

**Educational Committee
Semester 6 Documentation
2018/2019**



**Study
Association
Atlantis**

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This EduCo semester documentation consists of the evaluations of small issues we indicated during the last semester of the program.

Looking back

Struggle in the bubble

As a way of bringing the class together, as well as hoping to provide useful sessions for aiding the bachelor thesis process, the weekly Semester 6 Discussions were set up by Jasper Homminga (S6 Coordinator). The aim of these was to have a moment where the Class of 2019 could get together and discuss their progress, with every session having a different theme. One was about planning the thesis, another on academic writing, one on "What does it mean to be a new engineer" etc. Then there were the "Bring your struggle to the bubble" sessions, which were more casual opportunities for students to bring up problems they were encountering with their thesis that might be relevant to other students, and discussing potential solutions. All of these S6 sessions were a fantastic initiative and initially well attended. However, by around the fifth session, there was a great decrease in the number of attendees, with some sessions having a mere three students present. What we believed to be the problem, was that the sessions were not deemed useful enough, nor structured enough, for people to think them worth attending. They became more of a social opportunity with a Q&A element, where students decided that they could just as easily approach Jasper individually with a question. This was a great shame, but our year seemed to prefer spending their Monday lunchtimes working individually on their thesis, or conducting experiments in their research groups' laboratories instead. Jasper and the semester team's effort in designing and hosting these sessions is greatly appreciated, but unfortunately, the lack of attendance from our year prevented them from really becoming a success.

Capstone Project

In the Capstone proposal, the student was expected to provide a clear reasoning for the activities and scope of their capstone and how it matched the requested ECs. However, the scope of the capstone was not very clear to everyone. It is apparent that for some of us, the Capstone has a more 'product-oriented' focus instead of a process-oriented, where the quality of the end product matters more. This has resulted in several students taking extra time or even semesters, by putting in more hours than expected. Meanwhile, the main aim of a Capstone is to get students accustomed to the process of executing a big project, ideally in their desired expertise – it is more about the process of how a student approached the challenge, as opposed to judging how perfect the end product is. It may be valuable to emphasise such aims even more in the beginning, or to have more control with the proposal plannings to ensure students do not deviate too far from the main goal.

Furthermore, the quality of supervisors seems to also vary a lot among us. It was clear that some supervisors seem uninformed and not ready to assist bachelor students in carrying a big project, as the expectations from their side are not clear even after having read the ATLAS supervisor syllabus. Simply, there have been reports of supervisors not being able to help the students when they run into problems that they are not able to solve themselves. Although some level of autonomy should exist within the students, the supervisor should be able to help students with the process that the students have no experience in. In an extreme case, we

have had one report of a student switching a supervisor midway. We understand that ATLAS does not have full control in selecting supervisors, but perhaps an extra check would prevent such issues. This may be done by having a meeting with the students and all his/her supervisors, including the ATLAS supervisor in the beginning.

MTE

Within Semester 6, there was a focus on the submission of documentation of the students' progress. The relevance of this form of evaluation seems suspect - given the focus on the capstone, there is some difficulty in assessing progress in this form. It was discovered that there is a requirement for students to meet with their mentors after this assessment, though this requirement was not really emphasized. As this mid-term mentor meeting seems like it would provide much more insight into the student's progress, as well as prompting the student to reflect properly, we would recommend emphasizing this aspect to a much greater extent.

SER deadline

The SER deadline this semester was seen as being too early by our peers. Half of our semester is made up of the Bachelor Thesis, and 80% of the learning experience probably comes from it. With most of our peers still working on their thesis after the SER deadline, it made it hard for them to reflect and write about the process in the SER. Luckily, this was solved this year with a second round for SERs (students were allowed to hand in "incomplete SERs", and submit a more detailed SER later, once they had completed their thesis). However, this is something that has to be looked into the coming year again, and hopefully, a more permanent solution can be found for this recurring problem.

Conclusion

We acknowledge that Semester 6 is an odd semester to supervise, especially because everyone is busy with their own project, and often away from the Citadel. We really appreciated Jaspers efforts to sustain the community feeling as well as provide informative sessions, like the struggle in the bubble sessions. However, as always, a lot can still be improved... For example ensuring that students know what is expected from them during their capstone project, considering the implications of the timing of the SER deadline, and keeping third year students engaged with the ATLAS community. We currently do not have any hard advice to give on these topics, but highly suggest that they are critically considered next year.