



Programrapport

Programmets namn: Master in Library and Information Science: Digital Library and Information Services	Ladokkod: BMDD
Antal högskolepoäng: 120	Årskull: 2019
Programansvarig: Rachel Pierce	

Enligt Riktlinjer för löpande utvärdering av kurser och utbildningsprogram vid Högskolan i Borås (Dnr 589-17) ska programrapporten utgå ifrån följande aspekter:

- 1) Studenternas möjlighet till ansvar och delaktighet
- 2) Sambanden mellan programmets kurser samt mellan examensmål, lärandemål undervisningsformer och examinationer
- 3) Forskningsanknytning i programmet
- 4) Programmets resurser och hur dessa har använts
- 5) Programmets användbarhet och förberedelse för ett föränderligt arbetsliv

Material basis for the report

This report is based on the following material:

1. Course reports from all courses attended by the students in BMDD19h have been consulted. 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.
2. The program coordinator has conducted office hours once per month during the fall 2020 and spring 2021 terms, and a number of these have been devoted to receiving and then working with student opinion.
3. An oral consultation with students was conducted on 8 June – 3 students attended.
4. A written evaluation was filled in by a total of 10 students.
5. Information collected from course teachers via program group meetings
6. The program's internal evaluation, which took place during the academic year 2020-2021 and was conducted by outside reviewers via the program's internal evaluation. This outside review took into account information from the department leadership, program teachers, and students currently or recently enrolled in the program.

In terms of student input, students have the right to be represented in the Programråd, and Swedish-speaking students were invited to volunteer as representatives, but no student in the program has been interested in this position.

General reflections

2019-2020 represents a shift in responsibilities, as Rachel Pierce took over from Helena

Franke as program coordinator, ahead of Elena Maceviciute retiring. In addition, Covid-19 has presented an array of challenges for both teachers and students. Though the program is largely given as a distance program, elimination of the campus week presents some problems and some opportunities. Everyone in the program is working together and within their course groups to find solutions for problems with, for example, researching social science phenomena at a distance, conducting computer science workshops, and finding fair accommodations for students whose work and family lives have been complicated by the pandemic. This is a learning opportunity.

One of the most important things learned is what should and should not appear in campus weeks, when they are re-instituted. For pedagogical reasons, spreading out teaching across a course works much better than presenting lots of information in the first week of the semester, especially for those courses that will not start until halfway through the semester. This need has also been noted by the internal program review. The pandemic has also resulted in the creation of a number of meetings and information sessions to gather information from students and assist with student-to-student interaction, within and across year groups.

The program's course content, progression, and resources

Teaching resources are summarized in the following table:

Timmar	2 469
Andel Professorer	2,8%
Andel Lektorer	55,4%
Andel Adjunkter	33,0%
Andel Doktorander	1,8%
Andel interna	93,0%
Andel externa	7,0%
Antal kurser	11
Antal samläsning	5
Antal unika	6

The table demonstrates that the majority (58.2%) of teachers involved in the program have a PhD. Resources are used effectively through teacher stability – the same teachers tend to be involved in the same courses from year to year – and overlapping courses with the Swedish-language masters program BMBD1.

Course content is generally thought to be good, with specific positive comments focusing on the courses centered on computer skills, including both Information retrieval courses and both Technologies of digital libraries courses. Courses including the E-books course and Digital library management were deemed to be a bit out-of-date and in need of a refresh. Interaction design, Digital library management, and the E-books course were perceived to be particularly disorganized. This situation was largely due to timing. Interaction design and Digital library management were both in the beginning of an updating process, while the E-books course has been phased out. All of these issues are related to some extent with the teacher resources for the program. A new teacher is responsible for the Interaction design course, which has been updated (its first new run was in the spring of 2021) and now needs to be synced to some

degree with the parallel course Digitizing cultural heritage material. The Digital library management course is in the process of being updated after resources were allocated to this task, and a new version will be given in the fall of 2021. The E-books course was originally co-taught with teachers from Oslo Met, a collaboration that has now ended, and this course has been cancelled for the future – the course Digitizing cultural heritage materials will be offered every year, as Borås has the teachers to provide this course as long as the Royal Library continues to contribute.

