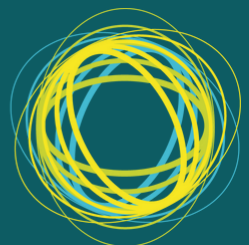


# UniPID Virtual Studies Student Feedback Report 2021-2023



**UNIPID**  
FINNISH UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP  
FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## **UniPID Virtual Studies Student Feedback Report 2021-2023**

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# STUDENT FEEDBACK REPORT 2021-2023

## 1. Introduction

The Finnish University Partnership for International Development (UniPID) is a network of ten Finnish universities<sup>1</sup> that seeks to advance universities' global responsibility and strengthen their response to global challenges. UniPID was established in 2002 after the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development, with the aim of promoting knowledge-based sustainable development cooperation between Finland and the Global South.

In line with UniPID's mission to advance global responsibility and sustainable development through academic cooperation, the network provides support services to universities to integrate global responsibility into the three pillars of higher education: education, research and societal impact. Specifically, UniPID offers virtual studies, supports interdisciplinary research, and contributes to policy discussions on development and education.

Through its Education pillar, UniPID aims to provide students with access to high-quality courses on sustainable development pathways while fostering collaboration with peers from the Global South. To achieve this, UniPID coordinates and funds the Virtual Studies Programme, enabling students to engage in specialized, multidisciplinary training offered by member universities. Each year, UniPID, in collaboration with its member universities, offers 10–20 online courses. All courses are conducted in English, carry a credit value of 5 ECTS, and are free of charge for students enrolled in UniPID member universities. Since 2020, some courses have been organized in partnership with universities from the Global South, in which case they are also available free of charge to students from these partner institutions

The UniPID Virtual Studies courses are designed to complement students' degree studies at their home universities, either as individual courses or as part of a 25-credit module titled *Sustainability in Development*. This module is tailored for students seeking to integrate global challenges and sustainable development perspectives into their academic programs. The topics covered in the UniPID Virtual Studies Programme include, but are not limited to, development, education, gender, human rights, health, economics, trade, governance, rule of law, environment, sustainability, climate change, conflicts, decolonialism, migration, extractivism, and social movements.

The UniPID Virtual Studies Catalogue is updated annually through a *Call for Course Proposals*, inviting teaching staff from member universities to submit course proposals that address global development challenges, with a particular emphasis on perspectives from the Global South. Additionally, UniPID actively encourages the co-creation of joint courses with partner universities in the Global South, fostering collaborative course design while expanding access beyond Finnish university students.

Course selection is carried out by the UniPID Virtual Studies Working Group, applying rigorous selection criteria. These include the course's alignment with the UniPID Virtual Studies

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<sup>1</sup> Aalto University, Hanken School of Economics, Tampere University, University of Eastern Finland, University of Helsinki, University of Jyväskylä, University of Lapland, University of Oulu, University of Turku, Åbo Akademi University.

Programme, its relevance to students' needs, the academic rigor of the course design and content, the qualifications of the teaching staff, and the extent to which Global South perspectives and partnerships are incorporated. Selected courses receive funding and are included in the UniPID Virtual Studies Catalogue for three consecutive academic years.

### 1.1 Background on respondents and courses

Upon course completion, students are asked to provide feedback on both the course content and the UniPID Virtual Studies Programme as a whole. Students' input is collected through the *Student Feedback Form* (see Appendix 1), and the results are subsequently shared with teachers to support the further development of course content and design for future offerings. Additionally, the feedback is utilized by the UniPID Coordination Unit to facilitate the continuous improvement of the Virtual Studies Programme.

This internal evaluation report analyzes the student feedback collected from those who registered for and completed UniPID virtual courses between 2021 and 2023. It is important to note that course feedback is provided voluntarily and anonymously, and that teachers are responsible for distributing the feedback form to students.

Between 2021 and 2023, 19 virtual courses were offered. Some of them only for one time, others for two academic years and some were offered during the three years of this report, thus representing a total of 35 course offerings. Across these offerings, 270 students responded to the feedback form. The highest number of responses was recorded in 2022, with 109 students providing feedback, while 2023 had the lowest participation, with only 75 responses (Figure 1).

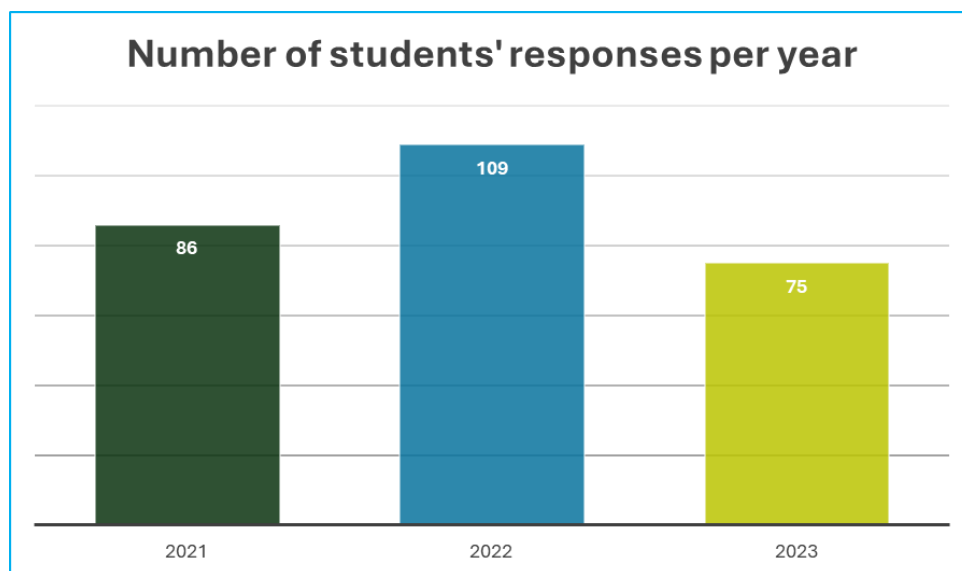


Figure 1. Number of students' responses per year.

In 2021, the courses with the highest number of respondents were *Concepts of Sustainability* and *Social Protection and Health*, each with 19 responses. In 2022, *Concepts of Sustainability* had the most respondents (n=25), followed by *Migration, Development, and Human Rights* (n=22). In 2023, *Curriculum Development for Climate Change Education in the*

*Global South* and *Concepts of Sustainability* received the highest number of responses, with 13 each. The respondent number of each course per year is summarized in Appendix 2.

Compared to the total number of course registrations (n=1,649) from 2021 to 2023, the course feedback response rate is approximately 16%. When considering the number of course completions during the same period (n=929), the response rate increases to around 29%. While this may seem like a low number of respondents, it aligns with the average feedback response rates for online courses in higher education. According to Chapman and Joines (2017), response rates for online education typically range between 30% and 40%.

It is important to note that this Student Feedback Report does not aim to fully represent the experiences of all students in the UniPID Virtual Studies Programme, given the relatively low response rate. However, it serves as a valuable tool to capture students' impressions of the programme and to identify areas for potential improvement. In addition to this report, it is recommended to also consider the feedback provided by UniPID teachers, as well as other constructive comments that teachers may have received during the course development.

## 1.2 Evaluation process

The analysis and assessment of the UniPID Virtual Studies Programme, from the students' perspective, was based on information and statistics collected through the Student Feedback Form completed by students over the three-year period 2021-2023. The Student Feedback Form consisted of 32 questions organized into three types:

- a. **Closed-ended questions**, responded on a five-point Likert scale (Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree).
- b. **Multiple choice questions**, assessed using three-point scales (High-Decent-Poor; Too much-Just right-Too little; Too long-Suitable-Too short; Too difficult-Just right-Too easy; Too high-Just right-Too low).
- c. **Open-ended questions**, allowing longer and free-format responses.

It is important to note that only questions type (a) and (b) were mandatory in the form. The open-ended questions (n=7) were optional, which explains the lower response rate for this section compared to the compulsory ones.

The evaluation process of the feedback collected between 2021 and 2023 followed these steps:

1. Both closed-ended and multiple-choice responses were grouped into three main themes:
  - Learning outcome and course content.
  - Learning environment and course design.
  - Course guidance and workload.
2. The responses were assigned numeric values on a 1-5 or 1-3 scale, as appropriate.
3. Average scores were calculated to provide an overall indication of student opinions.
4. Open-ended responses were analyzed, coded and thematically categorized. These qualitative perceptions were grouped into a fourth theme of analysis:
  - Overview of the learning experience.

Additionally, it is important to highlight that the feedback collected via the Student Feedback Form not only served as the basis for statistical analysis but also informed other sections of this report, including *Further Consideration*, *Recommendations*, *Areas of Improvement*, and *Future Themes*. The detailed steps and areas of analysis are summarized in Appendix 3.

## 2. The 2021-2023 feedback analysis by themes

This chapter presents key themes identified in the student feedback on UniPID Virtual Studies from 2021–2023. Drawing from both qualitative and quantitative data, the analysis explores how students experienced the courses, what they gained from them, and where there is room for improvement. The themes are organized to highlight learning outcomes, course structure and content, interaction and collaboration, and challenges faced by students.

Quantitative responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), which allowed for consistent evaluation of learning outcomes, course design, and overall satisfaction. In addition, specific questions on course duration, level of difficulty, and workload were evaluated using multiple-choice formats. Qualitative feedback was gathered through open-ended questions and analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns.

The chapter is organized into four key themes:

1. Learning outcomes and course content
2. Learning environment and course design
3. Course guidance and workload
4. Overview of the learning experience

Together, these themes offer detailed insight into the strengths of the virtual studies program as well as opportunities for further enhancement.

### 2.1 Learning outcomes and course content

This theme examines how students perceived the learning outcomes of the UniPID Virtual Studies courses from 2021 to 2023. It focuses on students' experiences with the relevance and clarity of course content, as well as the extent to which the courses supported their understanding of global issues and subject-specific knowledge. The section also considers how well the course structure facilitated critical thinking and engagement, offering insights into the overall educational impact of the program.

- *I have a better understanding of global sustainable development as a result of the course*

The feedback has demonstrated that the courses have consistently supported meaningful learning and knowledge development. One of the most significant outcomes across all years was that students developed a strong understanding of global issues and subject-specific knowledge. A large majority (250 students) agreed and strongly agreed that they had developed a better understanding of global sustainable development through the course, with an average rating of 4.39 out of 5. This finding aligns with UniPID's education strategy, which

emphasizes access to high-quality courses on sustainable development pathways and opportunities for collaboration with peers from the Global South (Figure 2).

