various skills during the course (Figure 5). The safety training received positive feedback when it came to its appropriateness for the course and the students' subjective sense of feeling safe in the field (Figure 6). Some comments were received in the free-text fields about factors the students believe should have greater emphasis in the safety training, e.g. a locked or bent breechblock and the amount of avalanche training.

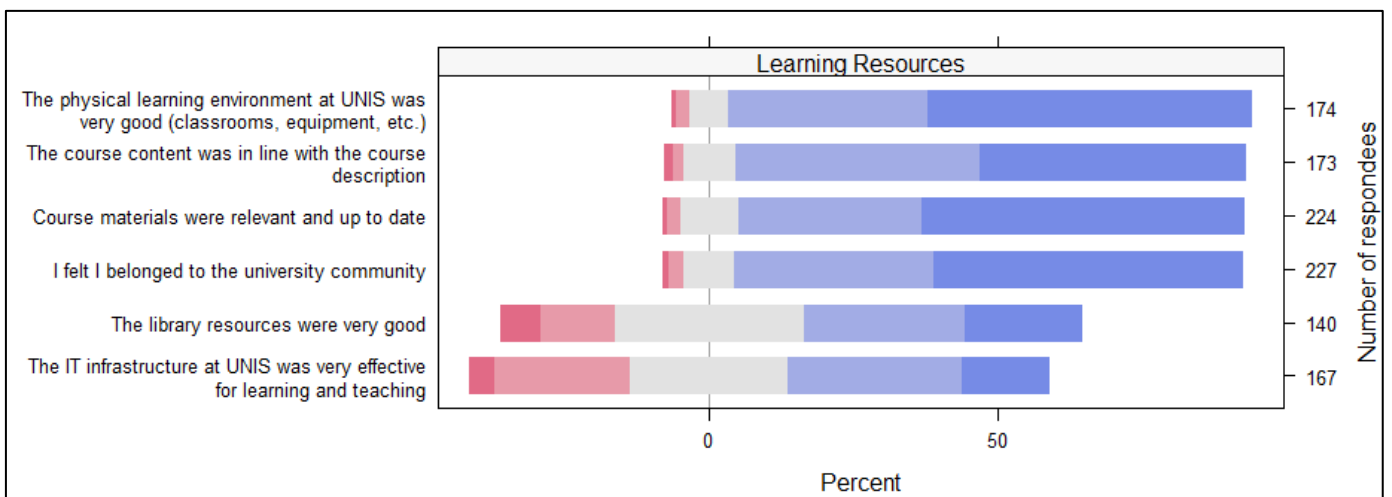


Figure 4: The students' perception of the quality of the learning resources and the learning environment.

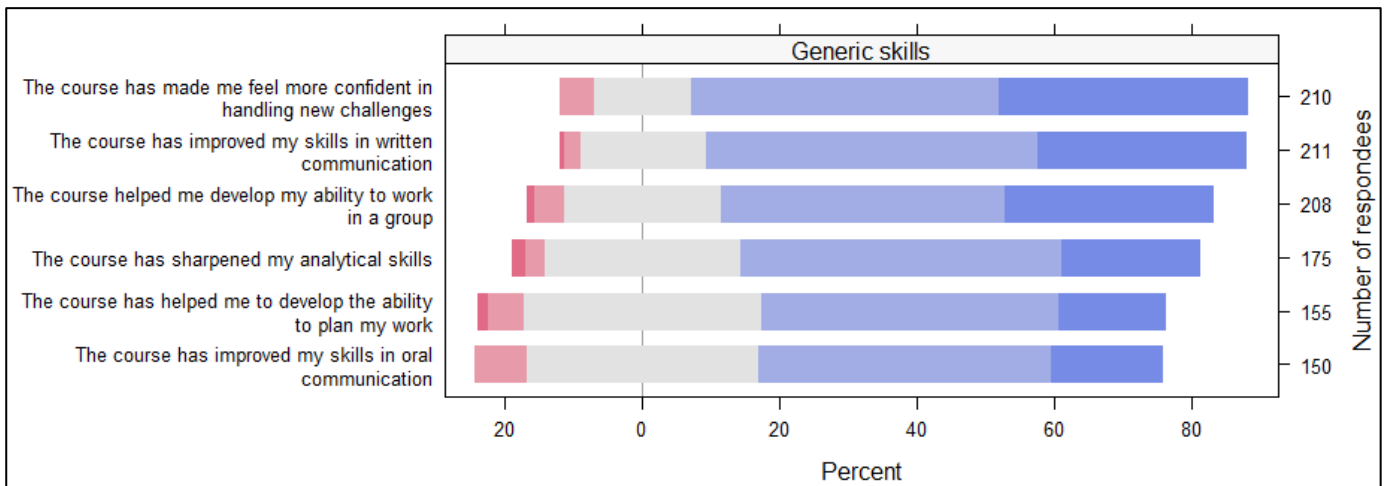


Figure 5: The students' perception of skills they have acquired during the course(s) they took at UNIS.

