Overview of Semester, Supervision & Course Evaluations, Spring 2017

Semester Reviews

Reviews of the Spring 2017 semester were good but not as good as they perhaps could be. Students had many complimentary remarks about their coursework and senses of what they were learning (the value of specific topics). Nonetheless, only 57% of students noted the overall benefit of their study activities as either “very big” or “big” – though 90% noted the benefits of their study in the semester as “average” or better. Issues seemed to fall in a number of areas – that courses are too infrequent, that 8-9 sessions in a class do not feel sufficient to cover the topics at hand, that students didn’t feel properly informed about deadlines and that certain modules could have been better organized. There was also a desire for more space for student discussion. Still, the general direction of students’ comments was that they were excited about course and program content – they simply want more. This coincides with the idea that 87% of respondents indicated that they either agree or highly agree that they “thrive” in the education.

The study fully acknowledges the desire of students to receive more teaching and forums for discussion of the central issues both in the study at-large as well as specific semesters. The study is working to extend all of its resources as far as possible. It is also has made a concrete effort to noticeably expand its range of extra-curricular offerings (film evenings, discussion nights, guest lectures and extra-curricular seminars). The result should be a fuller activity schedule.

Regarding communication, while the study recognizes the issue as formulated by the respondents, the specific examples noted by respondents do not appear to correspond to reality. i.e., claims have been made that students were not emailed or notified of something when in fact they were. The study is thus engaged in a concerted effort to underline the need for students to check their communications from the study on a daily basis.

Supervision Reviews

Students were highly content with the supervision process. They clearly experienced their supervisors as available and enthusiastic to help them on their project as well as providing relevant knowledge. There were a few individual concerns that supervisors were not expert enough in the areas they were intended to supervise.

Efforts are, and should be, ongoing to ensure that supervisors supervise as close as possible to the areas of expertise. The study recognizes the seriousness of this issue and attempts to match project supervisors with projects related to their field to the fullest possible extent in view of given resources and personnel. The study has also communicated to supervisors that they have latitude to help tone projects towards their area(s) of expertise in order to best help students generate the best possible project.
Course Reviews

Students had in fact quite positive experiences with the semester’s courses; they were perceived as challenging and full of useful information. Though the level was expressed as high with a number of courses – e.g., Cultural, Social and Political Theory from 2nd semester, or Discourse Studies: Theories and Methods from 2nd semester – it was suggested that the material was good and made ultimately digestible. There were many – many – highly positive comments about the teaching skills of many of the teachers. There were concerns that 4th semester Methods in Qualitative and Quantitative Research that the instructors were difficult to understand – linguistically – and that 6th semester Regional Studies is simply too diffuse, and a bit thin, as a course. Overall, however, the level of enthusiasm expressed towards courses and their instructors was high.

While the study is highly confident in the abilities of the instructors working with the Qualitative and Quantitative Methods course, the course is now being changed to a course solely in Quantitative Methods and placed as an elective – that in relation to general curriculum reforms. The study is also aware of the comments around Regional Studies. There will need to be a discussion among the courses instructors and study leadership about what might be addressed in the course to better communicate its substance to the students.

Overview of Education Evaluations, LISE, Spring 2017

The overall evaluations of the LISE education were, in fact, excellent. 94% of respondents saw clear coherence and progression in the education, and 87% had a good or better experience regarding their academic competencies (the remaining 13% were noncommittal, as opposed to negative). 0% of respondents indicated that they disagreed with the notion that they had improved regarding their ability to formulate problems, work with them, and engage in long-term work process. The one area of concern is that roughly one-third of respondents felt that both the study and university at-large did not sufficiently address career opportunities.

The study is pleased that students find the content engaging, challenging, and bringing a level of educational intensity. Via strengthening its curriculum, expanding extracurricular activities and fillings its schedule to the maximum possible extent, the study only hopes to further the overall strength of LISE. Regarding issues concerning career possibilities, the study is aware of this issue. As a BA program, however, the study also places extensive focus on possibilities for MA study upon completion of LISE. The study organizes a day each Fall semester with former LISE students pursuing MA degrees both at AAU and around the world, and have former students address their career paths with current LISE students.