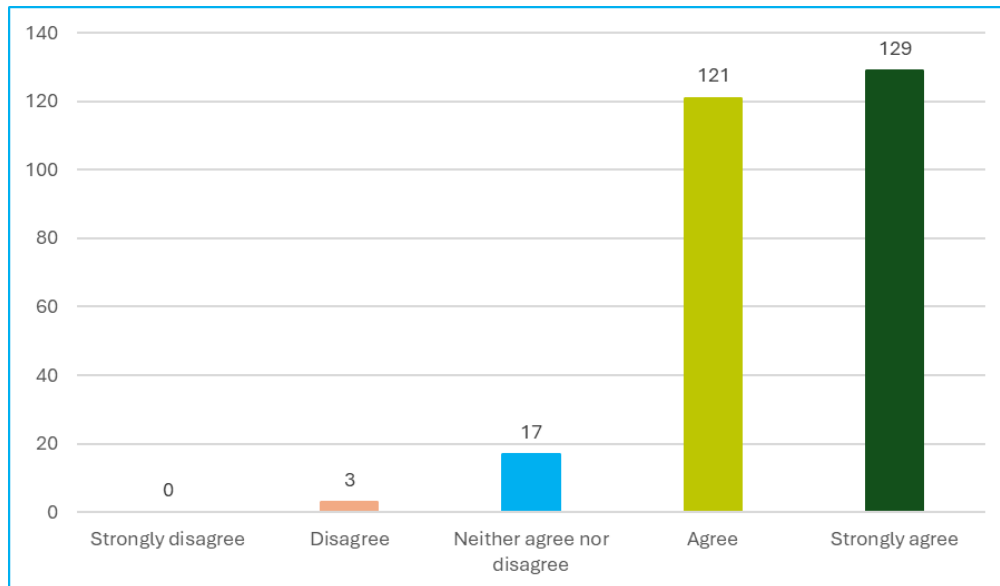


Figure 2. I have a better understanding of global sustainable development

- **The course contributed to my capacity to examine local, global, and intercultural issues, and to understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others**

In addition to content-specific knowledge, students reported substantial gains in their ability to think across cultural and geographic boundaries. 94.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the course helped them examine local, global, and intercultural issues, and to better understand and appreciate different worldviews (Figure 3).

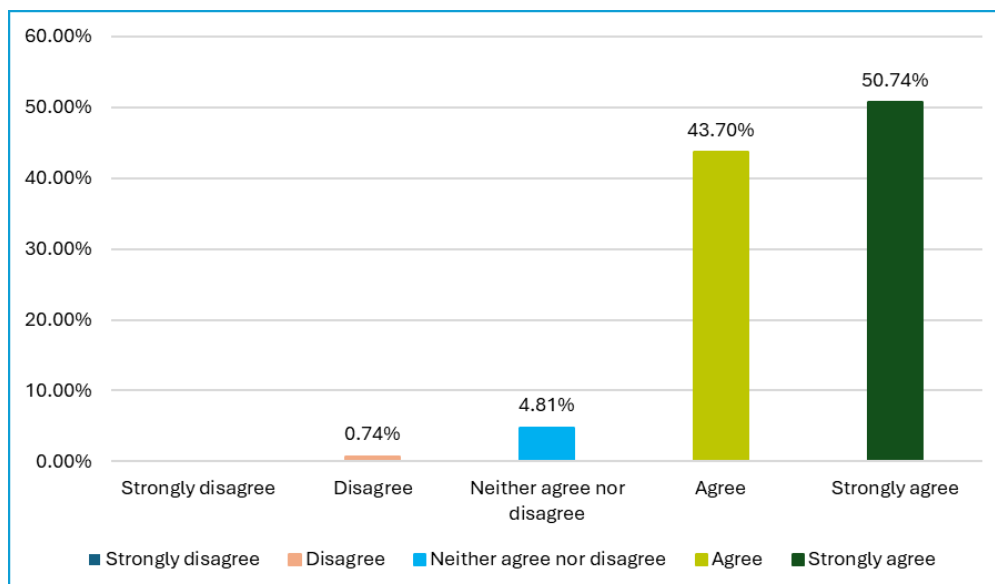


Figure 3. The course contributed to my capacity to examine local, global, and intercultural issues, and to understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others



- ***I have a better understanding of the course's subject and related concepts than I did before the course.***

A similar number (94.5%) felt that their understanding of the course subject and related concepts had improved, indicating that the course structure effectively facilitated deep and reflective learning. This depth of understanding was also reflected in students' overall engagement with the course, with many highlighting its relevance and interest. (Figure 4)

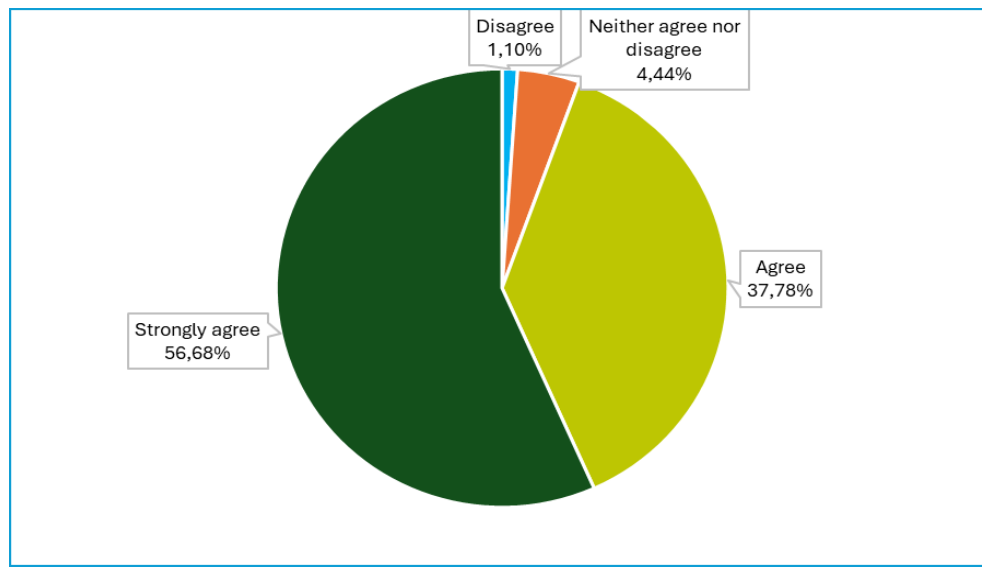


Figure 4. *I have a better understanding of the course's subject and related concepts than I did before the course.*

- ***I found the course interesting***

Most respondents, 93.3%, reported finding the course interesting, with 59.6% strongly agreeing and 33.7% agreeing. Only 5.6% remained neutral, and just 1.1% disagreed. These results suggest that the courses not only delivered educational value but also successfully captured students' attention and motivation, which are key factors for sustained learning in virtual environments. (Figure 5).

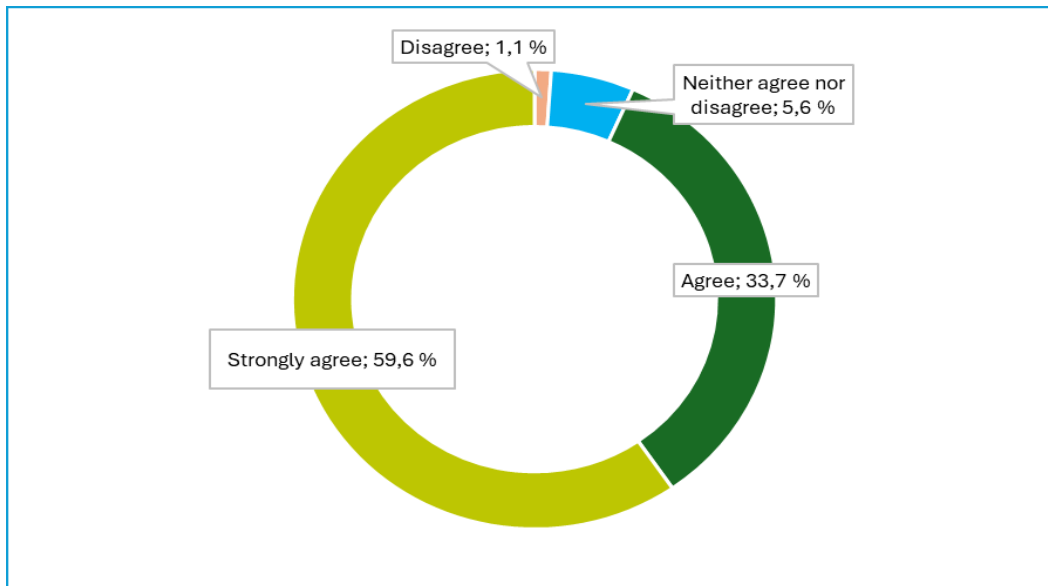


Figure 5. I found the course interesting

- **The course contents were presented clearly.**

The high level of student interest in the course was closely linked to the quality of content delivery and how well the course met its intended goals. 88.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the course contents were presented clearly, with 45.9% strongly agreeing and 42.6% agreeing. Only a small minority (4.1%) expressed disagreement, and 7.4% remained neutral. This demonstrates a broadly shared perception that instructional materials were well-structured and easy to follow. (Figure 6).

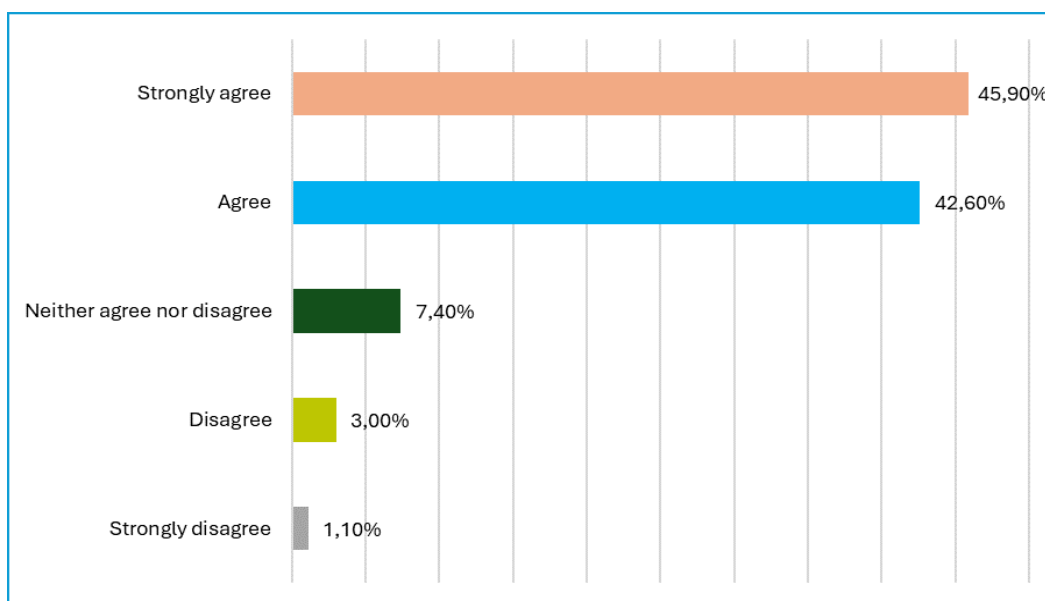


Figure 6. The course contents were presented clearly.

