

Program Evaluation 2021

Summary

This report analyses students' responses to the 2021 program evaluation survey. The program survey focuses on the entire student experience, including the factors such as how students experience interaction with the academic and non-academic staff, students' ability to influence their education as well as how they perceive the physical and social learning environment. A total of 777 students (out of 2 462) responded to the survey, representing a response rate of 32 percent.

The student experience during the 2020/2021 school year were in many ways shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020/2021 year was marked by sudden and drastic adjustments to the delivery of courses. Despite these adjustments, the results of the survey show that students were satisfied with their student experience at BTH. They identified the quality of communication with the program managers, teachers and support services staff as supportive of their learning. Students were also satisfied with their ability to share their opinions and feedback with program staff. The results show that students believed that the physical and digital learning environments supported their learning. Still, the pandemic influenced students learning through its effect on students' ability to meet each other face-to-face. The survey shows that the greatest effect of the pandemic was on students' perception of the social learning environment.

1. How do you rate the quality of communication between you and your program manager?

The survey asked students to rate the communication between them and their program manager. There were 715 responses to this question. Figure 1 shows that 85,8 percent of respondents indicated that quality of communication with their program manager was good (46,4 percent) or very good (39,4 percent). This represents an improvement relative to 2019, where 78,5 percent of students rated communication with their program manager as good or very good. There were approximately 183 text responses to this question in which students elaborated on their response. These responses are summarized below.

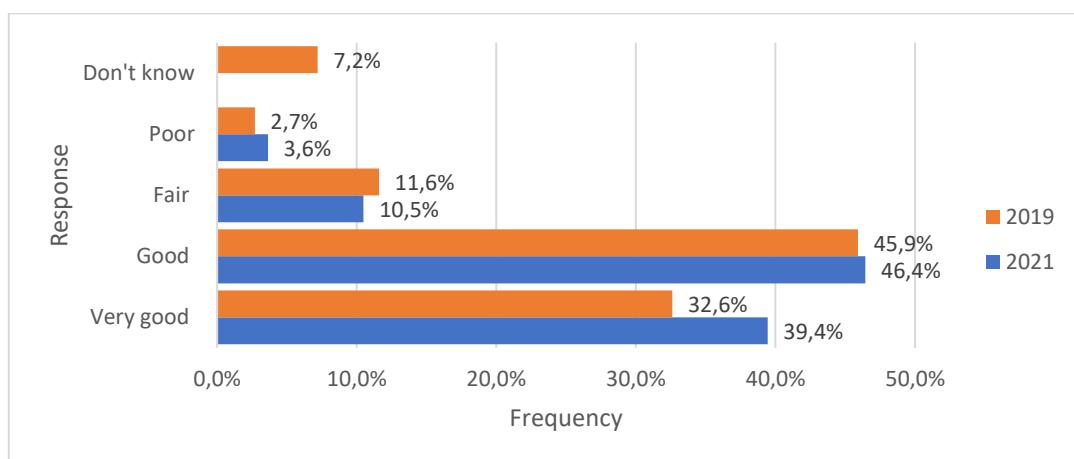


Figure 1: Responses to the question "how do you rate communication between you and your program manager?"

1.1 Strengths

Students described the areas in which they were satisfied with the communication with their program manager. Similar to 2019, students identified two main factors that determine their level of satisfaction with the quality of student-program manager interaction. These include: the frequency of communication and the perceived availability of the program manager.

Frequent/timely information: students who had a favourable view of the quality of communication with their program manager expressed that their program managers shared relevant information in a timely manner. Some students reported that their program managers organized program meetings at regular intervals and that program managers provided frequent updates on developments related to the program.

Available to provide support. In addition to receiving information in a timely fashion, students were satisfied with their experience when contacting their program manager for support. They expressed that program managers responded quickly to their email or telephone queries with clear answers and competent help. Students reported that their program managers were often accommodating and helpful and they felt that their program manager cared about their progress in the program.

1.2 Areas for improvement

Late or incorrect information. Students who reported a less favourable view of the quality of interaction with their program manager stated that the program manager sometimes provided

incorrect or insufficient information which negatively affected their studies. Not receiving relevant information on time was also an area for improvement identified by some students.