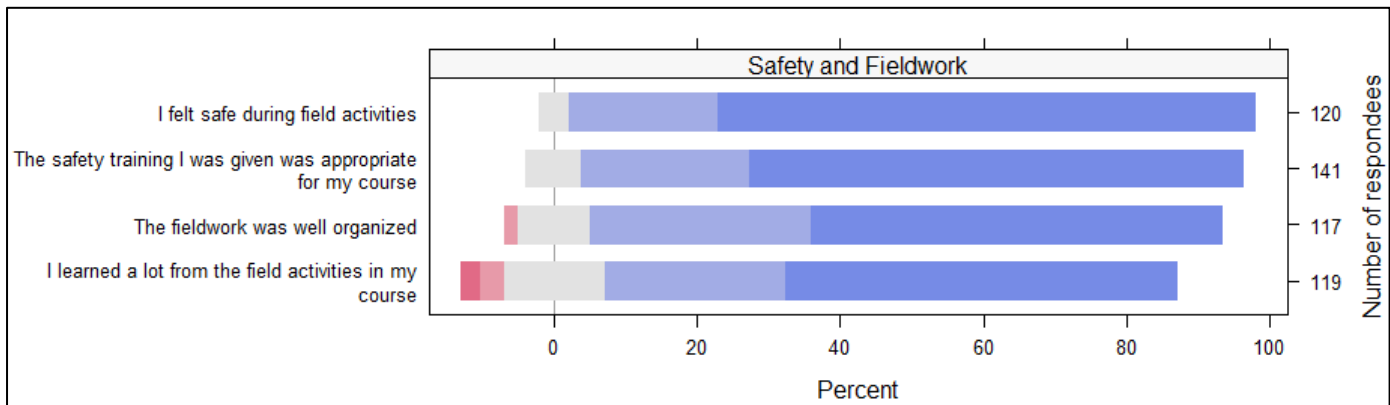


Figure 6: The students' perception of the field work and safety in the field.

Results from the evaluations by guest students in 2020

A total of 92 guest students were asked about factors related to their UNIS affiliation, 48% of which responded. Those who stayed at UNIS in 2020 also received questions directed related to their presence at UNIS. In all, 77% of the students in the guest student category (bachelor, master and PhD students) were satisfied with their UNIS affiliation and, of the 28 students who were present at UNIS during 2020, 86 % were satisfied with the availability of their supervisor(s). Approx. 80% of all guest students gave their supervisor(s) good or very good feedback for their follow-up and feedback (Figure 9). The guest student category provided more mixed feedback about the physical and psychosocial learning environment than the course evaluations. Of the guest students, 50% believe they had good access to IT facilities and services. The guest students had a lower satisfaction with the sense of belonging to UNIS and the university community than the course students. In the free-text comments field, they call for a system to identify and help students who lose access to their supervisor when he/she is absent for various reasons.

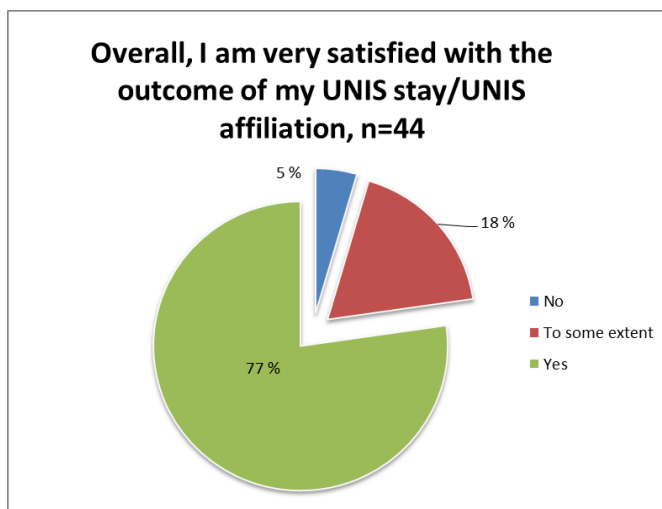


Figure 7: The guest students' (including those not at the campus) feedback about their UNIS affiliation in 2020.

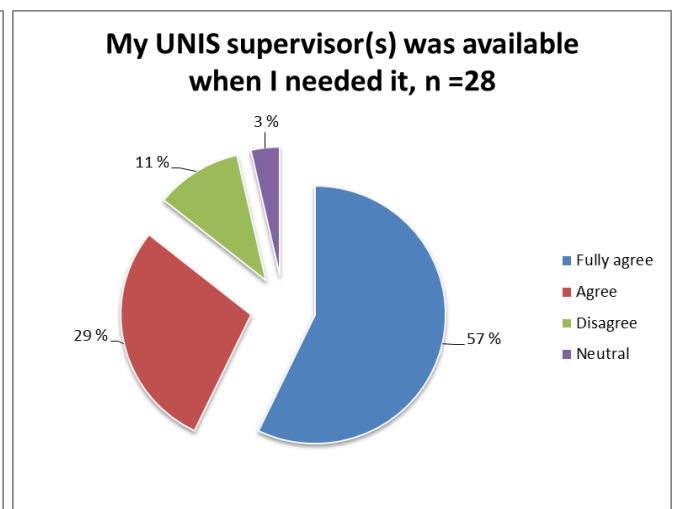


Figure 8: Feedback from guest students who were at UNIS about the availability of their supervisor(s).

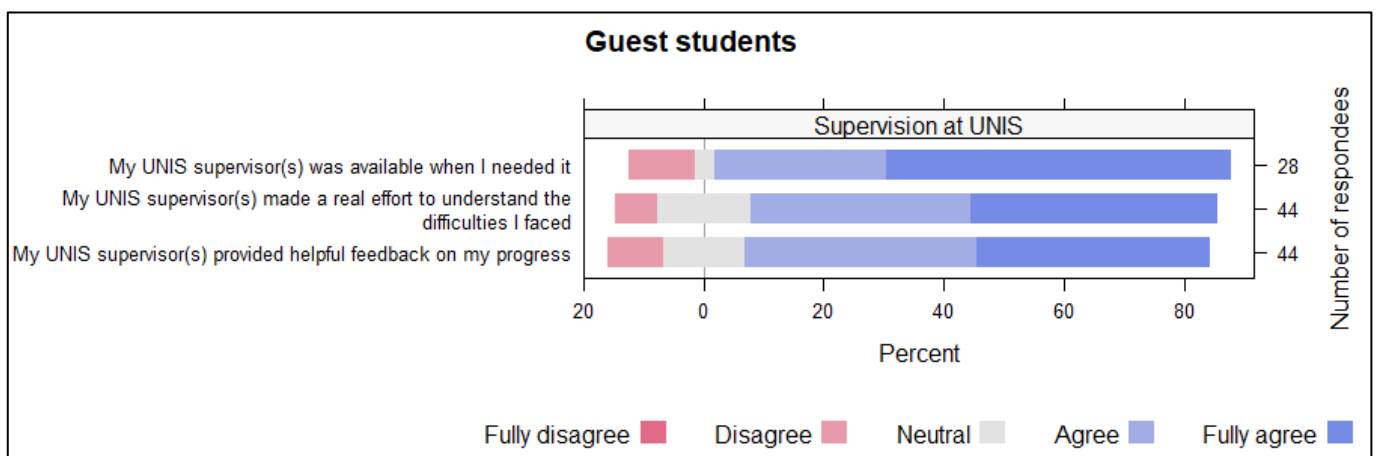


Figure 9: Feedback from guest students about the supervision they received from their UNIS supervisor(s).