- **The objectives of the course were presented clearly**

Similarly, 244 students out of 270 agreed and strongly agreed that the course objectives were clearly presented, with an average rating of 4.37 out of 5. These responses showed a negatively skewed distribution with low variability, indicating that while most students were satisfied, there may be minor areas to refine in terms of objective-setting clarity. (Figure 7)

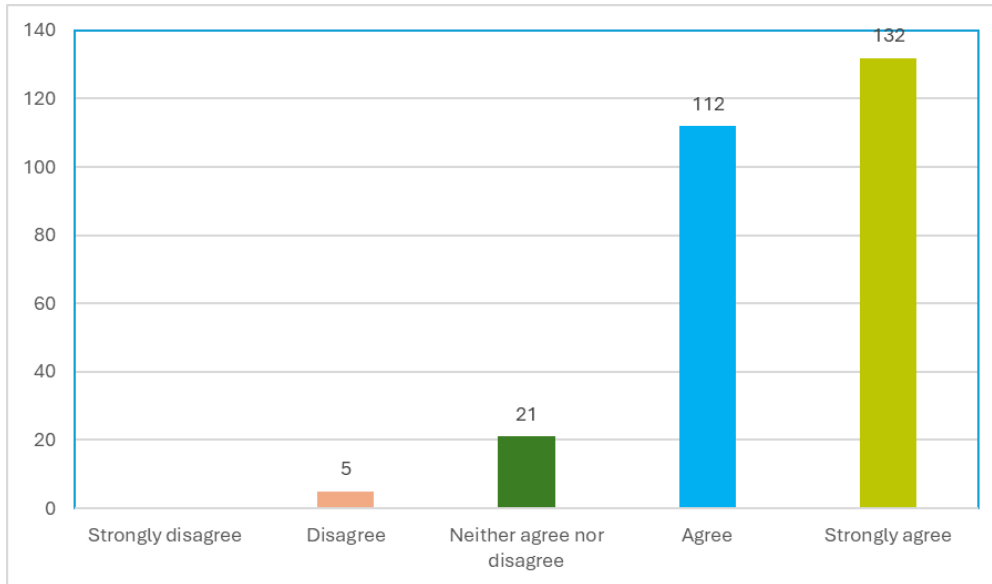


Figure 7. The objectives of the course were presented clearly

- **The course met the stated objectives**

In terms of alignment between objectives and delivery, 90% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that the course met its stated objectives, reflecting a solid connection between expectations and actual learning outcomes. With an average rating of 4.31 out of 5, this again shows consistent satisfaction. (Figure 8)

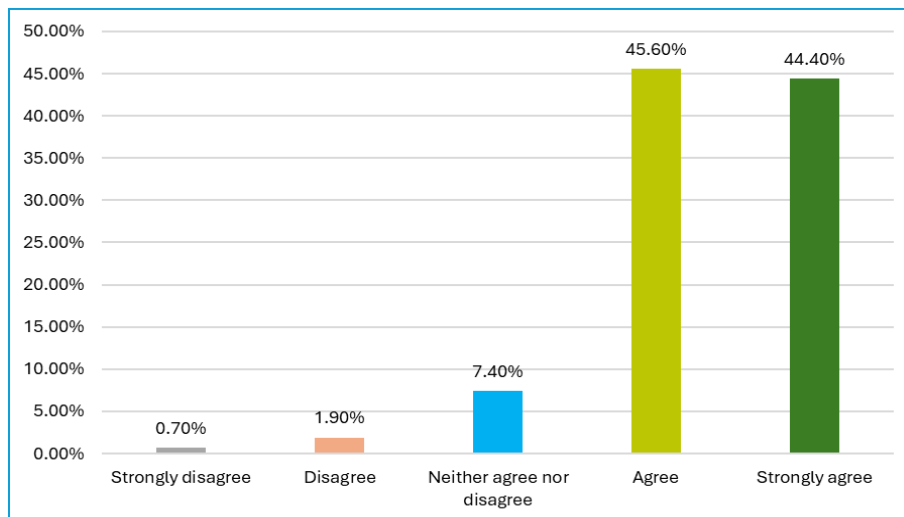


Figure 8. The course met the stated objectives

- ***The course was a useful part of my studies.***

When asked whether the course was a useful part of their studies, 88.9% responded positively, with over half (50.7%) strongly agreeing that the course was a useful part of their studies, pointing to a strong perceived academic value. (Figure 9)

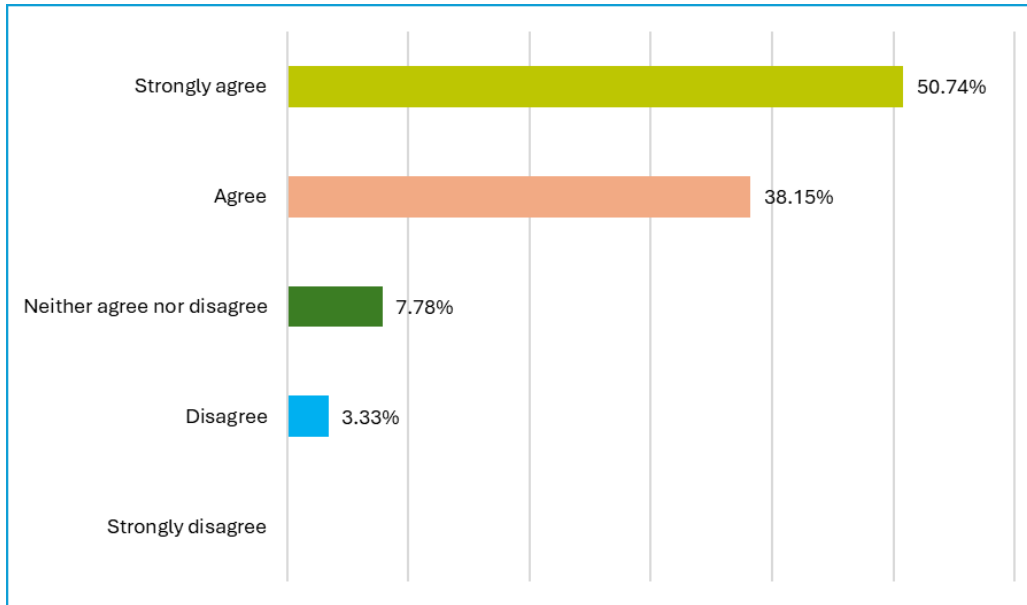


Figure 9. *The course was a useful part of my studies.*

- ***The reading material contributed to my understanding of the course's subject and/or related concepts***

Students also rated the learning materials highly. 91.9% agreed and strongly agreed that the reading materials contributed to their understanding of the subject. These results reflect strong content relevance and indicate that the materials were both accessible and pedagogically effective. Across all these indicators, the low rate of disagreement and neutral responses further supports the overall impression that the courses are well-designed, relevant, and closely aligned with students' academic needs and expectations. (Figure 10)

In conclusion, feedback on *Learning outcomes and course content* reflects a strong alignment between course goals and students' academic development. Most participants reported gaining valuable knowledge and deepening their global perspectives through the UniPID Virtual Studies courses. While the results were overwhelmingly positive, a small share of respondents remained neutral or less enthusiastic about content clarity and objective-setting, suggesting minor areas for refinement. Overall, the courses appear effective in delivering relevant, engaging, and meaningful learning experiences.

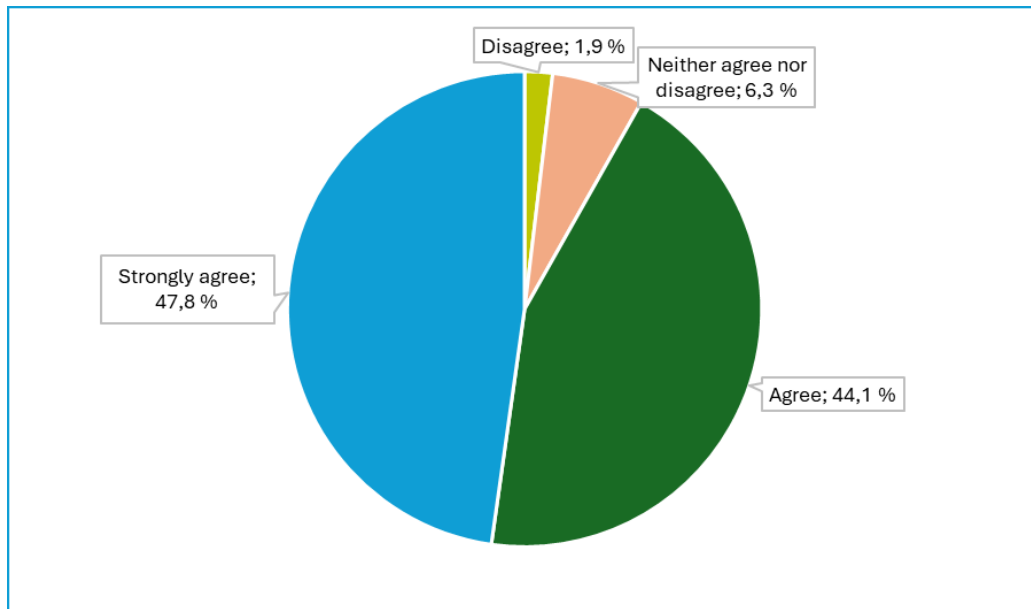


Figure 10. The reading material contributed to my understanding of the course's subject and/or related concepts

## 2.2. Learning environment and course design

This theme explores the students' experiences with the digital infrastructure and support systems that enabled their learning during the virtual course period. It specifically reflects on how well the online learning environment functioned, for instance, the quality of digital materials, clarity of assignment instructions and ease of platform navigation. More than just technical usability, this theme describes how accessible, organized, and supportive the virtual setup was in enabling actual learning and interaction.

- ***The virtual learning environment was clear and easy to use.***

The analysis begins by examining the usability of the virtual learning environment, which emerged as a strong point. Nearly 89% of participants had a positive perception of the learning environment, considering it clear and easy to use. This indicates the usage of platforms that likely minimized technical distractions and supported autonomous learning. The small fraction of respondents (less than 1%) who strongly disagreed suggests this was a rare exception, reinforcing a broad consensus on accessibility. (Figure 11)

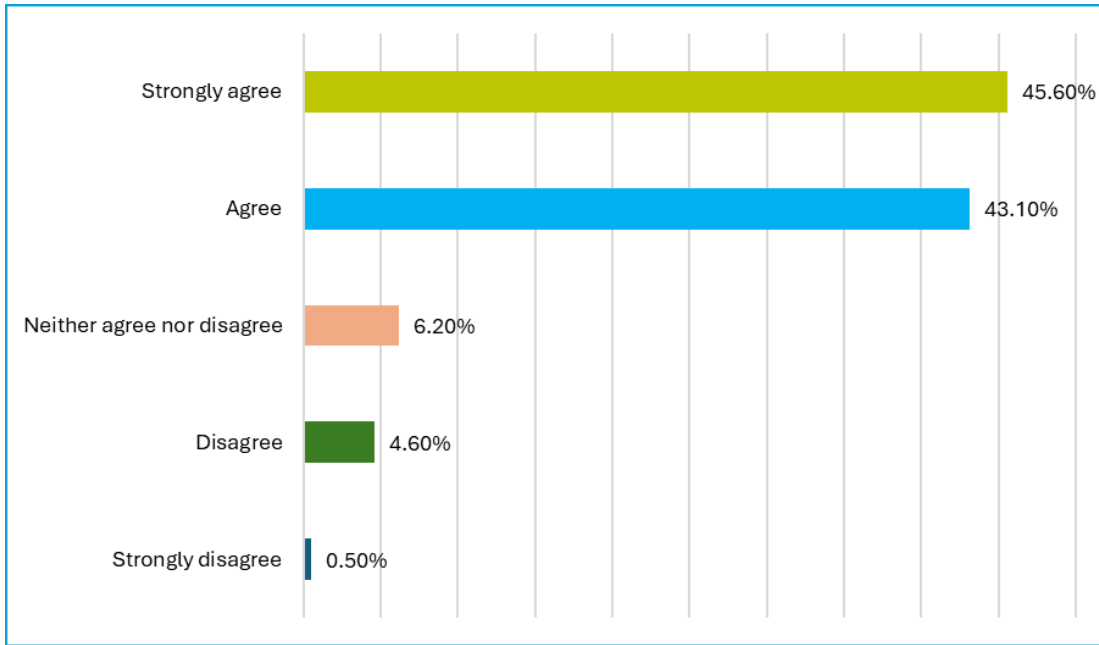


Figure 11. The virtual learning environment was clear and easy to use.