Communication within courses was a particular topic of conversation in student reviews. Some students believed that teachers were quite responsive while others felt that teachers were difficult to contact. Communication was somewhat improved with the implementation of office hours, which were well-received. However, both the Methods course and the Thesis course were criticized for communications issues. This is partially due to issues related to the pandemic, including staffing issues in these courses. However, these courses involve a great deal of self-driven research, and students feel quite unsure executing pilot project research without individual advising opportunities – a fear that compounds their fears about impending thesis work. The Methods course does not currently have extra resources for providing individual student advising. Instead, students present work at a mid-seminar. This seminar was perceived to be inadequate given the number of questions students had about the pilot project that constitutes the course's main assignment. The Thesis course is designed to primarily facilitate a relationship between students and their advisors, but this approach nearly eliminates formal interaction between students about their thesis work. These issues will need review in the future.

With regards to the connections between courses, negative comments focused on PingPong's unwieldy structure and difficulties with some assignments that relied too much on PingPong's discussion forum. There are also some general issues with connecting the content of the courses concerned with computer science to those that are heavily based in reading and writing. The courses are perceived as being separated into two categories: computer science courses and courses within the social sciences/humanities. This gap is expressed in course reports for Technologies of digital libraries 1, for instance. More might be done to create the connections between these two course categories. There are some students who make these connections themselves, but this is solo work and could be made easier by making those connections more explicit.

Generally, students to manage to find the connections between courses and implement their reading and learning. Skills and literature from all of the first semester's courses have been used to varying degrees by students in the E-books course, for example. These connections could be better supported in the future, however. The plan is to discuss course progression and how specific skills will be used in the program in the middle of each semester, during program coordinator office hours. There are also opportunities for course instructors to present program and professional connections – a suggestion from students via the Sunet survey.

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 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) to Powerpoints (Digital Library Management) to analytic papers (E-books; Methods) to concrete digital development projects (Interaction design). Students generally

like the range of assignments, although they found the number and timing of the assignments in Digital Library Management to be overly challenging. One student commented in the Sunet survey that a distance program should not contain group assignments (the Interaction design course is organized around a group assignment), although other students have requested more group work, to provide more opportunities for social cohesion amongst students.

A few specific areas of concern were the focus of the internal program review – gender equality, internationalization, and sustainability. These areas were considered to be well-integrated into the program's content, but not necessarily how the program was actually described to students and others. Instead, students had to find these themes themselves as they worked their way through the program. Making these themes more explicit and providing examples throughout the program is recommended. The lack of explicitness many have something to do with the simultaneous assertions by students that theory is both very present and not very present in the program. However, this divergence may also have to do with very varied expectations for the program, which attracts students looking to get a job in a library as soon as possible (often, these students are switching fields) and students who want an academic, demanding program that prepares them for research in LIS. These varied expectations are visible in student communication including office hours and in the two student feedback opportunities at the end of the spring 2021 semester.

Work has been done on internationalization in particular. Students are now able to take distance courses at other iSchools – this is ongoing work that will start in the fall of 2021. In addition, more meetings and interaction with the International Office has been initiated. An initial meeting was held in the spring of 2021, so that students could provide feedback on what kinds of international exchange options they were interested in and when information about these options might be presented. Students are positive about the international exchange possibilities that were presented, though planning for studying elsewhere is difficult within the context of a two-year program with a fixed course schedule.

Student graduation rates

Student progression is somewhat affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has delayed hand-ins in a number of courses. Most importantly, students have more trouble finding topics and executing research for the Thesis course during the pandemic. This situation was visible last year when the pandemic began and has continued. The nature of rushed theses is perhaps part of why the internal review committee noted certain issues with the academic writing quality of the theses, including issues with references and the uneven quality of English in the texts. Typically, it is these kinds of formal issues that are the last step in the thesis process, and students rushing have less time to devote to fixing language and references problems.