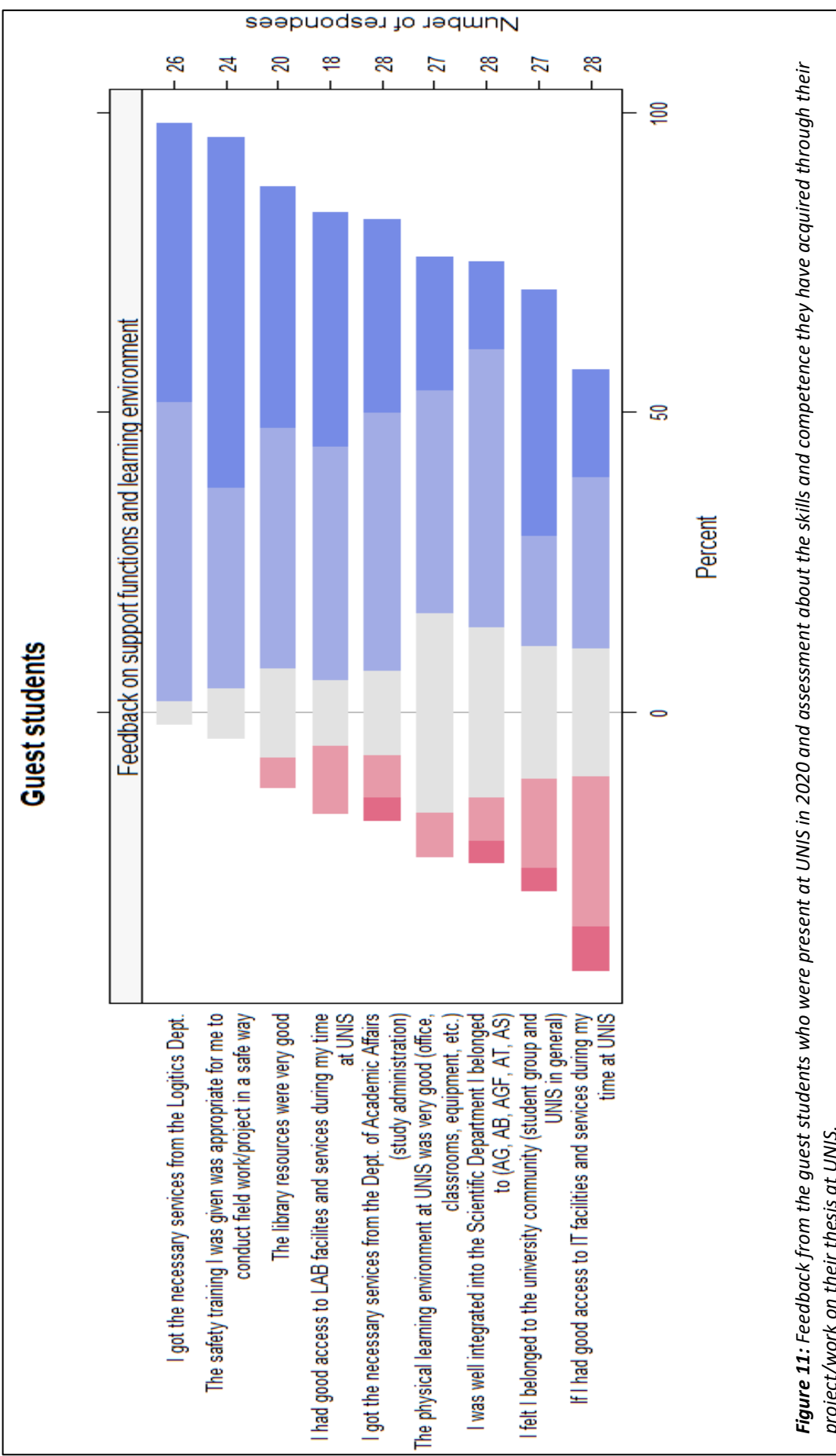


Figure 11: Feedback from the guest students who were present at UNIS in 2020 and assessment about the skills and competence they have acquired through their project/work on their thesis at UNIS.

Results from the COVID-19 survey

Based on the worldwide pandemic and the subsequent changes to student life, UNIS, like several of the Norwegian universities, decided to conduct a survey about the study situation during COVID-19 among course students and guest students. In all, 58 of 134 students (43%) completed the survey, a response rate that UNIS was satisfied with considering most of the students had returned home when the survey was sent out. The survey consisted of two parts: a) the transition to digital teaching and preparation for examinations and b) student life during COVID-19.

The transition to digital teaching and examinations and preparation for examinations received decent feedback. However, the students' perception of the study environment and student life showed that many struggled with motivation and structure in their everyday life. In the free-text field, UNIS received several positive comments about providing financial assistance for the students to travel home. However, there was some criticism about the communication between UNIS and the students, including the channels UNIS used to communicate important information, which were the students' e-mail addresses supplemented by Facebook. The criticism was particularly aimed at the use of Facebook as an information channel. Students also commented that on occasions the information was not given in a sympathetic manner and that confusion arose when information from various sources contradicted each other (UNIS, the Arctic Student Welfare Organisation, the Governor of Svalbard and home universities).