- **The course was well planned in advance**

Course planning received similarly strong marks as the majority of respondents felt that the course was well planned, with 53% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing. Only a small percentage (3%) disagreed, while 6% remained neutral. Overall, the feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction with the course's organization and preparation. (Figure 12).

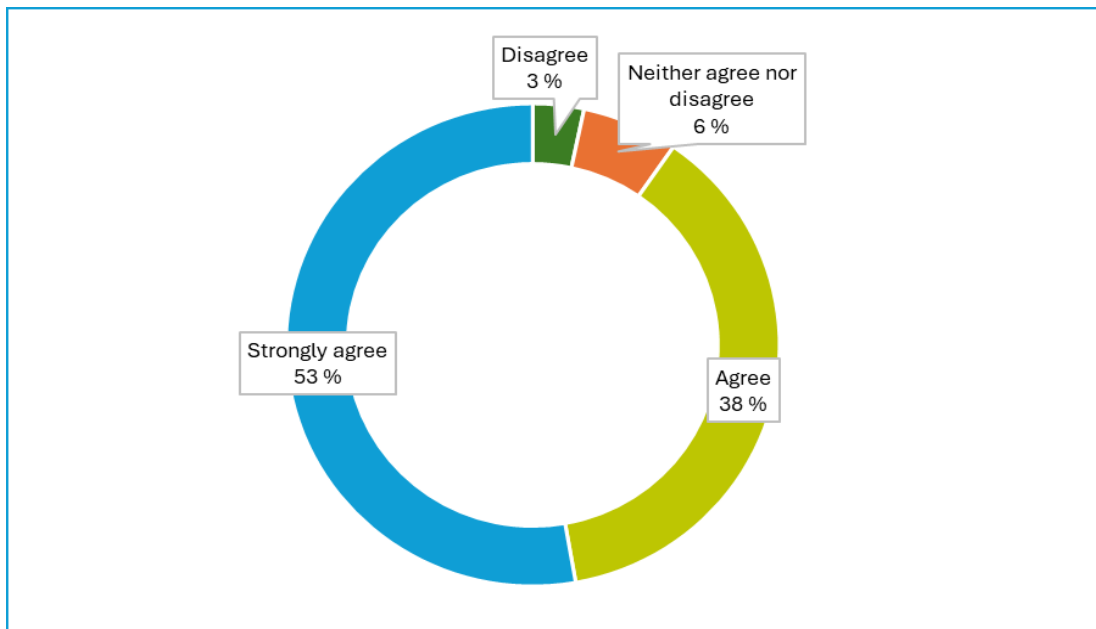


Figure 12. The course was well planned in advance

- **Teaching was well planned and organized.**

Most respondents (85.56%) agreed or strongly agreed that the teaching was well planned and organized, indicating a high level of satisfaction with the instructor's preparation and delivery. A small percentage (14.44%) disagreed, were neutral, or strongly disagreed, suggesting that while the majority found the teaching to be well-organized, there may be some areas for improvement to address the concerns of the minority. (Figure13)

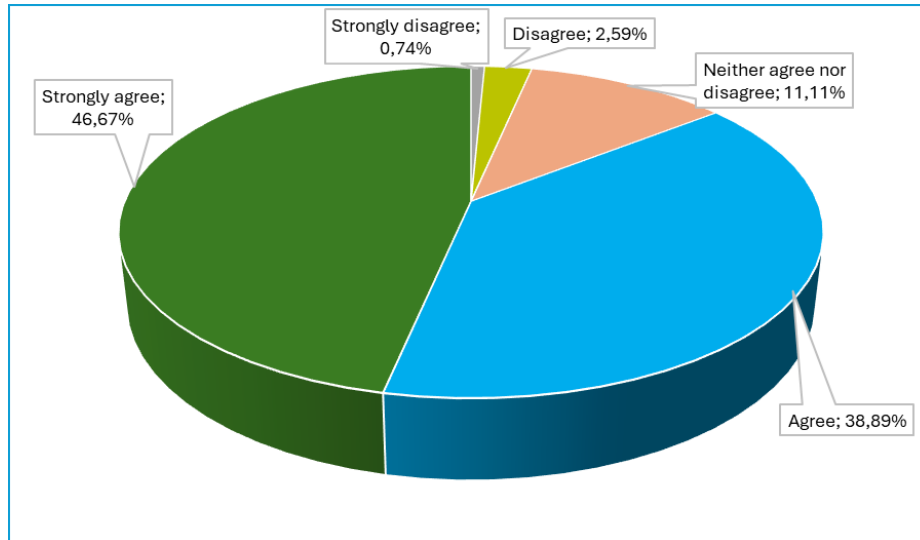


Figure 13. Teaching was well planned and organized.

- **Teaching was qualified.**

Regarding teaching quality, 238 out of 270 (around 80%) students gave it one of the two highest ratings, indicating that instructors were seen as both qualified and effective. (Figure 14)

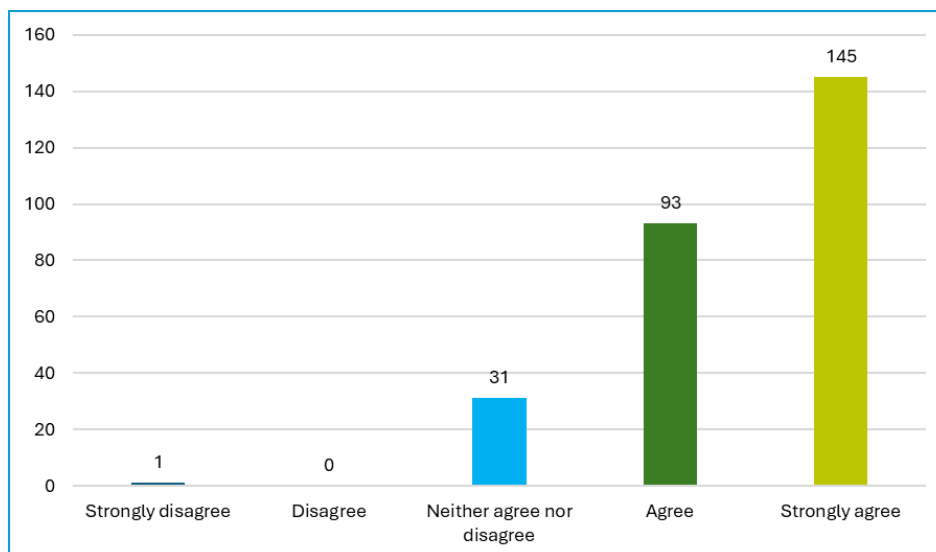


Figure 14. Teaching was qualified.

- *Teaching supported my learning during the course.*

220 respondents agreed that the teaching directly supported their learning, highlighting that the given instructions helped students engage with and understand the material. (Figure 15).

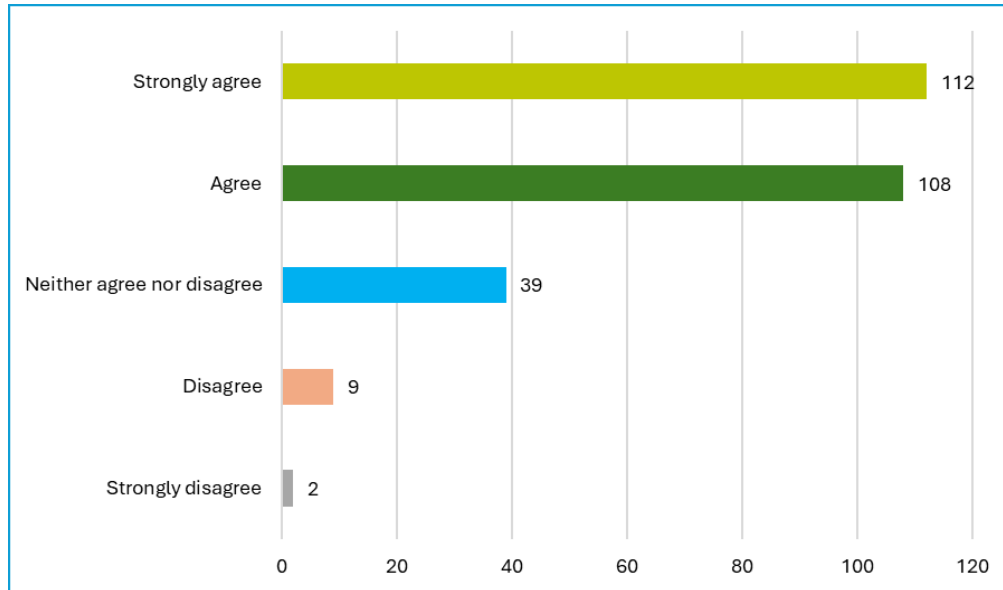


Figure 15. Teaching supported my learning during the course.

- *The amount of facilitated interaction between students was.*

On the social learning front, most respondents (200) were satisfied with the level of interaction between students. However, 41 wanted more, and 29 felt there was too much, suggesting that while the current setup works for the majority, it might be beneficial to offer flexible or opt-in interaction formats to accommodate varied preferences (Figure 16).

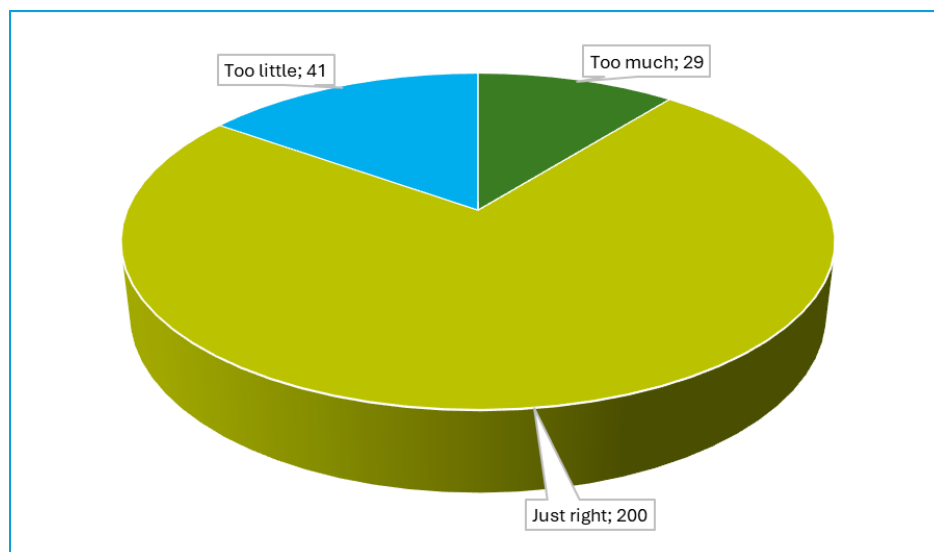


Figure 16. The amount of facilitated interaction between students was.



- ***The assignments/group work contributed to my understanding of the course's subject and/or related concepts.***

Assignments and group work were also seen as contributing meaningfully to learning. With 232 out of 270 students reporting that these tasks enhanced their understanding and with an average rating of 4.19 out of 5, it is clear these activities were valued (Figure 17).

