

# REBOUND

Fostering Resilience in Rural Communities



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

**Student End-of-Course Evaluation.**

**Special-Purpose Award: Certificate in Rural  
Community Resilience (NFQ Level 6)**

February 2024

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## Introduction

This report presents student feedback on the training course. It includes the results of a survey that was open to all students. As of January 8, 2024, 17 responses were received. The survey questionnaire invited students to evaluate the following:

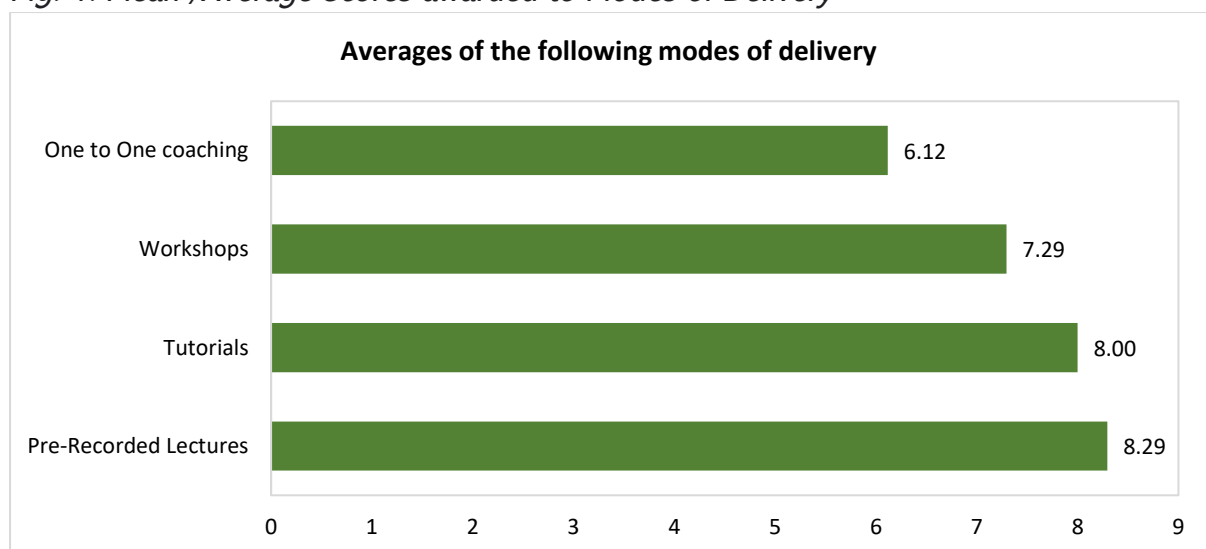
- Modes of delivery;
- Experiences / perceptions of the training;
- Course content;
- Logistics;
- Assessment; and
- Application (of knowledge).

The questionnaire also afforded students opportunities to put forward recommendations on how the course could be improved if it were to be run in future. In addition to providing feedback through the survey questionnaire, students were invited to put forward suggestions and to evaluate their learning experiences during their meetings with the mentors who had been assigned to them.

## Modes of Delivery

This course used several modes of delivery, including lectures, tutorials, workshops, and one-to-one coaching / mentoring. In addition, staff members also convened some group meetings with students. The survey questionnaire invited respondents to rate their experiences of the various modes of delivery on a scale from 0 (very negative) to 10 (very positive). The following graph presents the results; it shows the mean score for each mode of delivery, and it reveals that the highest levels of satisfaction were with the pre-recorded lectures and with the tutorials.