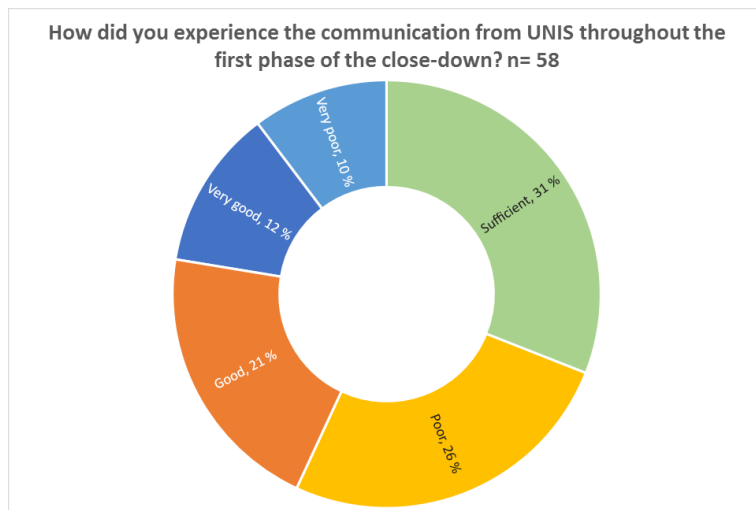


Figure 12: The students' feedback about the communication from UNIS throughout the first phase of the close-down, the request to return home and follow-up of the students.

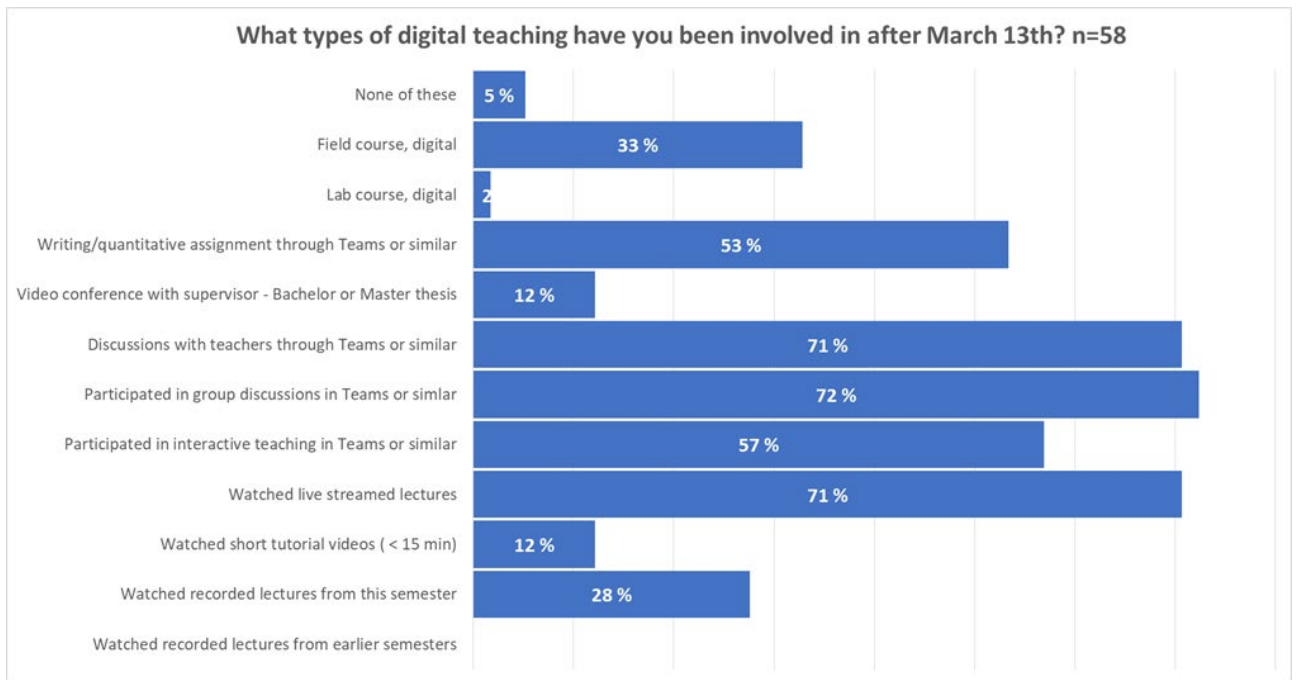


Figure 13: The students' summary of the platforms and forms of digital teaching they were involved in after the close-down of UNIS owing to COVID-19 and the transition to home-based teaching.