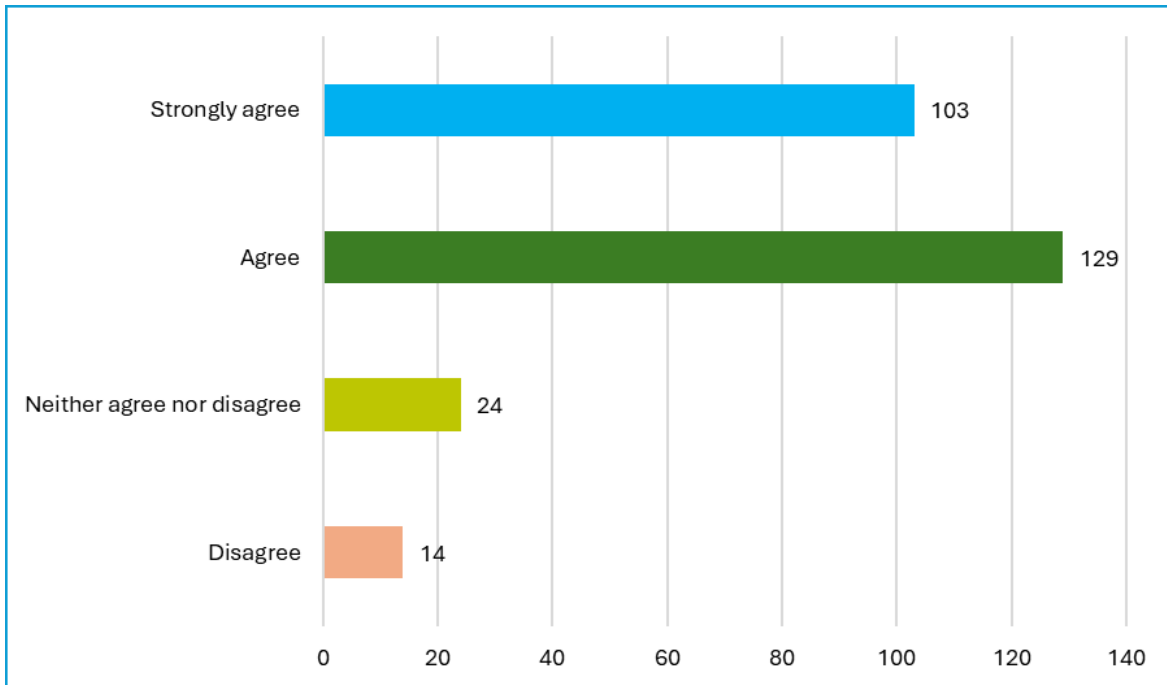


Figure 17. *The assignments/group work contributed to my understanding of the course's subject and/or related concepts.*

- ***The assignment instructions were clear and useful.***

This clarity of the instructions appears to have contributed positively to students' experiences, as reflected in the generally favorable feedback. A total of 236 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the assignment guidelines were clear and helpful. However, a small fraction (34) disagreed, suggesting that most students felt confident in understanding what was expected of them, while there is still room for improvement in the quality of instructions given by the teacher (Figure 18).

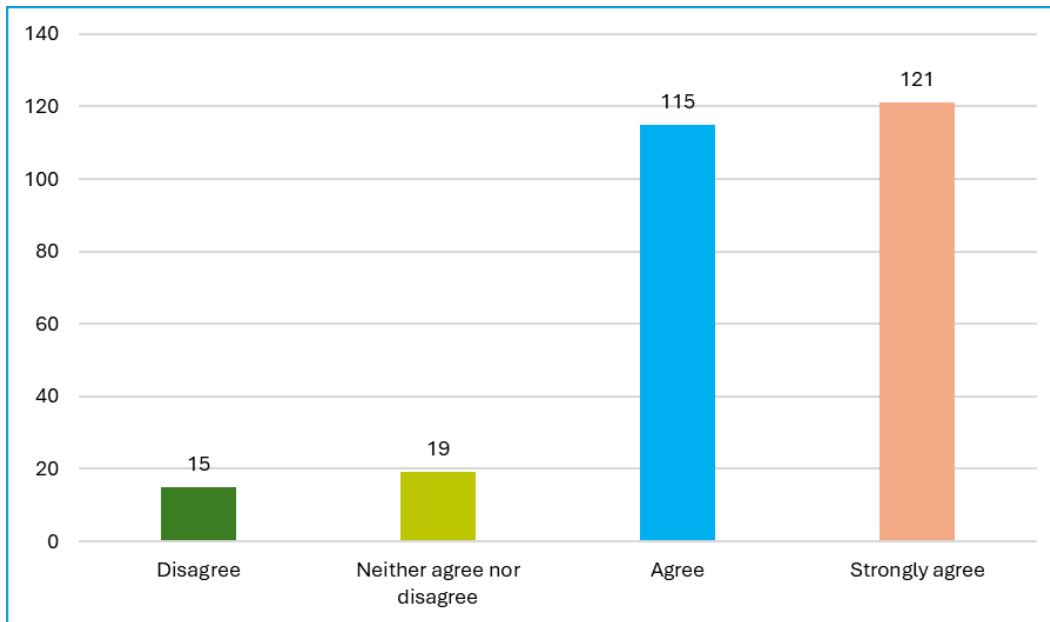


Figure 18. The assignment instructions were clear and useful.

- ***There was enough time to complete the assignment(s).***

Likewise, over 85% felt they had enough time to complete assignments, suggesting a manageable workload and thoughtful course pacing. (Figure 19)

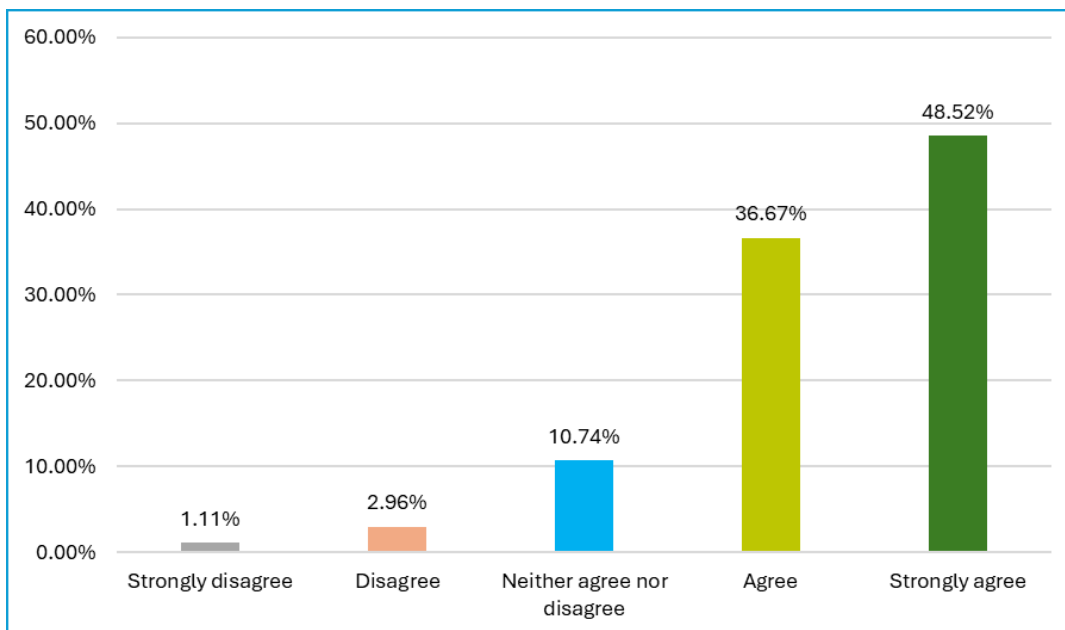


Figure 19. There was enough time to complete the assignment(s).

In conclusion, feedback on *Learning environment and course design* reveals high overall satisfaction with the virtual platform, course planning, and teaching quality. The figures

presented above suggest students appreciated the clarity of the learning environment, the usefulness of assignments, and the support provided by instructors. A small number of respondents mentioned areas for improvement, such as the quality of learning materials and the balance of peer interaction. Nonetheless, the findings reflect a well-structured and accessible learning experience for most participants.

### 2.3. Course guidance and workload

This theme captures students' reflections on the structure, level of challenge, and support provided during the courses. Their experiences highlight how well the courses met expectations in terms of guidance, workload, and duration, all of which shape the overall learning environment.

- ***I received sufficient feedback and direction during the course.***

Most students (173) indicated that they received enough guidance and support throughout the course. At the same time, 43 students disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that there may be a need for more consistent or detailed feedback for some learners. (Figure 20)

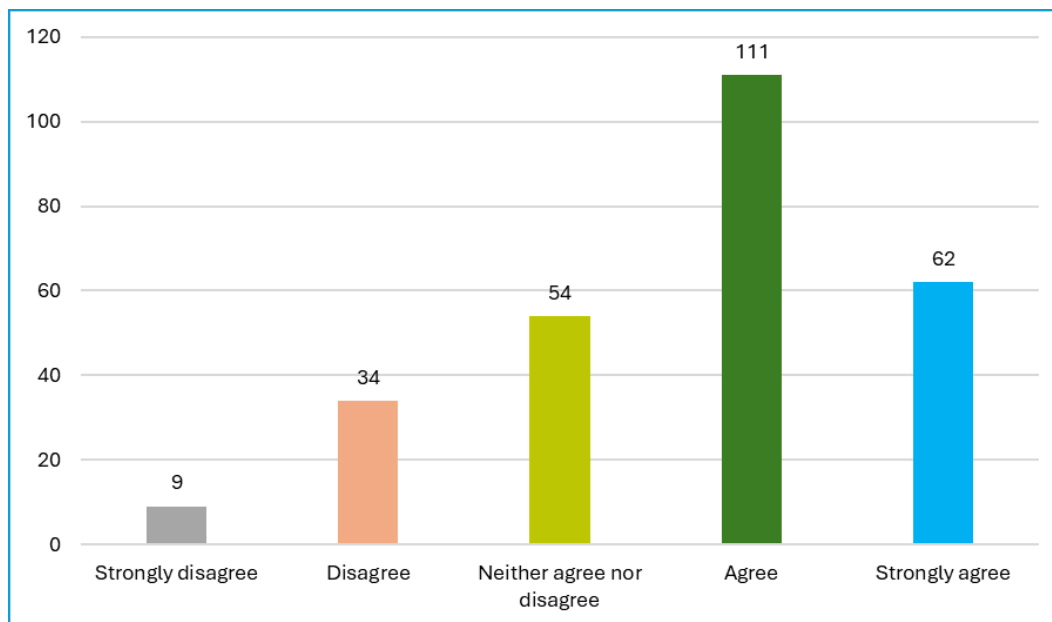


Figure 20. *I received sufficient feedback and direction during the course.*

- ***I learned from the feedback and direction given during the course.***

According to the responses, 36% of students agreed and 22% strongly agreed that they learned from the feedback and direction provided. Meanwhile, 28% were neutral, 11% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed. Although the majority reported finding the feedback helpful for their learning, a significant portion either felt neutral or did not find it useful. This suggests that feedback remains an important area for further development or improvement.

