



Programrapport

Programmets namn: Master in Library and Information Science: Digital Library and Information Services	Ladokkod: BMDD120h & BMDD120h1
Antal högskolepoäng: 120	Årskull: 2020
Programansvarig: Rachel Pierce	

Kommentar kring svarsfrekvens i studentvärderingen

The existing course reports from all courses attended by the students in BMDD20h have been consulted as well as a final evaluation. Students can make their voices heard in course evaluations for each course. In general, very few students fill out the course evaluation questionnaires, which means that they form an unreliable basis for making assessments about the students' views of the courses and program, although they can be an indication and a source to identify some issues to address further. In this case, 9 of 37 students (24.32%) of student enrolled in the thesis course have submitted responses to the final evaluation.

Analys av:

Studenternas möjlighet till ansvar och delaktighet

Apart from participating in questionnaires students also communicate with programme and course coordinators both online and during the residential weeks. This particular group was unable to attend campus due to the Covid pandemic, reducing contact with teachers and programme coordinators.

Students have the right to be represented in the Programråd, and Swedish-speaking students were invited to volunteer as representatives. However, no student could take on the task. Since 2019, a student representative from the Bachelor's programme has been involved.

Innehåll, undervisningsformer, examination och progression

Students largely liked the structure and content of the program, though there are areas for improvement noted by students who completed the final survey. One student noted that theory and theoretical application should be introduced in the beginning of the program, so that students can build these skills through the course of the two years of study. This is a point well-taken, and the new program will introduce theoretical perspectives in the first semester. One questionnaire answer does note that theory is treated well on the whole, stating that “I think that the program provides a solid foundation for research endeavors within that domain and I think that students are well prepared to spread theoretical and methodological knowledge themselves.” As an overall comment, students liked how the courses fit together but thought that semester 1 was a bit “off” in terms of planning, according to one student.

The teaching formats were largely online discussions and workshops on campus for the residential weeks positioned at the beginning of each semester, followed by PingPong and Canvas activities and discussions, as well as zoom discussions and seminars. The examinations range from specific skill-related assignments (like the HTML assignment in Technologies of digital libraries 1 and digitization skills in Digitization of Cultural Heritage Material) to Powerpoints (Digital Library Management) to analytic papers (Digital Library Management; Users; the thesis course) to concrete digital development projects (Digitization of Cultural Heritage Material; Interaction design). Students generally like the range of assignments. One student notes that the program requires self-reliance on the part of students, “which I think is appropriate for master studies” while providing good support for courses that built computer science skills. This student also notes that the pedagogical design of the program is difficult to assess because of its variety, though I would note that variety does not preclude a visible and easy-to-understand pedagogical structure. This transparency might be useful to build into the new iteration of the program that starts in Fall 2023.

Student progression seems somewhat less affected by Covid-19 compared to previous years. One thing affecting student progression numbers was the accidental acceptance of twice as many students as the program usually admits, which stretched teacher resources and also meant a larger drop-off in students during the first semester, as the program admitted a slightly larger number of weaker students than on average. This can be seen in the course report for Digital Library Management. 12 students successfully defended their thesis as of 22 August 2022. Several students normally submit theses for defense after the summer, so this defense rate is likely to go up after the early September defenses.

Forskningsanknytning

Connections to research are varied in the first year. Students have identified the Technologies of digital libraries 1 course as lacking a connection to research. This lack is considered fine for the course, which is built to prepare students to understand and undertake their own research using skills learned in this course. In this sense, the course supports an understanding of research. Students are generally positive about connections between the other courses and research fields. Instead, their main complaints via course and program questionnaire has to do with the lack of “real world” contact in the form of lectures by and meetings with digital library practitioners.

There is another question concerning levels of research access. Students felt that there was quite a lot of current LIS research integrated into the courses, but the thesis course presented other problems of access to “good” (i.e. A-grade) thesis work. They felt that it was difficult to assess the level at which they needed to research and write to produce a good quality thesis. This is a point well-taken, and one that even a well-written thesis course guide cannot cover. It might be good to choose a few higher-quality theses as examples of masters-level research work and provide students with these materials, possibly at the beginning of the program.

