



ATLAS

EduCo Semester Documentation

Semester 6, 2016, Class of 2016

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Introduction

This EduCo semester documentation consists of the evaluations of the project, the semester as a whole and the PDP and SER. All the evaluations have a similar structure: first, a short summary of the course/project/semester is given, followed by results of the EduCo semester six survey - which is based on the “EduCo criteria”, but tweaked to fit the circumstances. This survey was filled out by 15 students. Then a discussion is given, in which the strengths and weaknesses of the topic will be pointed out. Afterwards, solutions to the problems are suggested and in the last section the agreements that were made with the teacher/coordinator are described. Both the discussion and solutions are based on the Semester survey, the evaluation document from the Semester coordinator, and discussions between EduCo, students and staff throughout the semester.

Note: The agreements in this documentation were made with Jasper Homminga, who will be the coordinator of the semester for 2017

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Semester

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year/semester: Semester 6, 2016, class of 2016

Coordinator: Kees Ruijter

Summary of the course

Preparation of this semester already started at the end of semester four. This was to ensure that people were aware of the procedure and the fact that they had to establish their own project and supervisor. The semester lasted from February 1st until June 23th, however, some students got extension for their project or still had exams after this deadline. Students were expected to put 15-20 EC in their final project and next to this fill 13-8 EC with electives and/or their personal pursuit. Next to this, 2 EC were reserved for writing the PDP and SER and in this time mainly reflect on the total development over the past six semesters. Over the course of the semester, several workshops were given concerning the final project, the PDP and the SER.

EduCo semester survey

EduCo criterion	Mean	SD
1. The semester planning is clear and changes were communicated in time	2.66	0.89
2. The expectations for the semester are clear	3.33	0.98
3. An evenly spread out workload throughout the semester is possible	3.40	1.24
4. Students are able to make informed and meaningful choices about the combination of courses and their project within the semester	3.33	1.11
5. The semester allows for personalisation	4.53	0.83
6. The student had an informed mentor that helped the student in his/her academic and personal development	3.40	1.18
7. This semester allowed to apply/display all qualities fostered during the ATLAS curriculum	3.46	0.74

Discussion

Looking at the outcomes of the survey, the students seem to be somewhat satisfied with the course of the semester. It gave students the opportunity to choose what they wanted to do and to excel in their topic of interest. Planning and communication was a weaker point within the semester, it was not always clear what was expected when and the variety of documents made it hard for students to understand what the 'official' information was. Students were satisfied about the setup of the semester, they enjoyed their project and the freedom to choose their courses and moreover to shape the semester to their own interest. The choice of electives was good, though a more in time overview would have been beneficial. Furthermore, students experienced that the semester allowed them to show the competences and knowledge they gained over their ATLAS career.

A point was raised concerning the collaboration within the class. As many people worked on their own thesis, they did not do much with peers and in this missed the learning experience from others. This is something that increased a bit towards the end of the semester but should be considered in shaping next semester six.

Another issue concerning semester six was planning. The graduation date was fit in a very tight schedule, this had the impact that many students were not finished with their project or some courses before the graduation date. During graduation students did therefore feel stressed which should not be the case. Another ambiguity that occurred throughout the semester in terms of planning was the placement of electives. The electives could apparently be placed anywhere in the semester, be it before, after or even during the semester project

Within the ATLAS curriculum there is a prominent role for the mentor and even though most students say their mentor is informed and helps them guiding their development, some say the mentor is too busy and therefore not able to be of help in making decisions. This is something that has to be dealt with as students should have the opportunity to work with their mentor.

A major point of discussion were all documents on the blackboard website, they were messy, overlapping and contradicting. Next to this, the communication to supervisors, both internal as external has to be improved as they received documents that were hard to read or unclear for a non/ATLAS reader. Most of this occurred within the semester project and will therefore be discussed in that section.

During this semester 6, there were no students for which it was questionable whether they qualified to start the semester. However, as noted by the semester coordinator there were also no clear agreements on this and therefore for the next semester 6 this should be written down.

Problems and Suggested solutions

Clear overview of the electives

- Make a document where all electives that can be chosen are stated
- Also indicate which electives are hard to get into, so that the student knows he/she should start arranging things in time.
- Have a clear set of rules that an elective should meet.

A proper way of documentation

- Merge all documents into one, with a table of content
- Use PDFs instead of Word documents
- Make the documents more official
- Documents sent to supervisors should be more to the point.

More informed and dedicated mentors and (co-)supervisors

- Make sure they schedule time for their task
- Somehow make sure that they are all informed. Clearer communication will probably help.

More focus on reintegration of students in the ATLAS community

- Make this a focus point during the start of the semester.
- A common room seemed to help
- Some other initiatives by the EduCo, such as the lunches and Final Trail poster seemed to foster reintegration as well.