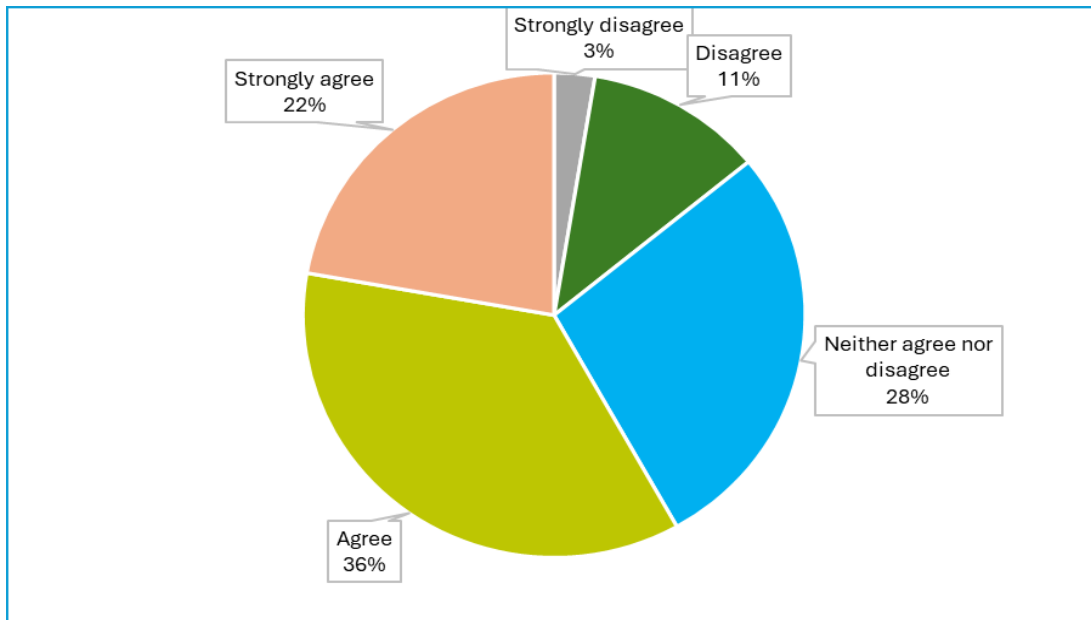


Figure 21. I learned from the feedback and direction given during the course.

- **The duration of the course was.**

Shifting focus to course duration, the majority (84.81%) considered it suitable. A few students found the course either too long (7.04%) or too short (8.15%). This suggests that the course duration was appropriate for the vast majority of participants, with a small percentage desiring a shorter or longer duration. (Figure 22)

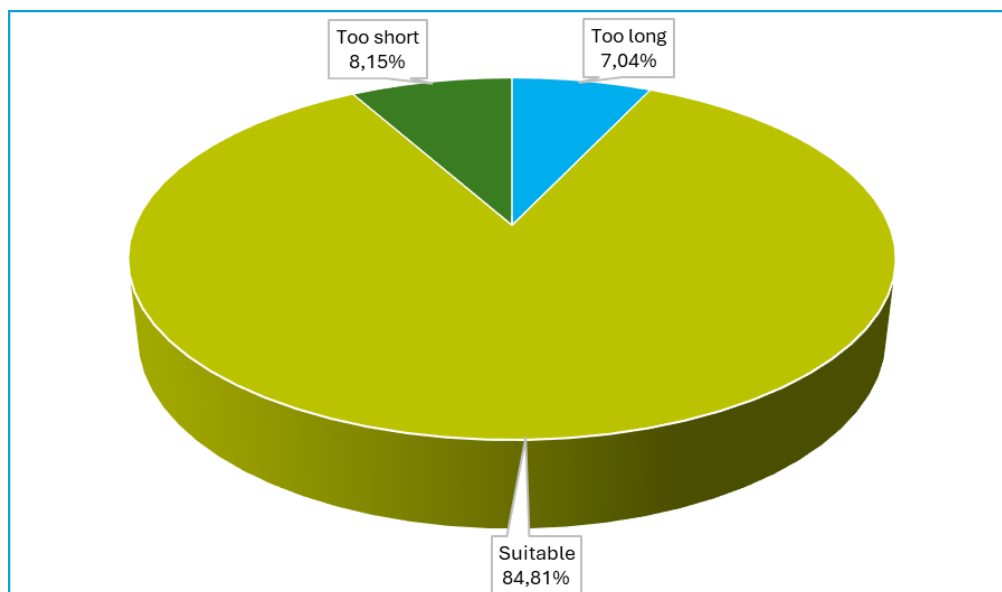


Figure 22. The duration of the course was.

- ***How challenging did you find the course?***

In terms of challenge, almost everyone (260 out of 270 people) said the course was neither too hard nor too easy, it was "just right." This means the course was challenging enough to be interesting but not so hard that it was frustrating. Only a tiny number of people (10) found the course a little too difficult, and no one found it too easy. (Figure 23)

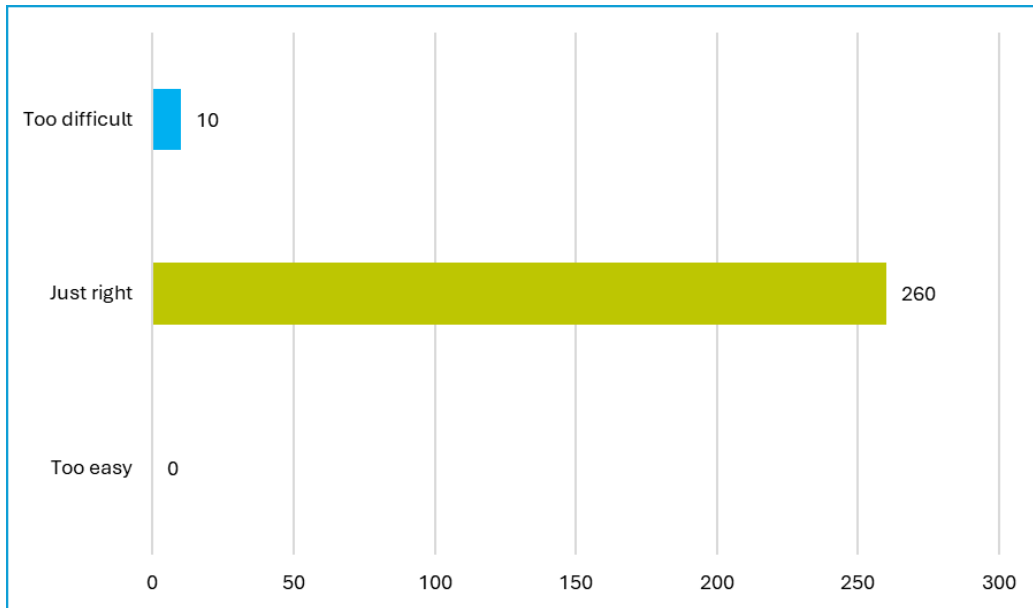


Figure 23. How challenging did you find the course?

- ***In relation to the credits received, the workload was.***

When asked about workload in relation to the credits received, 86.67% felt the workload was just right. A smaller percentage, 11.85%, felt it was too high, while only 1.48% thought it was too low. These figures reinforce the sense that, overall, the courses were well-structured in terms of effort required and expectations set. (Figure 24).

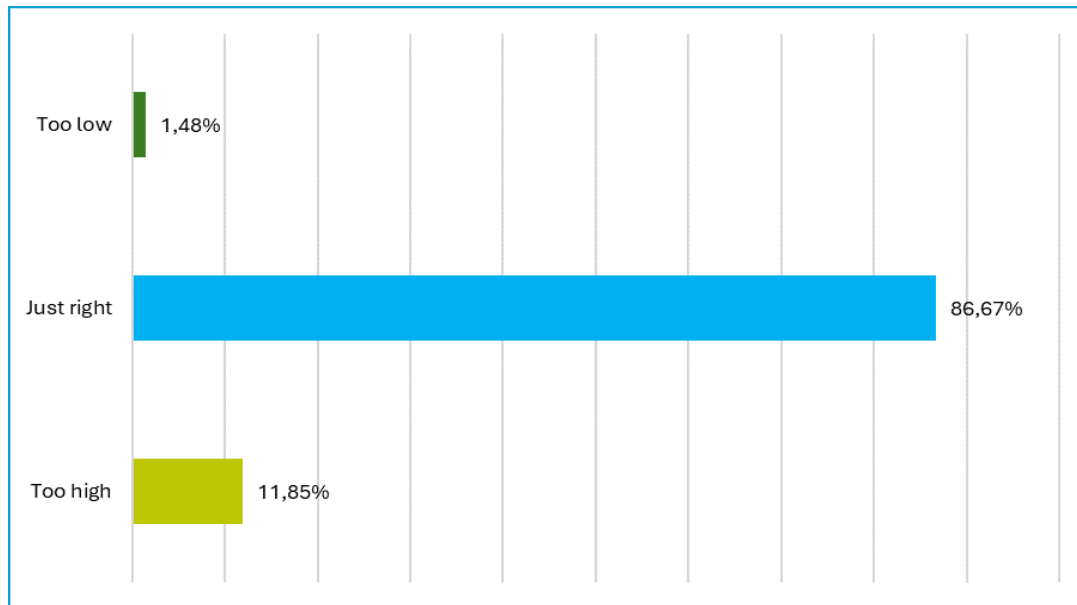


Figure 24. In relation to the credits received, the workload was.

In summary, students expressed a largely positive experience with the structure and support provided in the courses. The balance of challenge, workload, and duration appeared to work well for most learners. Continued attention to feedback quality, expectations, and flexibility in course design could help address the needs of an even broader range of students.

## 2.4. Overview of the learning experience

This theme is based on a mixed methods analysis of students’ open-ended reflections, offering both a structured overview of recurring patterns and a more personal understanding of their experiences with teaching quality and instructional methods. While earlier themes in this report focused on closed-ended survey responses, this section draws on qualitative feedback supported by thematic coding and quantification.

- ***From which aspect of the course did you learn the most?***

A large share of students (nearly 44%) said they learned the most from the use of multiple, integrated teaching methods (Figure 25). These included a blend of video lectures, readings, assignments, and both individual and group tasks. Students emphasized that no single format stood out on its own, but rather the thoughtful combination of approaches made the material easier to engage with and understand. As one participant explained, *“I found the combination of classes, group discussions, readings, individual tasks and group tasks together very suitable.”*

Course materials were mentioned in 22% of responses, often described as clear, relevant, and well-structured. Assignments followed closely, cited by nearly 15% of students as a meaningful learning component. These tasks helped solidify key concepts through practical application and independent thinking. About 11% of students referred to the quality of

teaching directly, describing lecturers as knowledgeable and well-prepared. Guest lecturers were also appreciated. Peer interaction, while less frequently highlighted in this particular question (just under 7%), was still valued by some students for the insights and diverse perspectives it offered (Figure 25). One student reflected, *“I learned a lot from the reading materials as well as from the point of view of other students and the online discussion. Also, I think the lecturers that were invited taught me a lot as well.”*

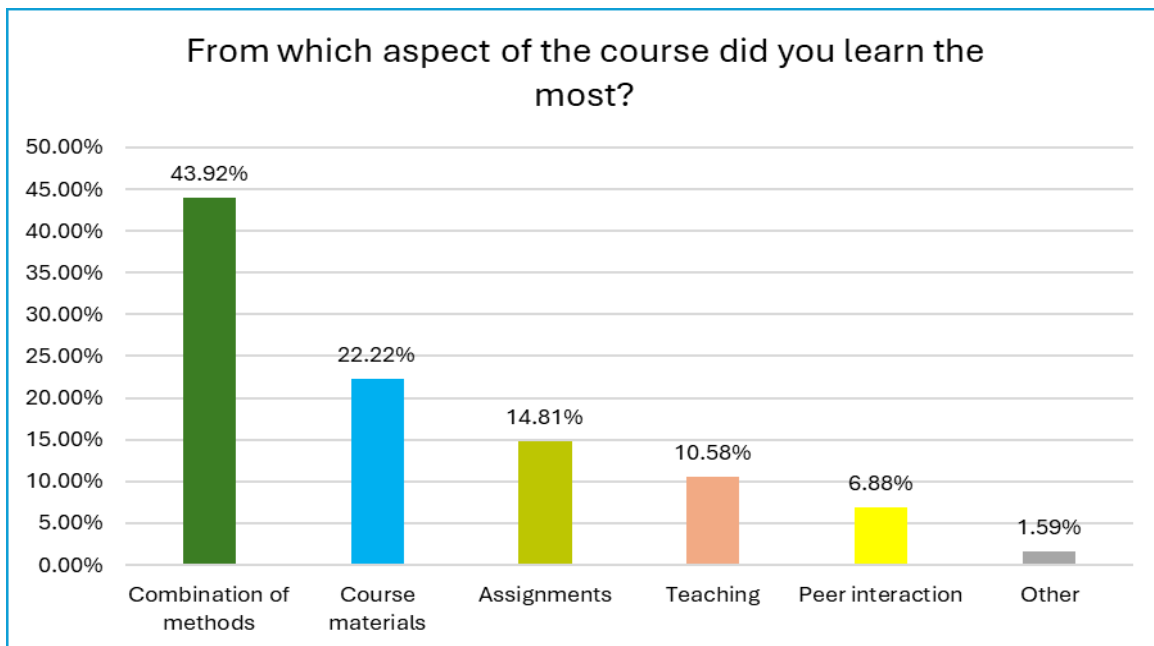


Figure 25. From which aspect of the course did you learn the most?