*Fig. 1: Mean /Average Scores awarded to Modes of Delivery*

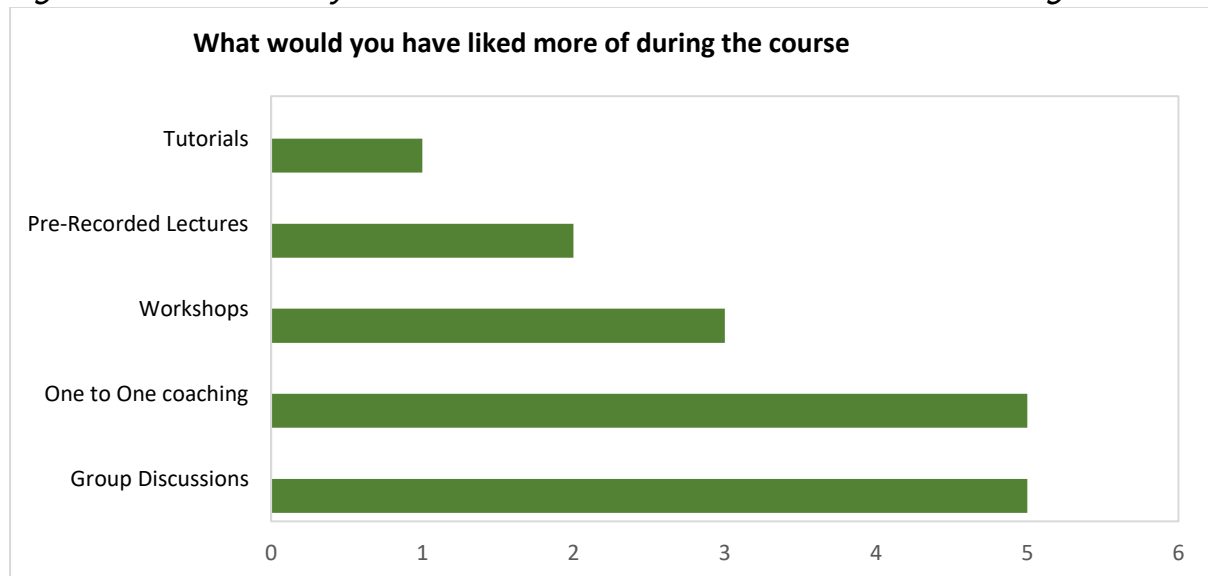


In their discussions with mentors, several students remarked that the pre-recorded lectures offered them flexibility; all are busy as professionals / volunteers in their

communities, and they appreciated being able to tune into the lectures at times that were convenient for them. They also reported that they liked being able to re-play lectures (in full and in part), so they could better absorb material. In their feedback conversations, students also commented favourably on the tutorials, and they referred especially to the ways in which the tutors facilitated participation and encouraged discussion. On the downside, they mentioned ICT connectivity challenges, and some remarked that the tutorials were too short. They stated that they would have liked more time and further opportunities to interact with colleagues from other member states and to have had more networking opportunities.

As the figures (in the preceding graph) show, the lowest levels of satisfaction were with the workshops and coaching sessions. In their feedback, students remarked that these tended to be assignment orientated and didn't provide enough scope to reflect on projects' capacities to shape rural community resilience or to deal with externalities (especially policy) that impact on resilience. Thus, while they helped students to be reflective and to maintain a focus on learning outcomes, many students felt they needed more time to absorb course content before being able to comment on how the learnings would relate to their professional and / or voluntary work. While the satisfaction scores for these two modes of delivery are lower than for the tutorials and the lectures, students reported they would like to have had more workshops and coaching sessions, as the following graph reveals. Several students remarked that were the course to be run over two semesters (rather than one), there would have been more scope for reflective praxis (especially in relation to policy issues), including transnational workshops and coaching with mentors from other member states.