Difficult to contact. In the text responses, some students reported that their emails and telephone calls to the program manager went unanswered. Furthermore, some students stated that they did not know who their program manager was and what the role of the program manager included.

2. How do you rate the quality of pedagogical communication between you and your teachers (e.g. information, feedback on your assignments, response to questions related to your studies)?

Figure 2 shows that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the communication with their lecturers. A total of 83 percent of the respondents rated communication with their lecturer as good (54 percent) or very good (29 percent). The results for 2021 have decreased slightly compared to the 2019 survey, which showed that 85% of the respondents were satisfied with their communication with their teachers. In the text responses, students described in more detail the factors that influenced their rating. A common response was that the quality of the pedagogical communication varied among teachers. Students identified the strengths as well as areas for improvement in this area. These are outlined below:

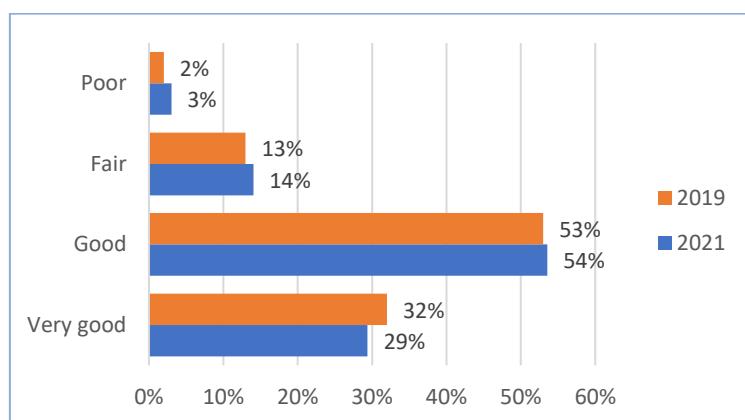


Figure 2: Responses to “how do you rate the quality of pedagogical communication between you and your teachers (e.g. information, feedback on your assignments, response to questions related to your studies)?”

2.1 Strengths

Adequate and timely information. Receiving timely information from lecturers was identified as an important factor contributing to students’ perception of student-teacher communication. Many students reported that in their courses all relevant information readily available.

Ease of communication. The text responses revealed that students were able to contact their lecturers and receive the support that they needed for their studies, which positively influenced their perception of student-teacher communication. Many students reported that teachers were courteous, accommodating, and willing to help outside of lecture hours.

2.2 Areas for improvement

One of the most common responses was that there were differences in the quality of the student-teacher interaction across courses. While students were mostly pleased with the level of pedagogical

communication with their teachers, they highlighted that this did not apply across the board. The following factors are areas for improvement:

Inadequate or infrequent communication. One area for improvement identified by students is that teachers should work to provide timely and accurate information during a course. In addition, students reported that some teachers appeared to be unavailable to address their concerns and that sometimes teachers either replied late or did not reply to their emails.

Insufficient feedback on assignments and examinations. Receiving detailed feedback on coursework and examinations was also an important factor highlighted by students. Some students stated that they would like to receive feedback that goes beyond merely assigning a grade. Students put forward that receiving more detailed feedback would improve their learning. Moreover, students reported that it sometimes took over a month for them to receive their grades on Ladok and Canvas.

Comparison with 2019

The problems identified in the 2021 survey were also raised in 2019. Students' negative perception of the student-teacher interaction was shaped by the ease of communication, and the quality and timeliness of information shared by teachers. Students expressed that feedback on coursework was too generic and did not promote their learning. The 2019 survey also showed that students experienced a long waiting period between submitting their work and getting a final grade.

3. To what degree does the quality of support provided by the support services staff (study counsellor, librarian, student health service and the IT helpdesk) support your studies?

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions have reduced students' interaction with the non-academic staff. Nevertheless, over 300 students who had prior experiences with the non-academic staff responded to the question. The responses for each of the support functions will be discussed in turn below. Comparison to 2019 is not possible as the questions were not broken down by function in the 2019 survey.

3.1 Study counsellor

Figure 3 shows that 64% stated of students that they were satisfied with the support provided by the office of the study counsellor. Students indicated that the study counsellor provided support to a great degree (42%) or to a very great degree (22%). In addition to the survey responses, students provided more detailed text comments. Most students stated that they had no prior contact with the study advisor. Among those who contacted the study advisors previously, the results were mixed. Many students stated that they received adequate support from the study counsellor while others

expressed that they were not satisfied with the level of support they received; they reported that the support they received was inadequate.