- **What was your favourite part of the course?**

When asked about the most enjoyable part of the course (Figure 26), students changed focus slightly. Assignments remained prominent (about 25%), but peer interaction gained more importance. Specifically, 20% of responses named it as their favorite element. Many students enjoyed exchanging views, especially when tasks encouraged comparisons with their own countries or experiences.

One student shared, *“My favorite part was all the tasks where we had to compare/discuss about our home country in the given task.”* On the other hand, another commented, *“I think my favorite part was to do the individual tasks. I could just concentrate on my own work and do it in my own time.”* Therefore, a good blend of both methods should offer the opportunity to engage with others while also allowing space for independent reflection and self-paced learning.

Teaching and course materials remained important in this question as well, each mentioned by over 13% of students as sources of enjoyment. Notably, nearly 30% of responses were categorized as “Other,” revealing a wide range of additional aspects students found engaging, such as specific topics, guest sessions, or the flexibility of the learning environment. (Figure 26)

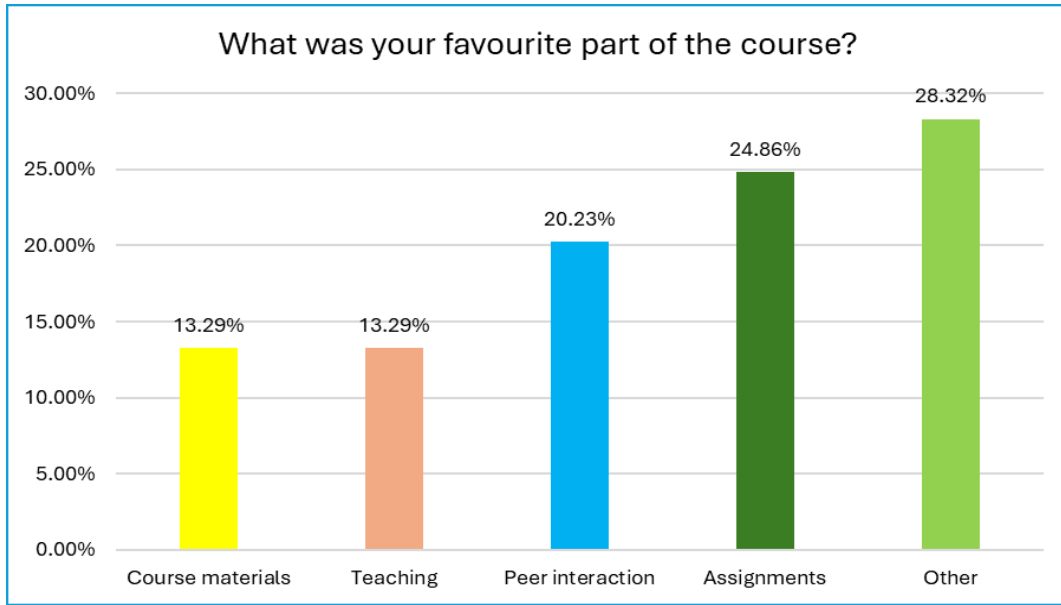


Figure 26. What was your favourite part of the course?

- **Challenges faced by students in the course**

When asked about the challenges, the most common challenge students reported was peer interaction (21%), indicating a desire for better engagement with classmates. While 18% had no issues, others struggled with course content (17%) and assignments (15%), likely due to workload or unclear expectations. Additional concerns included various “other” issues (16%), teaching methods (9%), and lack of interaction (4%), suggesting areas where course delivery and student connection could be improved. (Figure 27)

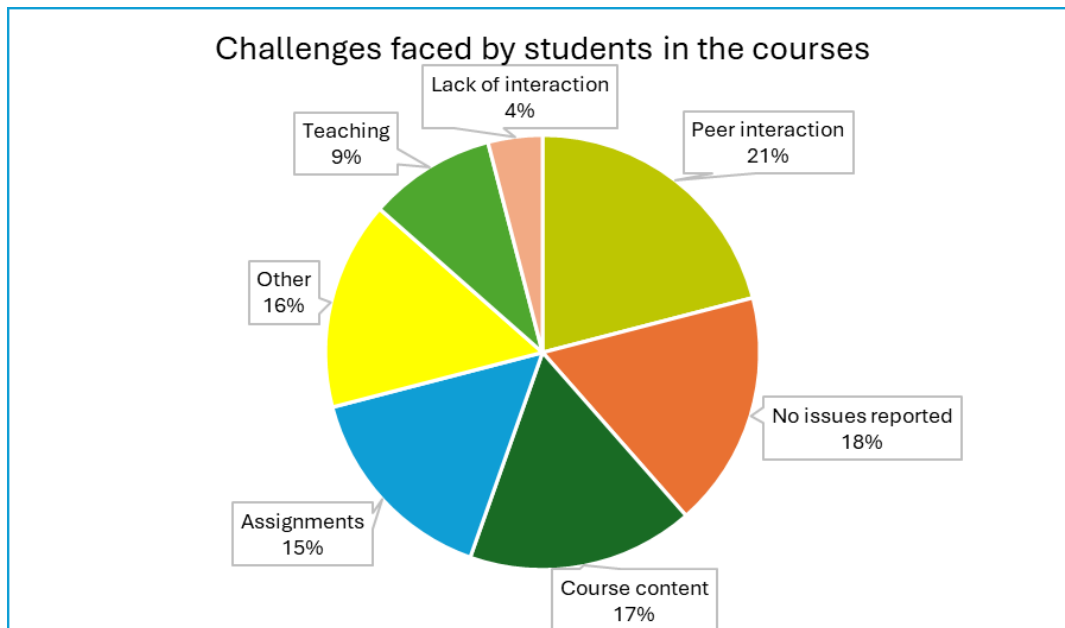


Figure 27. Challenges faced by students in the courses



The findings suggest that students valued a balanced mix of teaching methods, with combined approaches helping them learn and stay engaged. Assignments, course materials, and interaction with peers were often mentioned as key parts of their experience. The variety of responses also shows that flexibility and different learning options are important. Overall, using a mix of teaching strategies seems to support both learning and enjoyment.

The responses in the open-ended section of the feedback form, also revealed that the most common way students discovered UniPID Virtual Studies was through their university (networks, lecturers, intranet services, etc.), highlighting a strong institutional connection. Other notable sources included various channels categorized as "Other," followed by online searches, social media, and promotional channels.

In addition to how students found the courses, the feedback provided insights into their key areas of academic interest and potential topics student may be interested in. The most frequently mentioned themes were climate change and sustainability, decolonization and indigenous studies, and migration and refugee issues, reflecting a strong student focus on global challenges, equity, and socially engaged learning.

### **3. Further Considerations**

This section outlines areas to consider for further development based on the comprehensive feedback gathered from UniPID Virtual Studies' students between 2021 and 2023. Drawing from both quantitative survey results and qualitative open-ended responses, the aim is to identify practical and meaningful ways to further enhance the quality, accessibility, and impact of the UniPID Virtual Courses.

When asked about potential improvements (Figure 28), students raised several recurring areas of focus. Over one fifth recommended increasing interaction (22%), whether through live sessions or more consistent peer engagement. Others suggested improvements to course materials (14%) and clearer assignment guidelines (14%), often tied to clarity and workload. About 10% of students asked for more timely or constructive feedback, while 11% explicitly said that nothing needed to be changed.

The "Other" category (29%) included a wide range of individual suggestions, from platform usability improvements to requests for more varied topics. While less frequent, these responses reflect the diversity of student experiences and highlight the value of ongoing, flexible course refinement. (Figure 28)

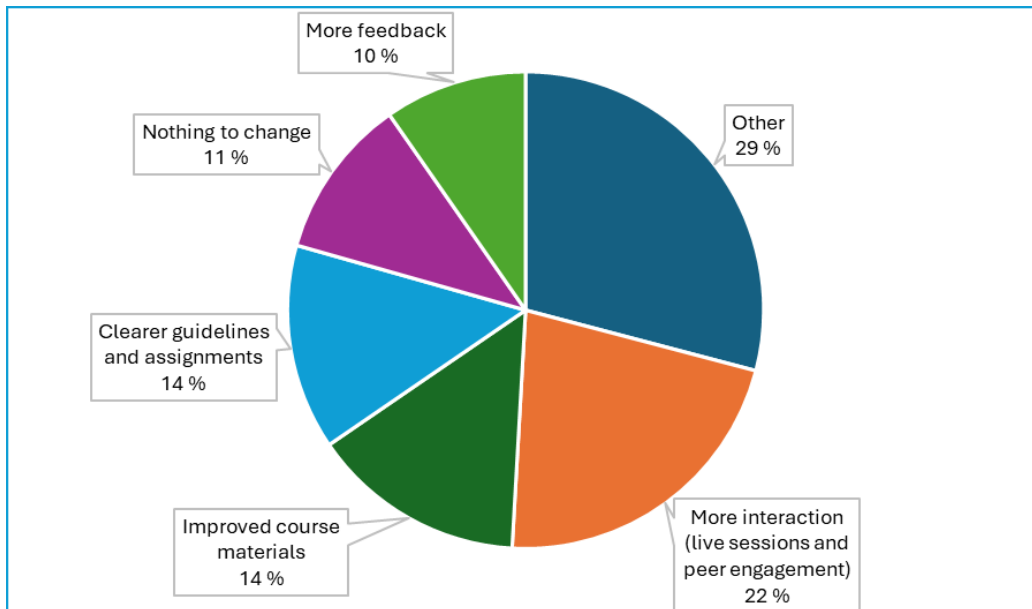


Figure 28. Areas identified for further development

#### 4. Conclusion

UniPID sincerely thanks those students who contributed and provided feedback to the UniPID Virtual Studies Programme. This reflects the commitment students have, not only as learners but as contributors to the programme’s ongoing development. This feedback reflects a genuine interest in shaping the learning environment and ensuring its continued relevance in advancing sustainable development pathways.

Feedback gathered between 2021 and 2023 highlights that, students generally had a positive experience with the UniPID Virtual Studies Programme. They appreciated the relevance of the course content and reported gaining valuable knowledge in development studies and Global South perspectives. In addition, students expressed a positive perception of both the online learning environment and the course design. The feedback also indicated that students valued a balanced workload, and the guidance provided by teachers, while also appreciating the opportunity for supportive independent learning. Finally, the variety of teaching methods was well received, with students finding them engaging and helpful to their learning process.