Five students successfully defended their theses in June, and two successfully defended in September, of a total of seven students. These graduation rates are in line with past rates. A positive was that grades for this year were on average higher than in previous years.

Connections to LIS research

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 in the follow-up course Technologies of digital libraries 2. In this sense, the course

supports an understanding of research. Students are generally positive about connections between the other courses and research fields, though they would like to see the material for the Digital Library Management course updated. The same complaint has cropped up in the E-books course. These courses are, however, praised for their grounding in research and important questions within the field of Library and Information Science. There is, generally, a divide between courses that are based in workshops and learning computer skills and those based in doing independent reading and research that is then applied to independent writing.

During the second year, the emphasis on research increases in all of the four courses. The two computer science-based courses (Information retrieval 2; Technologies of digital libraries 2) integrate more analytical work on current topics in the field such as pattern identification and linked data, among other issues. Current research is especially prominent in the Methods course, which demands the execution of a pilot project and subsequent short research paper. This assignment is meant to deepen knowledge of methodological questions while also allowing students to do some preliminary work in the field in which they intend to do thesis research. The success of this self-driven research was mixed with this year's group. Students believed that they needed more support in order to be able to do this kind of research, though two students noted in the Sunet survey that these kinds of assignments mean that students came out of the program able to do self-directed research – if they need to start a research project, they now know where to start. This requirement is obviously most acute in the Thesis course, where self-directed research sits at the center, guided by an advisor who has some skills in the specific area in which the thesis will exist.

Students have noted that they have little access to information about what these areas of faculty interest and research are, making it harder to choose suitable thesis topics for study. Without this information, they also have a harder time making choices about topics in the Methods course. There are researcher groups at the department, and students are currently directed to these pages if they want to know more about research currently being conducted by faculty. Additionally, these research groups line up very well with the program's specific themes. So researcher/teacher skills exist. Resource allocation within the context of pre-existing courses makes it more difficult to connect students directly with researchers and their various areas of interest.

This opinion is shared by the internal program evaluation group, which judged the program teachers to have broad and varied research skills related to the program. They also note that this breadth and variation are visible in the thesis topics chosen by students in the program – judged to be a positive. However, they also note something quite visible in the student Sunet survey – students come to the program interested in libraries, while a focus on the information science part of the discipline is less visible. This means that teachers must work hard to represent the field, which is more diverse than students expect (or, at times, want). A specific area of research that exists at the department but is less visible in the program is bibliometry. This is also an area in demand by students, a fact noted by both the internal program evaluation and the student Sunet survey.

Connections between the program and the job market

Students believe that the skills they have learned in the computer science-oriented courses (Information retrieval 1 & 2; Technologies of digital libraries 1 & 2; E-books) will be useful on the job market but are less sure that the other courses have contributed to their ability to get and keep a job as a librarian. Given that the program is an academic program, this is an

understandable but not entirely reasonable concern – the program is a masters program designed to teach academic skills and prepare students for future academic work in the field of Library and Information Science, either as a doctoral student or in another position where analytic LIS work is required. In this sense, students do generally feel that the program has introduced them to the range of topics within and a number of theories pertinent to the field of digital libraries. Students tend to more fully recognize the usefulness of the program after they have been out of the program and have begun work.

The program has implemented some changes to increase support for student job searches and networking. Though students request that the program provide internship opportunities, this is impossible for a small international program – internships will remain something that students must pursue themselves, although the program encourages these kinds of arrangements, especially if thesis work can be interwoven with internship labor. Additionally, two classes integrate lectures from and conversations with librarians involved in digital information services (Digital library management; Digitizing cultural heritage material) and former students who now work in the field are involved in the introductory weeks for both program years. Last, work with career counselling has started, so that students can access information about jobs, workshops, and application processes. This information has traditionally been available only to students who can understand Swedish. Career counselling will now be introduced in the introductory weeks for both program years, and the counselling services.