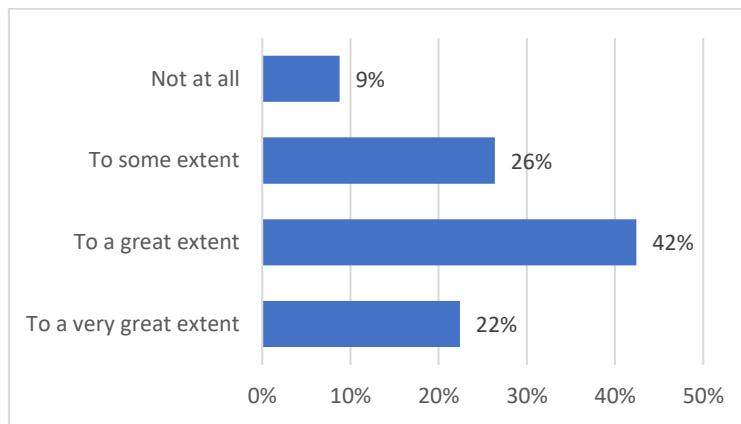


Figure 3: Students' response to the question "to what degree does the study counsellor support your studies?"

3.2 Library staff

Despite the ongoing pandemic and reduced campus activity, 349 students were able to respond to the question rating their interaction with the librarians. Figure 4 shows that 66 percent of students reported that the librarians provided support to a great extent (37 percent) or to a very great extent (29 percent). As the COVID-19 pandemic has restricted students' access to the campus, relatively few of the comments could describe actual experience with the library staff. In these comments, students reported that the staff was competent, helpful and courteous. In a few cases, students expressed that finding the information they needed via library's website was difficult.

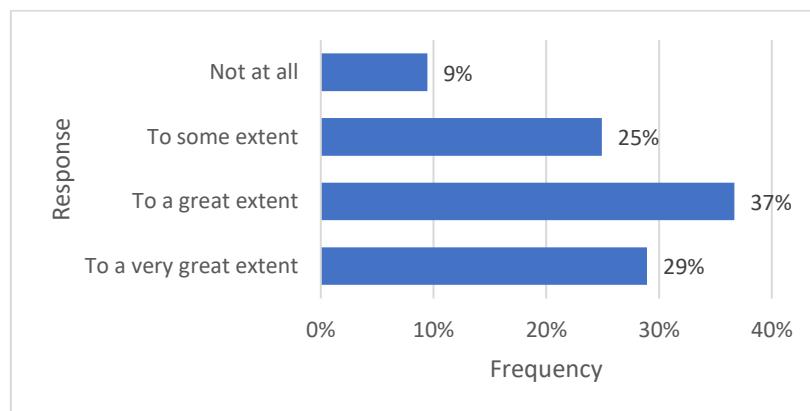


Figure 4: Students' response to the question "to what degree do the librarians support your studies?"

3.3 IT helpdesk

Figure 5 shows that of the 363 respondents, 73 percent were satisfied with the support provided by the IT helpdesk. The text comments highlighted the factors contribution to student satisfaction.

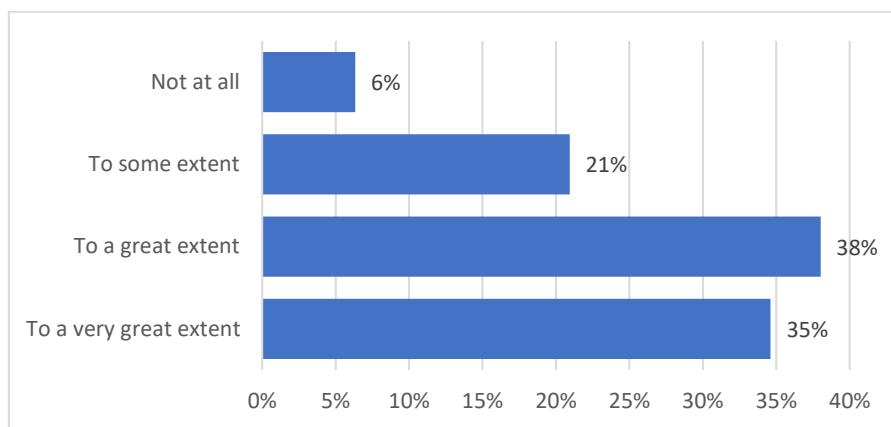


Figure 5: Students' response to the question to what degree does the IT helpdesk support your studies?