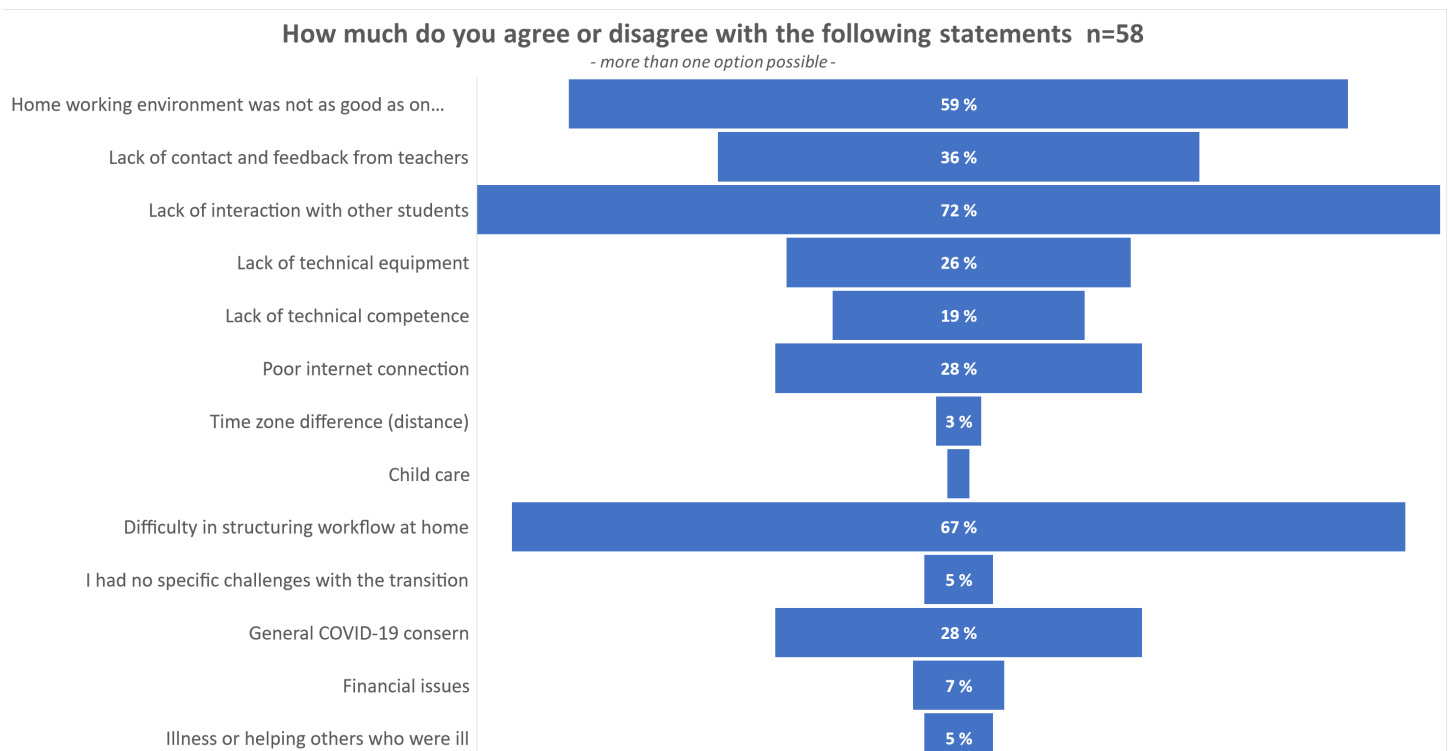


Figure 14: Students affected by COVID-19 and who had a transition to digital teaching summarise the challenges they encountered with home-based teaching.

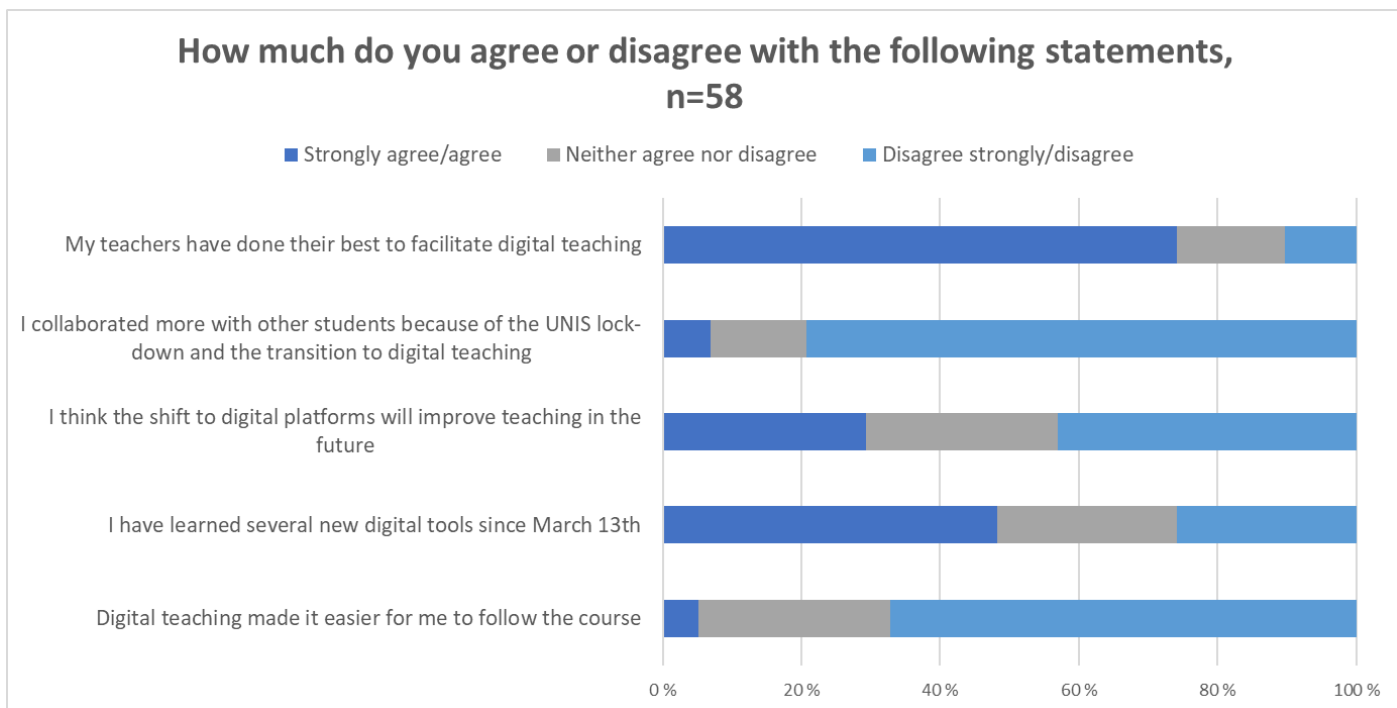


Figure 15: Feedback from students affected by COVID-19 about the transition to digital teaching and the learning outcome.

Student participation

The students' main channels for influence and participation at UNIS are through course evaluations and their student democracy (Student Council), as well as the UNIS board and forums such as bioCEED. Starting from 2020, students are no longer represented in the management group at UNIS. All semester courses have a midway assessment. All the courses in 2020, except one, had a final assessment in writing and all registered guest students evaluated their UNIS affiliation. The COVID-19 survey also provided an opportunity for input from the students. The learning environment is addressed separately in all the evaluations.

