

Course report: How to study behavior in vertebrates with focus on fish and rodents, 1.5 credits

Course report for “How to study behavior in vertebrates with focus on fish and rodent” held January 30 – February 3, 2023.

The course had 30 participants and was held in a hybrid format with most lectures and some participants onsite in Uppsala and others participating through Zoom. The decision to organize the course in a hybrid format was based on the feedback from the course installment in 2021 which was fully remote due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to the course evaluation (17 respondents), the participants were largely very pleased with the course (general opinion 4.5 ± 0.6 and fulfilled expectations 4.2 ± 0.8 , out of 5 (mean \pm SD)). The participants appreciated the interactive hybrid format and they were very pleased with the course organization (4.8 ± 0.5 out of 5 (mean \pm SD)).

The hybrid format promoted a broad international representation (participants were from institutions in Sweden, Denmark, France, Greece, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, Pakistan, Portugal and Spain) which facilitated the course and the scientific discussions. We are very pleased with the hybrid format and will likely continue to give the course as such and continue to develop the interactive and practical parts of the course in this format.

Weaknesses raised in the course evaluation regarded the pace and density of some lectures and some lacking instructions for the group task. For future courses, a revision of the lecturing schedule could be made, perhaps revisiting the idea of only scheduling half days, which was not implemented since the course was open to attend onsite also for external participants but no one chose that option. In addition, the group task should have clearer instructions, however, the task itself was highly appreciated and can be further improved upon with the feedback from the evaluation.

Comments regarding the level of the course were raised in both directions, some participants thought the level was too high (three participants answered 5, too high, on the level of the course) and some participants reported that the level was a bit too low (no participant answered 1, too low, or 2 on the level of the course but it was expressed in the comments). However, a majority (10 out of 17 respondents) answered 3, indicating that they were pleased with the level of the course. This is hard to correct for since the level of the participants is varied, we had participants ranging from master students through Ph.D. students to postdocs, researchers and technicians, all with different experience with differing types of experiments. As suggested previously, we asked some pre-course questions and disseminated the answers to the lecturers and although the issue persisted, the critique was less than the last installment of the course.

Overall, the course was highly appreciated by the participants and good suggestions to improve the course was raised.