Resurser

Teachers involved in each of the courses had relevant research backgrounds for teaching these courses. However, the resources for teaching were just barely sufficient for this overly large group of students. Issues with staffing subsided to some degree after the first semester, but this is an ongoing issue with larger intakes of students. Students felt that stretched resources were mostly felt via early engagement on the part of the teachers which then dropped off as the course progressed. This impression fits with the Kronox and assignment schedules and indicates that some courses might need more resources in order to more fully meet the needs of students. On the other hand, teaching structures might still be affected by the campus weeks that pushed teachers to load instruction into the front-end of the semester. Teaching should be further spread out through the semester in line with assignments, and after this is accomplished, resources should be reassessed.

A few courses (Digital Library Management and the Tech courses, for instance) demonstrate that updating the courses in the program presents challenges related to teacher resources. There was less time that needed for looking over literature lists and the like. This issue is most acute in courses involving large numbers of

assignments/large amounts of reading and/or courses with higher teacher turnover. Resource allocation should take these issues into account.

It should also be noted that a large number of students work and have families alongside their studies, and Corona has affected how resources are perceived and allocated. This was mentioned as a problem (though not one that the program could account for) in the program evaluation.

Användbarhet och förberedelser för arbetslivet

This area could be improved, according to students. According to the program evaluation, students felt that the program prepared them for future work in the area of digital libraries and information services, with one student noting that she or he currently worked in this area and felt that the program significantly increased his/her ability to work with this subject. However, students also responded that they wanted more concrete contact with practitioners during the course of the program. This indicates that the early contact with librarians in the program introduction and within Digital Library Management is not sufficient. Students also have the option of contacting and working with librarians and other digital library and information workers in several courses, but the coursework seems of such volume that they choose not to do this outreach work or do not have time to work with this aspect in greater depth given the pacing of the program.

One way to solve this issue might be to have a larger assignment that is submitted at the end of the course, rather than smaller assignments spread out throughout the course. This structure might give students more time to interact with and built assignments/projects around and based on the work of practitioners if this is something in which they are interested. Not all courses can implement this kind of structure, but it is something to consider.

Övrigt

This student group presented challenges related to the number of enrolled students and the work connected to the construction of a replacement for the current program. The program went through an assessment that raised few problems with the current program, but as work on the new program demonstrates, the current program matches less well with the research and teaching interests of the department. The effects of this situation can be seen in reviews for the program, which especially praise courses like Information retrieval and Digitization that fit with the interests of the course instructors.

Previous issues with communication about the program more generally seemed to be allayed with the introduction of monthly office hours on zoom. Students in this group have been consistently positive and seem very comfortable with reaching out and asking questions if they have questions. This was an issue with the previous group.

As with the preceding year's group, although the program is largely given as a distance program, elimination of the campus week continued to present some problems and some opportunities. These lessons will hopefully help us to develop the new masters program to better effect, especially in terms of digital tools use.

Eventuella förslag till förändringar

- More discussion between course coordinators of courses running parallel to each other to ensure that work loads are distributed more equally between the courses and that any existing synergies can be exploited.
- Theoretical perspectives and LIS research can still be clarified further, although this needs to be done on a course-by-course basis. From this evaluation, it is clear that these issues need clarifying most in the first semester.
- Any temporary solutions for the conditions presented by Covid-19 should be evaluated properly, so that we can all learn from them. Funding for assessing the usefulness and accessibility of potential digital tools was secured in Fall 2021 and a project was undertaken in Spring 2022. The findings there will hopefully help with program and teaching design for the new program.
- Assessments of this program will now be used to improve the design for the coming program, which will focus on digital information. Given this new focus, some issues with the current program will be solved while others will surely crop up.