Temporary academic staff

UNIS arranges the PhD forum, an academic/social meeting place for the PhD candidates from all the academic departments. This forum addresses topics and issues of common interest and serves as an arena for exchanging information between the PhD candidates, UNIS and the mainland universities. Two such PhD forums were held in 2020. Freelance editor Janet Holmén held presentations at the two forums about academic writing and oral presentations respectively. The PhD course Research ethics and philosophy of science was held at UNIS in the autumn semester through a cooperation agreement with NMBU. Eight PhD students took the course and it received positive feedback from students and lecturers alike. It was emphasized as particularly positive that the course was held physically at UNIS, which enabled interaction and discussions between students and lecturers, in a year when the Corona restrictions generally placed great restrictions on physical teaching.

The PhD forum in October was transformed into a more autonomous group, Temporary Academic Staff. In addition to the PhD students, the postdoctoral fellows and other temporary academic staff were included in the group. The group has roughly the same function as the PhD forum had. However, it has drawn up a mandate and budget and elects its own Chair and Deputy Chair. This group is represented on ECom and participate in the quality work there. The Department of Academic Affairs functions as secretary for the group. The PhD forum has functioned as intended since 2013, but it was both timely and desirable for the group to be more formalised and for the

members themselves to take greater ownership of the group. This group can be a clear voice in the further quality work for the temporary academic staff at UNIS.

Psychosocial learning environment and work

Feedback in the course evaluations describe the learning environment at UNIS as good or very good. UNIS adapts measures that can contribute to a good psychosocial environment. This includes a joint event for the students to mark the start of each semester with a social gathering and the serving of food (only the spring semester in 2020 because there was no course activity at UNIS in the autumn semester 2020). In January 2020, a workshop was held in collaboration with the Student Counselling Service in Tromsø for academic staff and the Department of Academic Affairs focusing on conflict resolution, study environment and students who are struggling. During the same period, a workshop was held for the students, which covered the themes new campus, routines, the Polar Night and intercultural challenges. When all students were encouraged to travel home and transition to digital teaching and Svalbard Science Centre was closed, UNIS had few measures for the students who remained in Longyearbyen. However, all students received the offer of a digital seminar with the Student Counselling Service in Tromsø and Ivar Nordmo from the University of Bergen (UiB) focusing on study routines and preparations for examinations during COVID-19.

A housing subsidy of up to NOK 5,000 per month was introduced from July 2020 for the guest students who chose to stay at UNIS in the autumn semester in 2020. In addition, UNIS arranged various activities during the semester as a trip to the museum, visit to SvalSAT and boat trip to Pyramiden, etc. Moreover, unisBREAKFAST was arranged by bioCEED. Arranging good offerings was challenging owing to the infection control rules. The “Friday Gathering” was held a few times, while the students also initiated various social gatherings themselves. The students still have access to a large equipment store for use in recreational activities, which enabled the students to engage in outdoor activities. An electronic “Speak up” system for notification and reporting of non-conformance or the learning environment/work environment for students and staff was developed in 2020 and is operational from the spring semester in 2021.

5 Main challenges

Based on the feedback and observations, the following main challenges are emphasized:

IT infrastructure

In the latter part of 2020, the IT infrastructure at UNIS received a boost through investment in a lot of new equipment, including a learning platform (Canvas), digital examination system (Wiseflow) and plagiarism detection (Urkund). However, much remains to be done in terms of operations, integrations, training and starting to use the new opportunities. Consequently, much of the feedback from students and staff in 2020 deals with lacking and old equipment (software/hardware), the absence of a learning platform or systems for file sharing/storage and easy communication between students and the course coordinator. Microsoft Teams was installed at UNIS just before COVID-19, so this became a possible channel to solve these challenges when it became necessary to switch to digital teaching. UNIS still does not have FEIDE login for students, which means UNIS needs to do many manual background processes in otherwise efficient systems. Furthermore, there is limited access to IT resources in terms of staffing, which makes it challenging to perform work involving the development/implementation of systems in addition to daily operations. Consequently, the IT situation remains a challenge in all aspects of the organisation, i.e. teaching, practical work involving student assignments and research, coordination between units, communication and opportunities for the best possible learning.

The Department of Academic Affairs is responsible for training and the phasing in software such as Wiseflow, Urkund and Canvas, while the IT Department can provide training in the new systems installed in classrooms and meeting rooms. Although it was not possible to provide a thorough introduction to new IT systems in 2020, the people responsible for the spring courses in 2021 received some training in the use of Canvas. These people function as pilots for Canvas and using the new screens and audio-visual technology in classrooms, meeting rooms and the auditorium Lassegrotta in 2021.

Percentage of Norwegian students and percentage of places filled

In 2020, 64% of the students at UNIS were Norwegian degree students. The increase compared with other years is attributed to the fact that 2020 must be considered an exception owing to COVID-19. This figure includes two cohorts of ANG students, who are primarily Norwegian and are admitted to a programme of study UiT The Arctic University of Norway. Consequently, without taking the ANG students into account, UNIS had a considerably lower proportion of Norwegian degree students. Recruiting Norwegian degree students and the balance between these and international students is still a challenge. The percentage of places filled on UNIS courses was 81%. The courses offered, semester packages, overlapping courses (in terms of theme and/or the timespan for implementation) and liaison with the mainland universities and the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund can be important factors to consider as part of efforts to improve arrangements for Norwegian degree students to come to UNIS for a longer period.

Quality assurance system – responsibility and follow-up

The quality assurance system is well rooted in the organisation, and work is structured in relation to its description. However, it is necessary to revise the system and strengthen the rooting of the system by clarifying roles, responsibilities and follow-up. This will also be useful for new employees. There is also room to improve how UNIS deals with findings from the course evaluations by students and staff and how it adapts the courses to address the findings. Moreover, there is no requirement to document continual, midway and/or operational evaluations of courses. However, from experience, this is a useful tool for adjusting the course along the way. A revision of the quality assurance system is also required owing to changes in the legislation and regulation. The revision will also contribute to increased focus on quality development among UNIS' management and board.