While satisfaction was high overall, students also identified areas for further development, particularly around peer interaction, clarity of assignments and instructions, and the quality of feedback. Addressing these areas may shed light for future courses, to create a more engaging and accessible learning experience for everyone.

##### 4.1 Recommendations

The input collected in this Student Feedback Report 2021-2023 suggests a series of identified areas where improvements can enhance the quality of the Virtual Studies Programme, as well as the overall satisfaction of students. This section provides recommendations across three key areas identified as having room for development:

- Peer interaction and engagement opportunities
- Clarity and consistency in assignment instructions
- Feedback provided by teachers on students' assignments

In the tables below, the group recommendations are organized alongside suggested or ideal goals to aim for. Additionally, recommendations, strategies, and suggestions are provided for both teachers and the UniPID Virtual Studies Working Group, reinforcing the idea that ensuring the development of the Virtual Studies Programme is a shared responsibility. While the Working Group is not directly responsible for teaching, it can offer guidance and support through training and resources for teaching staff.

<p><b>Peer interaction and engagement opportunities</b></p>	<p>While many students appreciated the flexibility of asynchronous learning, peer interaction emerged as the most cited challenge in both open- and closed-ended responses. As seen in figure 27, over 20% expressed a desire for more structured engagement with fellow students, teachers, and guest lecturers.</p> <p>To address this, the following strategies are recommended:</p> <p><u>For teachers:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Offer optional real-time sessions (e.g., Q&amp;A or check-ins) at key points during the course to foster discussion and clarify common challenges.</li> <li>2. Introduce structured discussion forums with specific prompts or rotating peer facilitation to guide interaction.</li> <li>3. Incorporate in-class guided small-group activities (e.g., collaborative case analysis or peer feedback exchanges) with clear instructions and deadlines.</li> <li>4. Encourage informal peer interaction through a dedicated social channel (e.g., Teams, or Moodle Café) for sharing experiences, resources, or questions.</li> <li>5. Allocate time –ideally- in the beginning of the course to discuss teacher’s and students' expectations, including the suitable level of living engagement and peer interaction.</li> </ol> <p><u>For the UniPID Coordination Unit/Virtual Studies Working Group:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organize training spaces and good practices workshop where teaching staff of UniPID virtual courses can exchange experiences on strategies for fostering peer interaction in an online learning environment.</li> </ol>
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Provide and coordinate feedback opportunities for students to communicate wishes and identified areas, as peer interaction, for further developed.</li> <li>3. Provide guidelines and research-based material to teachers on how to foster interaction and engagement in online learning environments. (<a href="#">See the Toolkit for Transforming Learning in Virtual Courses through Teacher-Student Partnerships</a>)</li> </ol>
<b>Goal</b>	Improve collaborative learning and create space for exchange.

<b>Clarity and consistency in assignment instructions</b>	<p>While students generally appreciated the structure of the courses, some expressed confusion about assignment expectations and instructions.</p> <p>To improve clarity and student confidence, the following strategies are recommended:</p> <p><u>For teachers:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide clear, concise task descriptions with step-by-step guidance.</li> <li>2. Include concrete examples of what a successful submission should look like.</li> <li>3. Use consistent deadlines across modules to support time management.</li> <li>4. Offer easy-to-understand rubrics that clearly outline grading criteria.</li> <li>5. Allow time for students to ask questions or seek clarification before major deadlines.</li> </ol> <p><u>For the UniPID Coordination Unit/Virtual Studies Working Group:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide teachers with a suggested time management table to support students in organizing their workload.</li> <li>2. Foster teaching training in good practices for designing course assignments, instructions and guidelines.</li> </ol>
<b>Goal</b>	Make instructions clearer so students feel confident and independent when completing course tasks.

<p><b>Feedback provided by teachers on students' assignments</b></p>	<p>Students shared that feedback sometimes felt too general or arrived too late to be useful. To support student learning and motivation, the following strategies are recommended:</p> <p><u>For teachers:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set clear timelines for feedback delivery and communicate them to students in advance.</li> <li>2. Provide more detailed, individualized comments, especially on reflective or applied tasks.</li> <li>3. Offer mid-assignment check-ins or formative feedback opportunities.</li> <li>4. Create space for students to reflect on and respond to feedback they receive.</li> </ol> <p><u>For the UniPID Coordination Unit/Virtual Studies Working Group:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organize training sessions and best practices workshops where UniPID Virtual Studies teaching staff can exchange ideas on effective and constructive feedback.</li> <li>2. Share student feedback with instructors to identify specific areas where students desired clearer and more personalized responses.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Goal</b></p>	<p>Deepen student engagement through meaningful, constructive feedback and academic support.</p>

## References

- Chapman, D. D., & Joines, J. A. (2017). Strategies for Increasing Response Rates for Online End-of-Course Evaluations. *International Journal on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 29(1), 47–60.
- EDUCase Platform., (2024). Toolkit for Transforming Learning in Virtual Courses through Teacher-Student Partnerships. Available in: [https://www.unipid.fi/site/assets/files/4272/a\\_global\\_learning\\_space\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.unipid.fi/site/assets/files/4272/a_global_learning_space_toolkit.pdf)

## Appendix 1. Student feedback form

The purpose of this form is to gather feedback on UniPID's Virtual Studies courses. The feedback is anonymous.

Please choose the statement that best matches your response to each question. The open questions at the end are voluntary.

Completing the form should not take more than 5-10 minutes. Thank you for giving feedback, it is very valuable!

UniPID Virtual Studies Student Feedback Form

Course in question *	Course semester *
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

What expectations did you have for the course?

I have a better understanding of global sustainable development as a result of the course \*

Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Neither agree nor disagree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly disagree

The course contributed to my capacity to examine local, global, and intercultural issues, and to understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others \*

Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Neither agree nor disagree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly disagree

I have a better understanding of the course's subject and related concepts than I did before the course \*

Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Neither agree nor disagree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly disagree

I found the course interesting \*

Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Neither agree nor disagree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly disagree

The course contents were presented clearly \*

Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Neither agree nor disagree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly disagree

The objectives of the course were presented clearly \*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The course met the stated objectives \*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The course was a useful part of my studies \*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The reading material contributed to my understanding of the course's subject and/or related concepts \*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The lectures contributed to my understanding of the course's subject and/or related concepts \*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The quality of the online lectures and/or video material was \*

- High
- Decent
- Poor

The virtual learning environment was clear and easy to use \*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The course was well planned in advance \*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



**Teaching was qualified \***

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Teaching supported my learning during the course \***

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**The amount of facilitated interaction between students was \***

- Too much
- Just right
- Too little

**The assignments/group work contributed to my understanding of the course's subject and/or related concepts \***

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**The assignment instructions were clear and useful \***

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**There was enough time to complete the assignment(s) \***

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**I received sufficient feedback and direction during the course \***

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**I learned from the feedback and direction given during the course \***

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The duration of the course was \*

- Too long
- Suitable
- Too short

How challenging did you find the course \*

- Too difficult
- Just right
- Too easy

In relation to the credits received, the workload was \*

- Too high
- Just right
- Too low

From which aspect of the course did you learn the most? (For example, reading materials, teaching, other students, assignments, online discussion, etc.)

What was your favourite part of the course?

What was your least favourite part of the course?

What should be developed/changed in this course?

How did you find out about the UniPID Virtual Studies?

What (if any) other theme would you like to be included under the UniPID Virtual Studies?

Any other comments

Submit

## Appendix 2. Survey respondent numbers per year

Year	Course	Registrations	Completions	Feedback responses
2021	Towards Sustainable Development Goals: the Nexus of Water, Food, and Energy	36	22	18
	Concepts of Sustainability	51	43	19
	Social Movements in the Global South	26	7	3
	Decolonising Sustainable Development? Introductory lessons from the Global South	55	18	7
	Ecosystem Restoration in the Tropics and Climate Change	33	12	1
	Migration, Development, and Human Rights	74	57	7
	Social Protection and Health	95	57	19
	Introduction to Global Development and Sustainability	79	55	2
	Curriculum Development for Climate Change Education in Global South	33	12	8
Climate Change and Trade in the Global South	40	25	2	
2022	Ecosystem Restoration in the Tropics and Climate Change	22	15	3
	Migration, Development, and Human Rights	69	46	22
	Social Protection and Health: Definitions, policy goals and global examples	52	31	7
	Global Education Development	54	39	1
	Introduction to Development Economics	34	21	1
	Global Extractivisms and Alternatives	21	14	9
	Curriculum Development for Climate Change Education in Global South	35	17	11
	Concepts of Sustainability	44	33	25
	Climate Change and Trade in the Global South	39	20	3
	Social Movements in the Global South	16	9	6
	Contemporary Environmental Conflicts	40	15	2
	Towards Sustainable Development Goals: the Nexus 2.0 of Water, Food, and Energy	43	22	17
Decolonising Sustainable Development? Introductory lessons from the Global South	30	24	2	
2023	Climate Change and Trade in the Global South	27	12	1
	Concepts of Sustainability	36	26	13
	Gender, Conflict and Development in the Global South	38	15	7
	Towards Sustainable Development Goals: the Nexus 2.0 of Water, Food, and Energy	32	12	10
	Food Entrepreneurship, Sustainability and Innovation Practices in Africa	22	12	7
	Decolonising Sustainable Development? Introductory lessons from the Global South	26	9	2
	Globalisation and Corporate Responsibility	16	7	1
	Global Education Development	34	26	5
	Good governance, the rule of law and religious freedom as approaches to sustainable development in the Global South	11	6	2
	Curriculum Development for Climate Change Education in Global South	45	25	13
	Social Protection and Health: Definitions, policy goals and global examples	37	23	7
Global Extractivisms and Alternatives	20	16	7	

### Appendix 3. Evaluation steps and methods

Theme	Questions from the course feedback survey	Method & Formula
<b>Learning outcomes and course content</b>	I have a better understanding of global sustainable development	Average
	The course contributed to my capacity to examine local, global, and intercultural issues, and to understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others	Average
	I have a better understanding of the course's subject and related concepts than I did before the course.	Average
	I found the course interesting.	Average
	The course contents were presented clearly.	Average
	The objectives of the course were presented clearly.	Average
	The course met the stated objectives	Average
	The course was a useful part of my studies.	Average
	The reading material contributed to my understanding of the course's subject and/or related concepts.	Average
	The lectures contributed to my understanding of the course's subject and/or related concepts.	Average
<b>Learning environment and course design</b>	The quality of the online lectures and/or video material was.	Average
	The virtual learning environment was clear and easy to use.	Average
	The course was well planned in advance.	Average
	Teaching was well planned and organized.	Average
	Teaching was qualified.	Average
	Teaching supported my learning during the course.	Average
	The amount of facilitated interaction between students was.	Average
	The assignments/group work contributed to my understanding of the course's subject and/or related concepts.	Average
	The assignment instructions were clear and useful.	Average
	There was enough time to complete the assignment(s).	Average
<b>Course guidance and workload</b>	I received sufficient feedback and direction during the course.	Average
	I learned from the feedback and direction given during the course.	Average
	The duration of the course was.	Average
	How challenging did you find the course?	Average
	In relation to the credits received, the workload was.	Average

<b>Overview of the learning experience</b>	From which aspect of the course did you learn the most?	Thematic coding
	What was your favourite part of the course?	Thematic coding
	Whats was your least favourite part of the course?	Thematic coding
	What should be developed/changed in this course?	Thematic coding
	How did you find out about the UniPID Virtual Studies?	Thematic coding
	What (if any) other theme would you like to be included under the UniPID Virtual Studies?	Thematic coding
	Any other comments	Thematic coding