Quick feedback. The most common response among those with prior experience of the IT helpdesk is that the staff responds quickly to students' emails. Furthermore, students were satisfied with the assistance they received.

Irregular maintenance of equipment. The main area for improvement identified by students was specific to a particular program that uses a special device. Students reported that the device was not maintained on a regular basis, which influenced their ability to hand in assignments where the device in question was out of service.

3.4 Student health services

A total of 174 students responded to the survey question on the quality of support provided by student health services at BTH. The responses (presented in figure 6) indicate that 46% of students were satisfied with the level of support provided by student health services. An analysis of the text responses showed that a common response was that most students had no prior contact with the student health services. For students who had prior interaction with the staff at the student health center, the text responses largely describe areas for improvement.

Inadequate support. Some students reported that they did not get the support they needed.

Low visibility on campus. Many of the responses stated that students were unaware that there was a student health center at BTH.

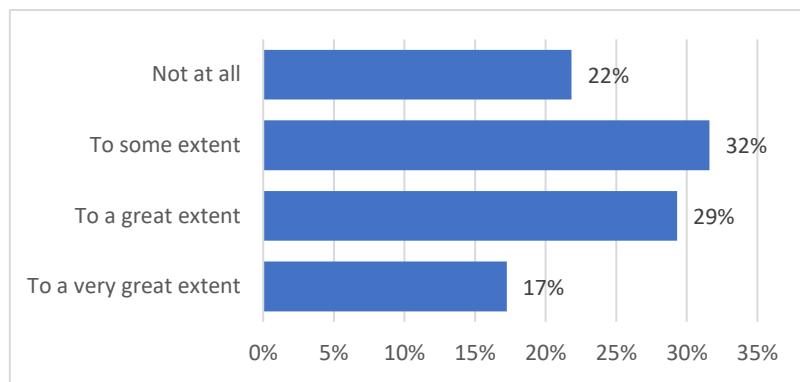


Figure 6: Students' response to the question to what degree do the student health services support your studies?

- What is your perception of the response by members of staff to your feedback and opinions in those contexts where the program and its contents are discussed (course evaluations, program advisory council, program meetings)?

The survey investigated how satisfied students were with their ability to provide feedback on their education and have their voices heard. The results are presented in figure 7 below. The results show that 81% of students were satisfied with how members of staff responded to feedback from students. This represents a 23-percentage point increase relative to 2019.

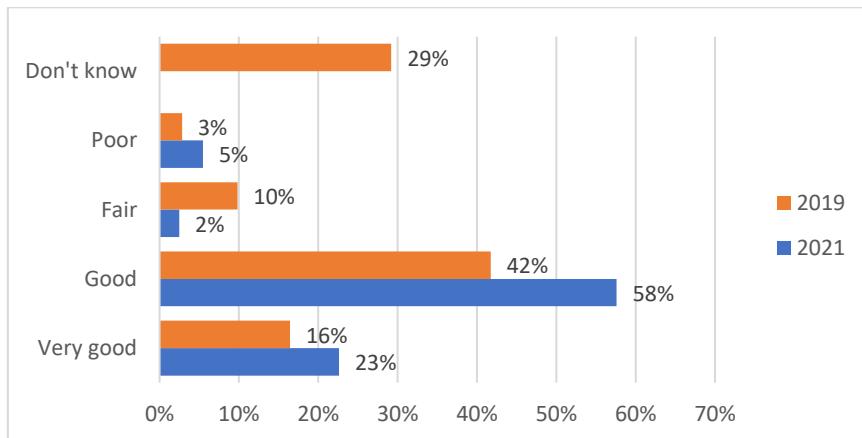


Figure 7: Responses to the question "what is your perception of the response by members of staff to your feedback and opinions in those contexts where the program and its contents are discussed (course evaluations, program advisory council, program meetings)?"