Other factors

As in 2019, the lack of reading lists (or that these were sent out too late), a wish for more academic preparation prior to field work and a shortage of space in the computer and teaching labs were recurring factors.

6 Work on quality development and quality of education

There is a strong focus on the quality of education at UNIS, and the UNIS Education Committee (ECom) and the management group at UNIS have followed up the quality work in 2020. A collated report detailing the main trends from all course evaluations in the previous semester, as well as the status of the list of measures in the previous report on educational quality, was presented to ECom in January 2020 and the management group in September 2020. The role of vice-dean for education was discontinued when this trial arrangement expired in the summer of 2020. This combined with COVID-19 has led to ECom being less active in 2020, and the management group has therefore had responsibility for all matters related to quality of education. The board considered the report on educational quality for 2019 in June 2020.

Changes and improvements to courses are the responsibility of the individual course coordinator and UNIS works on the assumption that measures are taken when needed. The Department of Academic

Affairs also reads all the course evaluations and can forward courses that receive particularly strong criticism to the head of department or management group.

UNIS facilitates teaching training and development for the academic staff. Owing to the COVID-19 situation, the university pedagogy course planned for 2020 was postponed until 2021. The *Learning Forum* is the largest annual event focusing on quality work and development for all academic staff, and this was held with a combination of physical and digital participation in 2020 (see chapter 8). Staff have received the offer of attending several workshops, meetings, seminars and presentations, some of which were organised by bioCEED or iEarth (see chapter 7).

7 Centre for excellence in education

bioCEED

bioCEED plays an important role in pushing for and initiating quality development in teaching methods and forms of assessment, as well as collegial sharing of experiences. In 2020, bioCEED has been important as a resource for assisting and training staff during the transition to digital teaching and creating a digital learning environment. In close collaboration with UiB, UNIS staff had the opportunity to take part in online skills development groups and lectures on this topic. bioCEED also pushed for meetings for the students linked to new, digital study routines. Furthermore, bioCEED has arranged unisBREAKFAST for the students, bioCEED seminars for staff focusing on teaching, academic writing workshops for PhD students and teaching portfolio workshops for staff in connection with calls for applications for status as an Excellent Teaching Practitioner (ETP), as well as worked on creating a schematic overview of the workload for PhD students. bioCEED has also worked on a separate website containing tools and tips for transitioning to digital teaching. bioCEED also works with iEarth in relevant contexts.

iEarth

In December 2019, UNIS became a partner in a new Centre of Excellence in Education – iEarth, a national earth science collaboration between UiB, the University of Oslo (UiO), UiT and UNIS. The Departments of Arctic Geology and Arctic Geophysics at UNIS are jointly responsible for Progress domain 4, which focuses on further developing the field learning in the new geoscience programme being developed in iEarth. Academic staff from each department are education chairs for each thematic area. In 2020, iEarth ran several digital learning seminars on various themes linked to educational quality. iEarth was in an establishment phase in the spring of 2020. The formal opening took place on 1 June with a subsequent local event to mark the opening at UNIS on 13 October. In this context, a Gelearning Forum for students and staff who held at UNIS. iEarth contributed to Learning Forum 2020 and works with bioCEED in relevant contexts.

8 Learning Forum

The Learning Forum 2020, the seventh in a row, had digital teaching as the main theme. A total of 94 people from throughout the organisation took part, including four presenters and 16 students. This is a record number of participants for the annual event. In all, 29 staff and students contributed to the Learning Forum through organisational work, presentations and sharing sessions. The event was held physically at UNIS with strict infection control measures. Owing to COVID-19, the event was streamed via Teams. Between 14 and 20 people followed the live stream all times, internally at UNIS as well as outside the archipelago (adjunct professors). Some presentations and workshops were also held digitally. A new feature this year was an informal poster session including dining and refreshments, which was well received.

In the evaluation of the event, the staff emphasized the opportunity to discuss and share teaching-related themes with colleagues from all the departments as being particularly important and useful. The panel debate in which lecturers from UNIS shared experiences about the transition to digital teaching in spring 2020 was considered extremely useful. With respect to topics for the future, there is a desire for more about collegial sharing, as well as more workshops focusing on practical training in the use of digital tools, learning platforms or other systems (administrative or academic) of importance for educational quality at UNIS. Forms of assessment is a topic desired by several staff. The event is a measure for developing the educational quality and creating a culture for working to enhance the quality of education, but just as importantly – and perhaps especially in 2020 – a good measure for the working environment. All staff can access all presentations and streams in Teams.

9 Infrastructure for teaching and learning

Measures to reduce condensation and improve energy efficiency are still necessary to ensure a good working and studying environment as there is significant pressure on the offices, teaching space, laboratories and storage space at the Svalbard Science Centre. Teaching laboratories and computer rooms are especially cramped. In 2020, UNIS invested in a new boat that will be used in teaching from 2022, purchased new IT equipment and upgraded classrooms, meeting rooms, computer rooms and the auditorium Lassegrotta. In 2020, there have been no challenges related to capacity in classrooms and office spaces for guest students, owing to COVID-19. However, this is not considered representative of a normal year when UNIS lacks available classrooms for teaching on some occasions. There are currently places in reading rooms or work areas and very few group rooms for students at UNIS, but this will be taken care of in the Arctic Student Welfare Organisation's new building, which is scheduled for completion in 2022. UNIS is participating actively in this work with the aim of ensuring appropriate and good premises for this purpose.