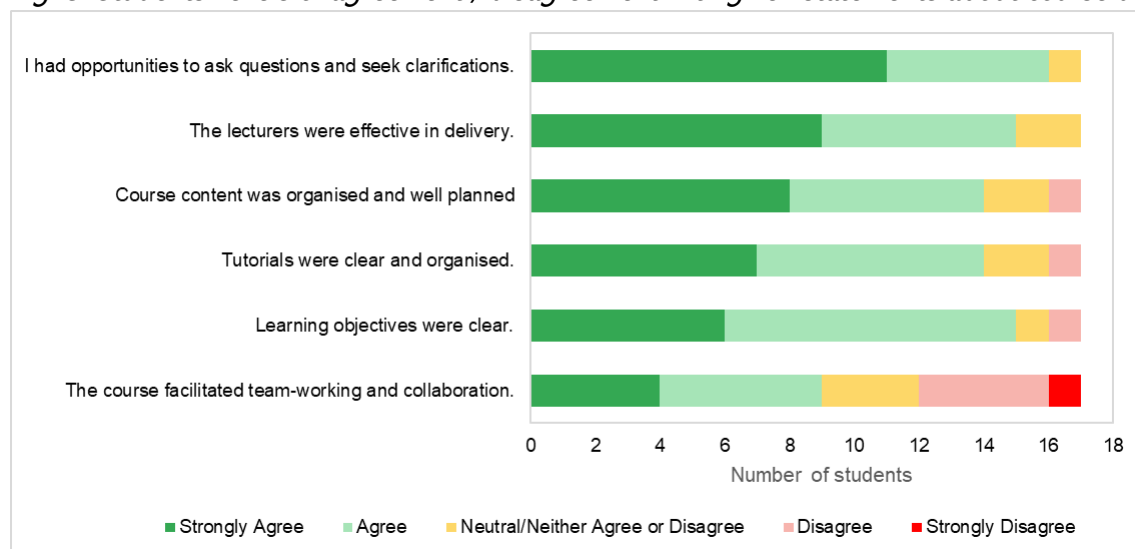
*Fig. 2: Modes of Delivery that students would like to have seen more of during the course*



## Experiences / perceptions of the training

In order to capture students' experiences and perceptions of the training, the survey questionnaire presented them with six statements. They were asked, using a Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree), to indicate their level of agreement / disagreement with each statement. As the following graph shows, there were high (majority of students) levels of agreement with the affirmative statements about the course delivery. Almost all students agreed that they had opportunities to ask questions and seek clarifications. They also agreed that delivery was effective and that the content and tutorials were well planned, clear, and organised. Almost all agreed, as well, that learning objectives were clear. As the graph shows, however, students were less likely to agree that the course facilitated team-working and collaboration. This latter finding is associated with the limited time over which the course was delivered and students' voluntary and professional commitments – as they outlined in their feedback to mentors.

*Fig. 3: Students' levels of agreement / disagreement with given statements about course delivery*



The following are emblematic of students' responses to open-ended questions evaluating their experiences and perceptions of the training.

### Experiences of the Training, Delivery

- No negative, all enjoyable.
- I didn't get the one to one coaching
- Maybe workshops have not been precisely structured, leading to outcomes that were not as successful as they could have been. Otherwise, the program was well-designed.
- I didn't avail of any one to one coaching, apart from the discussion on the Practical Assessment. Perhaps 3 to 4 organised one-to-one sessions could have helped with the progression of assignments during the semester.....as I've left mine all to December.

- I enjoyed the topics and contents of the lectures and the pre-recorded lectures + live tutorials system was working well. I enjoyed the discussions between participants. There was some miscommunication regarding the timing of some of the tutorials and workshops. Especially in the beginning, the practical arrangements were a bit all over the place and confusing. The workload of the course was huge for someone who is working and studying a master's program at the same time.
- Not sure about answering the one to one coaching question as this did not really happen. This is totally understandable because of time constraints.
- I didn't have any one-to-one coaching and didn't know it was available.
- Presentation of the course and its materials were excellent.
- At time of completing this questionnaire I had not had a one-to-one session with my academic mentor.

This training course comprised ten units (all of which were thematic), and survey respondents were invited to rate their usefulness of each unit – on a scale from zero (not at all useful) to 5 (very useful). The following graph presents the mean (average) values for each unit. It reveals that all units attained a score that is >4.0. The graph presents the values in descending order. It reveals that the three units that are perceived to have been most useful are as follows:

- Models of Rural Resilience;
- Participation Models; and
- Community Planning & Measurement Tools

*Fig. 4: Mean (average) scores for the perceived usefulness of each unit*



The following are emblematic of students' responses to open-ended questions evaluating their experiences and perceptions of the course's usefulness.