4.1 Strengths

BTH provides many opportunities for students to give feedback and influence their education. Students stated that some teachers discussed the results of course evaluations with them to gain better understanding of their perception of the course. In addition, most students expressed satisfaction with program meetings, stating that they were able to share their opinions with their program managers on a regular basis.

Feedback taken into consideration. Many students felt that their feedback and opinions were well received by teachers and program staff. Students also stated that teachers made improvements to courses based on student feedback.

4.2 Areas for improvement

In the text responses, students also highlighted the following areas for improvement:

Being open to receiving negative feedback/criticisms. One of the areas for improvement is the ability to receive praise as well as criticism. A common response was that students' negative feedback was not well received by teachers and course managers, and students often came away with the feeling that they were "whiny".

Communicating changes that have been made in a course. Another area for improvement is that teachers/program managers need be more explicit when changes have been made to a course or program because of prior student feedback. A common response was that many students were not made aware of any changes ensuing from course evaluations, citing the fact that these changes would be implemented in the future and not at the time of doing the evaluation. Another common response was that teachers' responses to course evaluations were sometimes vague or nonexistent.

5. To what extent is the physical environment (classrooms, library, lab rooms, group rooms and study spaces) functional and supportive of your learning?

The survey asked students to rate the extent to which the physical environment was conducive to their studies. Due to pandemic restrictions, many students had never visited the campus and, as a result, were unable to respond to this question. Those who responded either positively or negatively based their responses on previous experiences during the 2019/2020 school year or earlier. Of the 537 students who responded, 70 percent stated that the physical learning environment supported their learning to a great or very great extent.

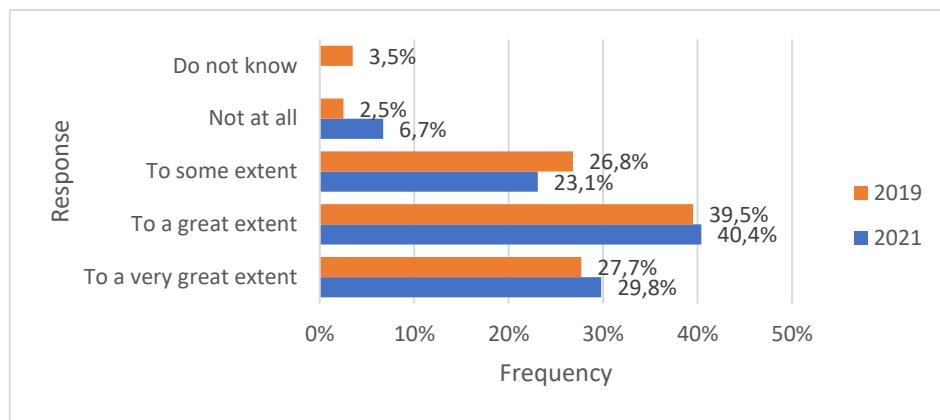


Figure 8: Responses to the question “to what extent is the physical environment (classrooms, library, lab rooms, group rooms and study spaces) functional and supportive of your learning?”

Strengths

Modern, aesthetically pleasing facilities. Many students reported that they were pleased with the quality of the physical environment.

Available study spaces. Some students expressed that the availability of spaces for independent study supported their learning.

Areas for improvement

Poor ventilation in classrooms. Students with prior experience of the campus stated that the ventilation in some classrooms was poor. They also found that classrooms were sometimes too warm or oxygen-poor.

Shortage of quiet spaces for independent study. A common response was that there were too few places for students to study independently. Students found that the library was too noisy and, as such, was not appropriate for quiet study. Another area for improvement is the perceived shortage of group rooms and program rooms (for those programs that do not have one).

6. Distance learning

Figure 9 shows that 72 percent of students found that the distance learning resources such as chat, forums, live or recorded lectures, and discussion sessions supported their learning. This is a slight improvement relative to 2019. Further comparison is not possible as the 2021 survey includes both traditional distance students as well as campus students whose courses were moved online in response to the pandemic while the 2019 results only included the former.