10 Library

The library was closed for much of 2020 owing to the pandemic but also had periods with limited opening hours. Loans were still possible when the library was closed, with loaned items being issued to letterboxes instead of directly to users. Consequently, the library has experienced a significant decline in the number of visits and physical loans. There has also been somewhat reduced use of electronic resources compared to normal years. The decline is attributed to reduced demand because there have been fewer students at UNIS. In 2020, the library staff have given priority to catching up on registration work. The library and the users have benefited greatly from the student assistants in both the spring and autumn semesters in 2020. The library offers CRISTin but does not have capacity for research support and an institutional repository. As in previous years, it has been remarked that the library has reduced opportunities for training and follow up of students compared to the rest of the higher education sector.

As well as having a role as an academic support unit, the library is also important for the psychosocial learning environment. In 2020, lending board games has been especially welcomed by the users.

11 The Director's recommended prioritisation of measures for 2021/2022

2020 was a demanding year for students and staff alike. When UNIS was closed on 12 March, a target was set that all course students at UNIS should be given an opportunity to complete the semester by switching to digital teaching. Determined collaboration between highly adaptable teaching staff and students resulted in a completion rate of 97%.

All courses contain a significant field component and, without being able to guarantee field work, it was not possible to admit new course students in 2020. This unintentionally created financial wiggle room to catch up on a large backlog of digital solutions and replace outdated laboratory equipment, which had been demanded in previous student evaluations. Despite the upgrade of the IT infrastructure in 2020 and the fact that there was not enough time for adequate training in the use of various systems and software, a good physical foundation has been laid for improving the IT infrastructure and software related to teaching.
























UNIS has a good culture for collegial collaboration in the development of new learning methods. Positive elements about the digital teaching were presented during *Learning Forum 2020* that will be continued during the normal situation. It is essential to increase the basic staffing at the IT Department in 2021.

From the autumn semester in 2020, all the academic departments are represented by their head of department head on ECOM. This measure is designed to ensure a good rooting of the work involving quality development in the HR line.











Recommended priorities in 2021:

- Provide training in the use of digital solutions
- Become greener: Utilise digital solutions, optimise the use of guest lecturers, semester packages
- Establish statistics of successful completion of PhD education
- Quality check to ensure the expected academic background is relative to the specified admission requirements
- Increase the recruitment potential by intensifying collaboration with the mainland universities to achieve better integration of the courses offered
- Add course offers for the priority area energy when revising the course portfolio, redefining courses or developing new courses
- Implement an annual strategic assessment of the total courses offered (staff, student production, relevance to research and society, cost)

12 Reporting on the status of measures in 2020/2021 as of 31.12.2020

Completed =  Work in progress =  Not started =  Continual = 	Status
Continue the IT infrastructure project, including investments and upgrades	
Commence the learning management system (LMS) planning project	
Plan the phasing in of a system for digital examinations and plagiarism detection	
Upgrade the IT equipment in classrooms (projectors, cables and computers)	
LAB: upgrading of equipment including microscopes, and creation of maintenance procedures	
Update the form for teaching loads among the academic staff	
Update the form for course workloads for students and survey 50% of the UNIS courses	
Stipulate fixed course periods 2021. Evaluate the overall course portfolio	
Clarify the use of an open course code	
Plan when and how to test and evaluate new teaching methods and discipline-related courses. iEarth, bioCEED and FieldPASS are natural sparring partners.	
Increase the collaboration with local institutions and actors with a view to increasing the use of the local areas for field-based education that can have a direct social benefit	
Discuss the wish for guidelines pertaining to the number of courses per department per year – course portfolio	
Discuss the wish for guidelines for the number of guest lecturers per course/per year	
Discuss the students' feedback about the need for more academic preparation before field work	
Assess various measures that can homogenize the background knowledge among the course students	
Review/revise the quality assurance system	
Establish and operationalize the "Speak up" system for students.	
Establish an evaluation form for guest students at UNIS	
Improve the process for scheduling and registering of field requirements, including cruise time	
Improve the resource pages for educational quality on the UNIS website, including various tools, forms and instructions: assessment guidelines for examiners, system for reading lists	

13 Prioritised measures and focus areas in 2021 and 2022

Completed = 	Work in progress = 	Not started = 	Continual = 	Status
Focus area 1: IT infrastructure				
Continue the IT infrastructure project, including investments in remaining rooms (e.g. Festningen) and training in the use of new systems and facilities				
Training in and full implementation of the LMS Canvas in all courses				
Full implementation of new systems for digital examinations (Wiseflow) and plagiarism detection (Urkund)				
Focus area 2: Quality in teaching, course development and courses offered				
Implement testing and evaluation of new teaching methods and discipline-related courses. iEarth, bioCEED and FieldPASS are natural sparring partners.				
Quality check that course descriptions and content are relative for the academic background				
Discuss the students' feedback about the need for more academic preparation before field work				
Revise UNIS' course portfolio, look at course packages, relevance to working life and popularity, resources and the teaching capacity, assess guidelines for the number of courses per department per year				
Complete/decide the matter about UNIS starting to use of an open course code				
Focus area 3: Library				
Investigate and implement <i>Nasjonalt Vitenarkiv</i> (NVA), including master's theses and other student papers				
Upgrade the computer group room at the library to stimulate increased use				
Increase the proportion of e-books in the library				
Ensure that the library offers training in the use of library resources at least once every semester				
Complete Kopinor licensing agreement				
Focus area 4: Green profile and societal relevance				
Assess the use of guest lecturers based on evaluations and a greener profile				
Increase the collaboration with local institutions and actors with a view to increasing the use of the local area for field-based education that can also have a direct social benefit				
Focus area 5: Structural and infrastructure needs				
Revise the quality assurance system				
Contribute in the work to create new reading room places in the Arctic Student Welfare Organisation's new building				
LAB – create maintenance procedures				
Improve the process for scheduling and registering of field requirements, including cruise time				
Improve the resource pages for educational quality on the UNIS website, including tools such as assessment guidelines for examiners, system for reading lists and other forms, etc.				
Update the form for teaching loads among the academic staff				
Update the form for course workloads for students and survey 50% of the UNIS courses				
Establish statistics of successful completion of PhDs at UNIS				