**Comments on Course elements/modules**

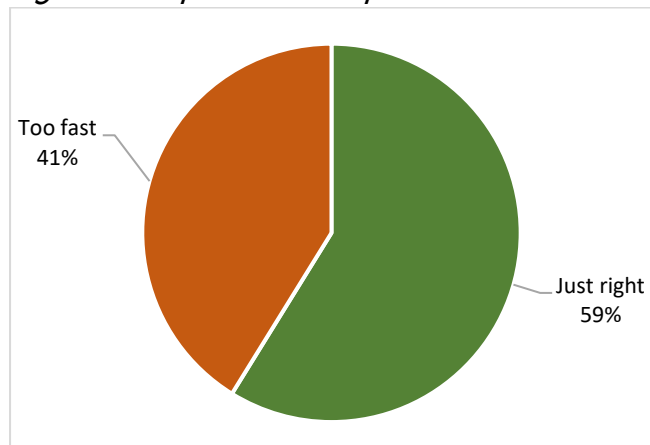
- Was very relevant and useful
- Very useful for work with my voluntary group.
- Definitely usefulness
- The knowledge I gained from the lectures may not be directly applicable to my current work (unless I get employed in this field), but it will be more helpful in understanding rural areas and their development, as well as in writing my master's thesis.
- Excellent

## Logistics

When delivering training or continuous professional development, it is important to pay attention to the logistics. These are particularly important for distance learning. They include pace, duration and required student effort.

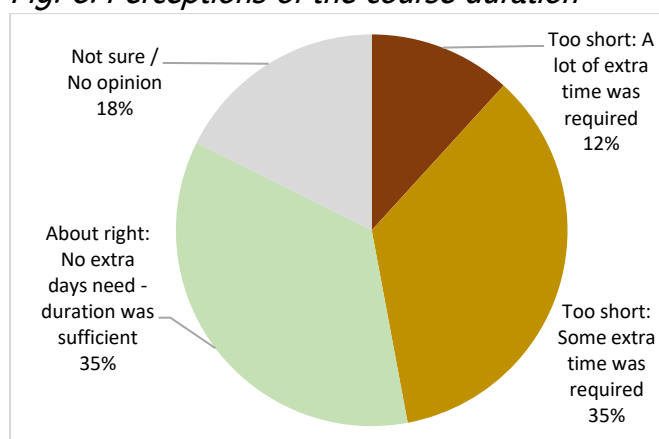
As the following pie-chart shows, the majority of students believe the pace of the course was 'just right', while just over forty percent believe it was 'too fast'.

*Fig. 5: Perceptions of the pace of the course*



As the following pie-chart shows, just over a third (35%) of students believe the course was of the appropriate duration. Almost half believe it was too short. These findings reiterate the earlier findings that emerged from the discussions with students – in which they indicated that they needed more time to absorb material and to apply learnings to their voluntary and professional contexts. Some students suggested that Module 1 should be delivered in the first semester, and Module 2 should be delivered in the second semester.

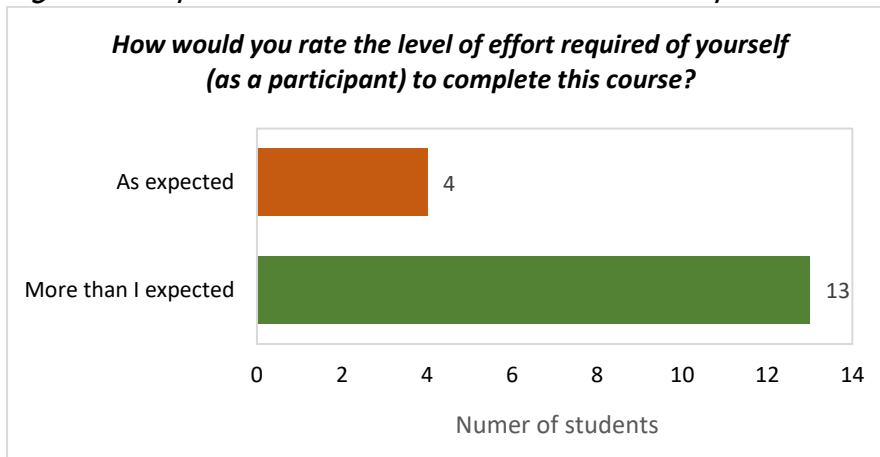
*Fig. 6: Perceptions of the course duration*





As the following graph shows, the majority of student believe the level of effort that was required from them was greater than they had anticipated. This finding also emerged in response to the questions that were asked about assessment.