Some issues have to do with the way that the program is marketed, a point made by both students and the internal program evaluation. In general, students do get jobs in the field, often working with digital services at libraries or as academic librarians, while a few go on to doctoral studies. Several get jobs while still in the program – a goal for many, who have moved to Sweden and are taking the program to find employment in a library. The program attempts to accommodate students who want to combine work and studies, by helping students plan for courses and allocate teacher resources accordingly. This work is specifically named as appreciated by the student group in Sunet reviews. This work is difficult to integrate into the program and, thus far, remains somewhat invisible for students. More help from Career Counselling is necessary here.

Implemented changes

- Program coordinator office hours have been implemented, which has improved communication between students and the program coordinator.
- This shift has led to the communication of more information about international studies opportunities. The program coordinator has also started work around creating a compendium of digital tools use in the program, so that tools use can be streamlined (so students do not have to use short-term trial versions and/or buy too many tools) and so that course teachers can try to see that parallel courses coordinate tools use.
- The Digital library management course is being restructured and filled with new content. This content includes some information on subjects like bibliometry and open access, in which students have demonstrated interest.
- The E-books course has been permanently replaced with the Digitization of cultural heritage material course.
- PingPong will be replaced by Canvas as the program learning platform, beginning in the fall 2021. This replacement should solve some issues with teacher communication, given that student messages are also sent as alerts to teacher email.
- A thesis prep workshop will be held in mid-fall 2021. This work will be coordinated to

some extent with similar work in other programs at the department via the HGU group in charge of discussing issues pertinent to the thesis courses run by the department. It will also involve the LIS programråd and the research groups, so as to balance professional and research trends and interests.

- The welcome letter has been edited to include information for students about literature and other resources to look at during the summer before starting the program. Information about how to navigate Borås will be added when students return to campus weeks.
- Contacts with career counselling have been increased, so that career options and information about the Swedish job market are available to students.

Recommendations for program improvement

- There is currently work being done in the HGU group to simplify the thesis seminar and grading process. Changes will hopefully increase the usefulness of the thesis seminar.
- While Canvas may be an improvement on PingPong, the program teacher group will still need to discuss how to construct courses on the platform and come to collective decisions about how to use certain functions like the calendar, the discussions, and other similar functions. Student communication will also need to be standardized to some degree.
- Include information on how courses fit into the program and the profession at the beginning of each course. This work might be eased by integrating voices from the field into more courses.
- Make themes of gender equality, internationalization, and sustainability more explicit within the program. These issues may also need to be integrated into general program descriptions, such as the program syllabus.
- Improve information on thesis opposition in the Thesis course and remove the cap on the number of pages of text that can be sent in for the midway seminar. Improve instructions for the midway seminar, making it clear that students should provide reading instructions for their texts (including where they are in the research and writing process and listing topics they would like to discuss).
- Consider integrating research groups more fully into the program in some way, in order to make the available areas of current research more visible for students. This work might fit well with the thesis idea workshop (see above), but more thorough-going work in other courses would also be beneficial.
- Increase the interaction students have with potential employers, though this must be done after the first semester, when students have some experience in the program. Until now, a day with librarians working with digital services occurs during the first campus week for new students. This opportunity should be moved forwards, so that students are prepared to ask questions and make connections.

Program development

It should be noted that further development of the program will be affected by the planned closure of this program and current work combining aspects of both the Swedish-language and English-language masters programs into one program. A new distance program for students with an academic background in LIS and/or Information Architecture (or for students holding doctorates, who are therefore well-versed in research methods) in English will start in the fall of 2023. This new program will focus on Digital information, which is

seen as a necessary update to the some of themes in the current BMDD1 program, as digital libraries are somewhat outdated. The new program provides space for a lot of the themes students currently feel are missing from the BMDD1 program. Information from these evaluations (and the documents upon which these evaluations rest) has been used to plan both program development and the initiation of a new program.