Make the role of every document that has to be handed in clear

- Make clear who is responsible for approval of which document. Kees made an overview of this:
 1. PDP → mentor; plus non binding advice from the semester coordinator to the mentor;
 2. Adjustment of PDP → Mentor; point of attention whether the programme's objectives are met.

3. Project idea → not to be approved; discussion with the mentor and/or the semester coordinator to find the prospective supervisor; as soon as someone is to be approached the semester coordinator should be informed;
 4. Project proposal → supervisor; preferably also the co-supervisor, but sometimes the co-supervisor is not assigned in that stadium already;
 5. Project plan → supervisor and co-supervisor
 6. Midterm: go decision → supervisor and co-supervisor together
 7. Final grade/ conclusion → examiners (at least supervisor and co-supervisor).
- Indicate whether deadlines in the planning are strict or more an indication
 - Indicate whether products are mandatory or not
 - Make clear what kind of feedback and from whom the student can expect it on which document.

Agreements

Clear overview of the electives and the rules of electives

- Make students follow a list of steps:
- Example:
 - Check on rooster to make a short list
 - Send the list to Jan Schut. There are two possibilities
 - He can arrange it immediately
 - Other routes need to be taken to be admitted, will most likely take longer or not happen at all

A proper way of documentation

- The documentation will be rewritten and needs to look a bit better (mostly for outside impression)
- PDFs will be used and BlackBoard will be more structured
- Make clear what site is used for the handing of material (portfolio or blackboard; not both)

More informed and dedicated mentors and (co-)supervisors

(Co-)supervisors

- Make clear what the role is of the supervisor and co supervisors and who needs to hand in what
- Make them hand in certain confirmations of having received and read material (midterm report, project plan, research plan etc)

For mentors

- Involvement in the get-together event. Make it more personal
- Mentor meetings to keep them informed on where their mentees should be at the moment

More focus on reintegration of students in the ATLAS community

- Get-together event at the start of the semester.

Better overall planning of semester six

- Make hard deadlines with consequences (potential idea: warning system)
- Create time lines (one concentrated, the other more spread out)

Plan the date of the graduation better

- It needs to occur after the last exam of the semester

Admittance semester 6

- Will be part of next years OER.

Bachelor Project

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year/semester: Semester 6, 2016, class of 2016

teacher: Kees Ruijter

Summary of the project

The project of semester 6 is the final bachelor project of the students. In this individual project, the students show their competences in research, design and the other learning lines and their knowledge in a field specified by themselves. Through the project, the students try to show their growth over the ATLAS curriculum for both the ATLAS program and the master program they want to enter.

The project consisted of three parts: preparation, implementation and completion. A better overview of the project can be found in the [elaborated overview](#). As the project was individually selected by each student and for some even drafted by the students themselves, the aim of the project varied per person. However, the main aim was to show the student's competences in either Design or Research and working on an individual project. ATLAS organized a couple of workshops to help the students through the different stages of the project, with varying degree of success.

EduCo criteria

EduCo criterion	mean	SD
1. In the project non-Dutch students are not put at a disadvantage	4.4	0.63
2. The student was confident in their ability to apply the knowledge that they had on the subject	3.43	1.09
3. Tutors/consultants are informed about the project, and have relevant knowledge	3.07	0.99
4. Tutors/consultants are readily available/accessible for students.	3.57	1.09
5. The project has a well-communicated and logical set-up	3.07	0.91
6. The students are provided with relevant information/knowledge that can be readily applied within the project	3.42	0.76
7. The procedure for project assessment is clear in advance	3.43	1.16

Discussion

In general, students were somewhat satisfied with the process of the semester project, scoring around a 3, which is in the middle of the scale. Because of the wide variety of projects, there are only some contact points which are within the reach of the program to change. These include the workshops given; communication to students, co-supervisors and supervisor; and the assessment.

Over the course of the semester, 6 workshops related to the project were given by the ATLAS core team to catalyse peer review and to help those that were not completely sure what was expected from them. Due to the fact that the agenda of students varied greatly and the presented importance of the workshops; attendance was generally low, with about 50% of the students showing up.

The assignment of the supervisors went well, with everyone receiving someone that had a relatively high level of expertise in the field. For some students it was only very late that they knew who their Co-supervisor was.

The communication throughout the project was one of the largest struggles. Initially, there were multiple documents floating on blackboard, each with a variation of a names given to a certain aspect of the semester project. Furthermore it was not very clear what had to be done exactly. This caused some confusion, but was somewhat improved when a final updated version was made on request from the Educo. One aspect that kept occurring was that the formality of some of the deadlines was unclear. For example, the midterm report was completed in varying degrees.