*Fig. 7: Perceptions of the level of effort that was required*

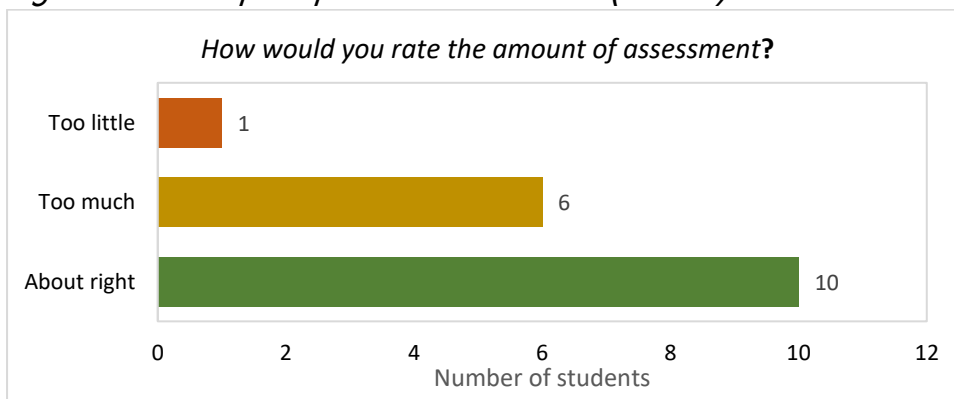


## Assessment / Assignments

The survey questionnaire asked two closed-ended questions about assignments / assessment.

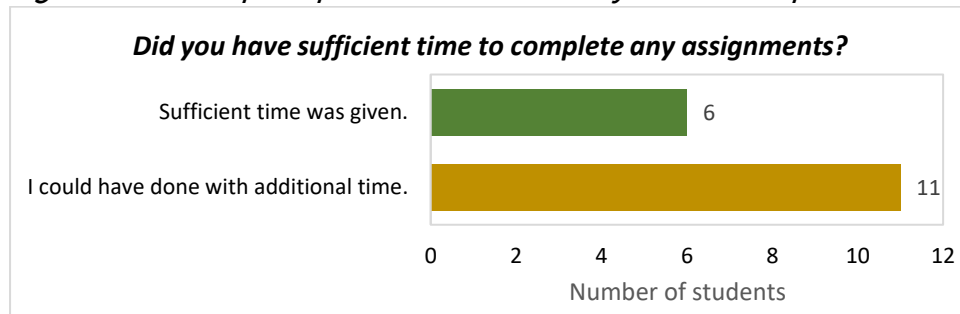
As the following graph shows, the majority of students believe the amount (or volume) of assessment was 'about right', while just over one third (36%) of them believe it was 'too much'.

*Fig. 8: Students' perceptions of the amount (volume) of assessment*



As the following graph shows, the majority of students would like to have had more time to complete their assignments.

*Fig. 9: Students' perceptions of the time they had to complete their assignments*



The following are emblematic of students' comments in relation to assessment:

#### **Assessment**

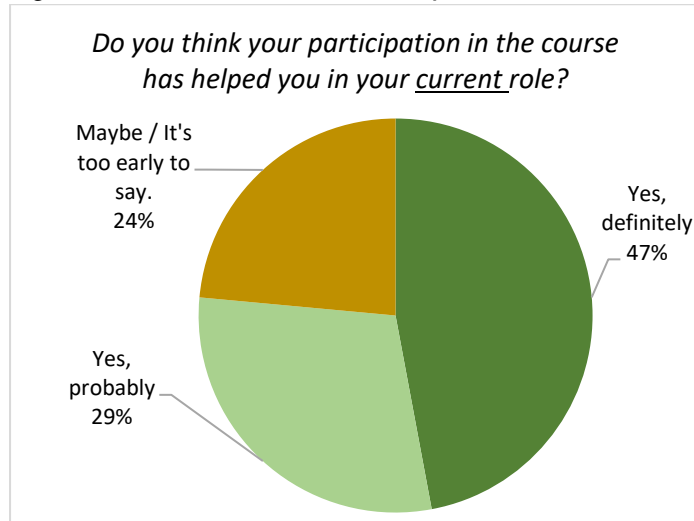
- With regard to the time for assignment submission, just coming up to Christmas, it is difficult to complete between work & other commitments. The other side of Christmas would be perfect.
- I think you should ask for the return of the module reflections weekly, as I'm sure most people will have left them to the end. I know the advice was to do these periodically, but we typically leave things to the end.....
- Pre-course info says 1 hour a week – misleading, given number assignments
- Re: assessment - I found that there was quite a bit of overlap/repetition, but some this was probably because of the nature of my community/case study.
- An assessment deadline earlier in the course of one topic would have been helpful. It would help to understand what the standard and expectations were for the rest of the course.
- I think I would have derived even more benefit from the course if it had been spread out over a longer period of time ... time to let the messages sink in and to reflect more on the material before having to attempt reflective assessments.
- The ongoing assessment would have been much more suited to purpose if it had regular submission deadlines and did not have to be submitted as part of one document, with case study, at the end of the course.
- Far too much assessment expected for a Level 6 programme

The one-to-one discussions with students provided further opportunities to garner students' feedback in relation to their experiences of assessment. These revealed that students appreciated the challenging nature of the assignments, and they liked the variety of modes of assessment. Yet, they perceived that the course team had set a high standard in the material they had delivered, and they (the students) were apprehensive about maintaining such a high level in their work they would submit for assessment.

## Application of Learnings / Knowledge

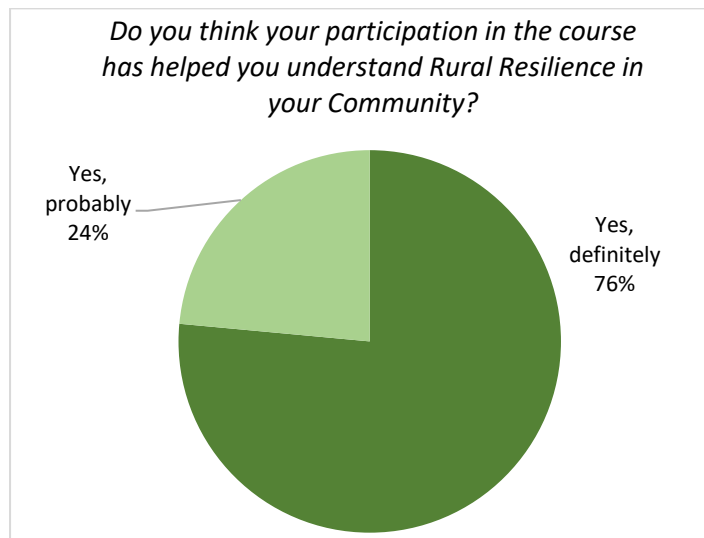
This course was primarily designed for practitioners, and it was co-designed in collaboration with rural development practitioners. Therefore, 'knowledge application' is a key performance indicator, and the survey questionnaire specifically asked students about the course's impacts in terms of assisting them in their current (voluntary and / or professional roles). As the following pie-chart illustrates, the majority of respondents believe the course has helped them in their current roles.

*Fig. 10: Extent to which students perceive the course has helped them in their current roles*



All students reported that the course has helped them to understand rural resilience in their own communities. Over three quarters of them are emphatic in this respect, as the following graph shows.

*Fig. 11: Extent to which students believe course participation has helped them understand rural resilience in their own communities*



The survey questionnaire included open-ended questions that invited students to make further comments about the application of their learnings. They were specifically asked to identify what they found most useful and least useful. The following are their comments:

**What aspects, if any, of this course were MOST useful or valuable?**

- I enjoyed the module on policy structures
- Being able to incorporate knowledge from others into my own work.
- The European context
- Policy Making
- Case studies
- I enjoyed the whole course and found each module both interesting and useful. All are applicable to both the theory side, and practical efforts we're making in our communities.
- Project management skills, a comprehensive approach to resilience
- Models and case studies
- The 500 word reflections/video as I was able to focus in on specific areas of interest in relation to my community/case study.
- The lectures and essential/self-directed reading
- The diversity of units and
- Learning from the experiences of others on the course as well as the material prepared by tutors
- Case studies, communications, and project management
- Case studies
- Governance and rural ageing were very interesting for me in my role.

**What aspects, if any, of this course were LEAST useful or valuable?**

- Ageing
- Nothing stands out.
- I didn't get that much out of the 3 workshops in Module 2
- Sometimes too academic rather than maybe more practical examples especially about policy at EU level, where some is better than Ireland
- Probably the lectures/tutorials on specific skills such as facilitation, communication, project management - the main reason being that I would already be familiar/have studied and practiced in these areas.
- The workshops
- Different, but complementary, perspectives from people of different European countries

## Recommendations

The questionnaire concluded by asking students if they would recommend the course to others, and it invited them to suggest ways in which the course could be improved. Of the seventeen respondents,

- Two said they would not recommend the course – as the workload was too much;
- One said they would probably recommend it, if it could be delivered over a longer period of time; and
- Fourteen students said they would recommend the course.

Two students expanded on their recommendations as follows:

- It would be good to educate rural people about these topics - especially people engaged in the development of local communities and rural areas; and
- I'd suggest a version of the Rebound Manual be adapted to circulate within community groups, as this course would give lots of people a good grounding for their efforts within their respective communities.

The following is the list of recommendations put forward by students, when asked to suggest ways in which the course could be improved.

### How would you improve this course?<sup>1</sup>

#### Mode of delivery and Content

- More one to one
- Perhaps more video examples from other countries.
- Would like to see a greater asynchronous activity
- Maybe more structured workshops
- Plan a weekend or a few 2-hour blocks change 5pm time. Too hard in winter. Had get home too late after work too early leave. Give better IT advice like if you have 2-3 Teams accounts etc.
- A bit more time for digesting the topics
- Give it more time.

#### Assessment

- More time for the assessments
- Relook at the assignment submission dates. Spread them out more.
- Maybe scale the workload a bit or have options to choose a larger/smaller amount of assessment. A final assessment that can be done in smaller steps throughout the semester could be good. Some more clarity to the practical arrangements
- Probably less material and assessments if the timeframe continues as one semester.
- Give more guidance and support on the practical module. More frequent deadlines rather than a final one for all.
- Less assignments
- Have less assessment, better communication from programme leaders, clearer instruction in relation to what is expected from learners

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<sup>1</sup> The sub-headings (in blue font) were inserted by the reports' authors.

## Conclusion

As this report shows, there is a high level of satisfaction among the learners who completed the pilot training course. The vast majority of them would recommend it to others. Their feedback indicates that the course should be offered again.

The student evaluation recommends that a re-run of the course ought to incorporate most of the content and features of the pilot programme. There is a high level of agreement, among those who have completed the pilot programme, that it has been useful; learners report that they have been able to transfer knowledge to their voluntary and / or professional work settings. Therefore, most of the content could be updated and incorporated into a new or mainstream programme. The evaluation findings also indicate that mixed modes of delivery have worked well.

The evaluation findings also identify ways in which a future training course could build on the pilot programme and be adapted to respond to student feedback. These include the following:

- Running the programme over two semesters, so that students have more time to absorb and apply their learnings;
- Ensuring assignments are more appropriate for Level 6 learners;
- Requiring a more continuous submission of assignments, so that learners incorporate lecturers' feedback and recommendations for subsequent submissions; and
- Providing more opportunities for student interaction and inter-learner knowledge transfers.