Furthermore, throughout the semester, changes were made to the setup when noticed that the original setup was not going to work. Since this was again changing the plan and there was a large possibility that this would cause confusion, the EduCo took it upon themselves to improve the communication, together with the semester coordinator. This was done by writing a weekly newsletter in which we stipulated what deadlines were coming up in the week, requests from the semester coordinator, a count down to how many days there were left and a section in which detailed explanation of a certain aspect of the semester project could occur. The students indicated that they were happy with the newsletter and that it helped explain a great deal of what was expected, removing a little bit of the stress of the project. The newsletter was also sent to supervisors and co supervisors, however no feedback was received from them, and thanks to the software with which we sent the newsletter we also saw that only around half of the supervisors and co-supervisors read it. This caused some of the supervisors to be misinformed about changes to the setup, occasionally clashing with what students expected from them. This applied to both the faculty supervisor and the ATLAS supervisors.

The assessment procedure also had some problems that could be easily mitigated for the next time. The complete setup of open and closed sessions was only clear after some of the presentations had to occur. In addition there needs to be a standard in terms of feedback and grades, because some students received different types of feedback.

Problems and Suggested solutions

Finding Co-supervisor

Low attendance at workshops

- Make them mandatory

Difficult communication caused by changes in setup

- Weekly newsletter update to indicate changes for students
- Organize bi-weekly session with all supervisors to get an update on what they should be expecting from their students
- Make a compact note that somehow reaches all supervisors ...

Assessment Communication

- Make a compact note on how it works exactly

Agreements

Finding Co-supervisor

- This needs to be done earlier
- If the role of the co supervisor become more important, they need to have the time to work on it
- Ask current co-supervisors how much time they think that needs to be done by co-supervisor

Low attendance at workshops

- Make people more enthusiastic about going to the workshop

- Tailor them so that you do not depend on having a large group of students

Difficult communication caused by changes in setup

- Weekly newsletter update to indicate changes for students (Video?)
- Make a compact note that somehow reaches all supervisors ...

Assessment Communication

- There needs to be a standard evaluation. A full version is available, but there is also a shorter version for the supervisor that does not have enough time. The co supervisor will know the long version. Important is that they tell the same story.

PDP and SER

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year/semester: Semester 6, 2016, class of 2016

teacher: Kees Ruijter

Summary of this chapter

During this semester the PDP and SER had a more prominent role. Students were supposed to not only make goals for and reflect upon semester 6, but also reflect upon their whole ATLAS career. Since it was estimated that more time was needed to do so, students got 2EC for writing their PDP and SER which on their verdict is mentioned as 'reflection and integration'. Two workshops were given, one on writing the PDP and one on writing the SER.

EduCo criteria

EduCo criterion	mean	SD
1. The expectations of the PDP were clear	3.53	1.24
2. The PDP workshop was useful	2.64	1.21
3. The feedback given on my PDP was useful	2.57	1.16
4. The role of the PDP in this semester was useful	3.43	1.16
5. The expectations of the SER were clear	3.46	1.26
6. The SER workshop was useful	2.79	0.89
7. The feedback given on my SER was useful	3.00	1.11
8. The amount of ECs given for writing my PDP and SER is fair	3.71	1.07
9. The role of the SER in this semester was useful	4.00	0.88

Discussion

The expectations for the PDP and SER were clear, especially after the workshops that were given. However, the quality of the workshops could still be improved. The only feedback most students got on their PDP was a go/no-go decision. Students would have liked to get more elaborate and constructive feedback. Moreover, some only got their go decision after repeatedly asking their mentor. The feedback on the SER, i.e. the verdict, was received as minimalistic. Students would have liked more constructive feedback. Even though it is the last verdict, students would still have liked more critical feedback on their verdict in order to improve themselves and have a better understanding of the final academic outcome (PC, PH, PX).

Students don't agree whether it was good that they got 2 ECs for writing the PDP and SER. Some state it was fair, some state less would also have been satisfactory. It was also stated that it should have been communicated more clearly that the 2ECs were part of the 30ECs students are to gain during the semester.

Suggested solutions

2ECs for writing the PDP and SER

- The 2ECs for writing the PDP and SER is not necessarily a problem, but it might not be the optimum. Some students proposed to turn it into an 1EC 'course'. Another suggestion from the Semester coordinator is to let the student choose between writing an elaborate PDP and SER in which the student also reflects on the whole ATLAS career worth 2EC, or a normal PDP and SER only about semester 6 and getting no ECs for that.
- Whatever the role of the PDP and SER will be in the next semester 6, it should be clearly communicated in time and should be explained how it fits in the semester.

Feedback on PDP and SER

- ATLAS should discuss what they think the feedback on the PDP and SER should look like and why.
- Then it should be made very clear to teachers what feedback is expected and who is responsible for this. It should also be communicated to the students what kind of feedback they can expect and from whom they will receive this.

Agreements

2ECs for writing the PDP and SER

- This is going to be removed

Feedback on PDP and SER

- The role of the pdp needs to be made clear
- Feedback guidelines should be clearly defined