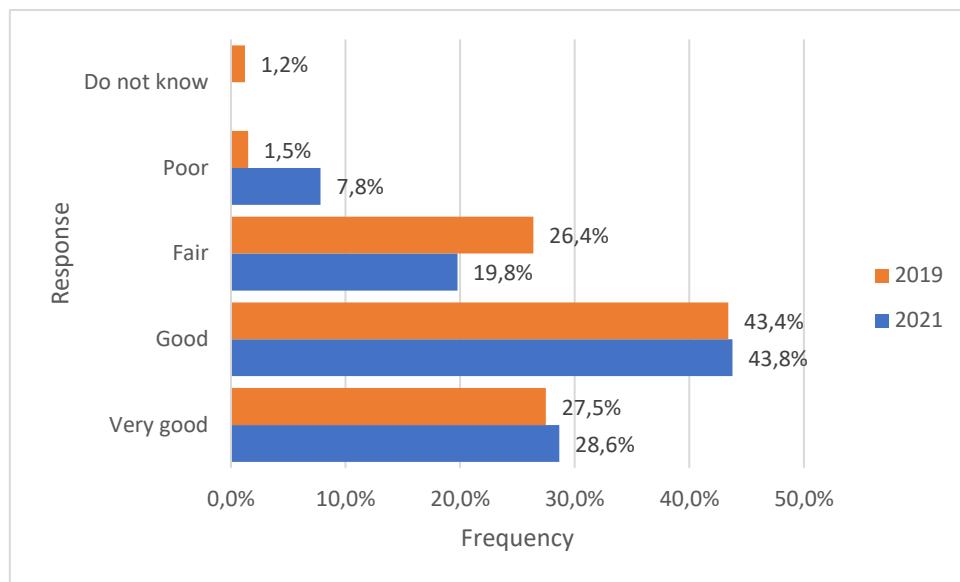


Figure 9: Responses to the question “How do you rate the distance learning resources such as chat, forums, live or recorded lectures, and discussion sessions in supporting and inspiring your learning?”

The shift to distance learning removed from students' everyday lives the daily structure and external sources of motivation that are normally present in a school environment. As a result, students reported having to rely on self-discipline to progress in their studies. How students experienced distance learning was shaped by two types of factors: technical factors and social factors.

- (i) Technical factors influencing students' experience include how well teachers use digital tools and having access to special equipment necessary for their studies. The text responses reveal that teachers who readily adapted their courses to fit a distance environment by skillfully using digital tools to deliver their courses were viewed positively by students. However, courses that provided minimal digital learning resources such as live or recorded lectures and other online activities were less supportive of students' learning. In some cases, students expressed that courses that rely on access to special equipment, software or hands-on practice were not as easy to adapt to a distance format.
- (ii) Social factors such as low or no interaction with classmates and teachers influenced students' motivation. In the comments students described having low motivation to continue their studies, as there was not enough communication with their teachers and classmates. This was more important for formerly campus courses that were delivered online due to pandemic restrictions.

For students who identified themselves as distance students, their experience of distance learning was not influenced by COVID-19 to the extent that lecturers had very little time to adapt to the new restrictions. Nevertheless, the abovementioned technical and social factors influenced distance students' perception of the online learning environment.

Strengths

The availability of recorded lectures promoted learning. Many students stated that recorded lectures positively contributed to their learning as they were able to repeat lectures as necessary, an

option that was not available for campus courses. They also reported that recorded lectures have given them more freedom and control over their studies. Some students suggested that teachers should continue to provide recorded lectures when campus courses return.

Areas for improvement

Teacher-led activities in online courses decreased compared to campus courses. Students reported that they would have liked to have had more activities that promote interaction with teachers and their classmates. A few of the responses stated that using recorded lectures as the primary method of instruction did not motivate them to learn and that there were too few or no live lectures in their courses. Regarding the use of discussion forums on Canvas, some students stated that they were not very active.

Increase collaborative learning in online environments. Students expressed that they would benefit from a more collaborative classroom environment online with higher participation rates in online lectures and improved classroom dynamic. Some students suggested making greater use of digital tools such as the chat and breakout rooms functions on Zoom.

7. To what extent does the social environment support your learning?

The social learning environment is another aspect of the student experience that was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 10 shows that students' satisfaction decreased compared to 2019. Of the 726 respondents, 62 percent rated the social learning environment of as supporting their learning to a great (38,8 percent) or very great extent (23 percent). This corresponds to a 9 percentage point decrease relative to 2019.

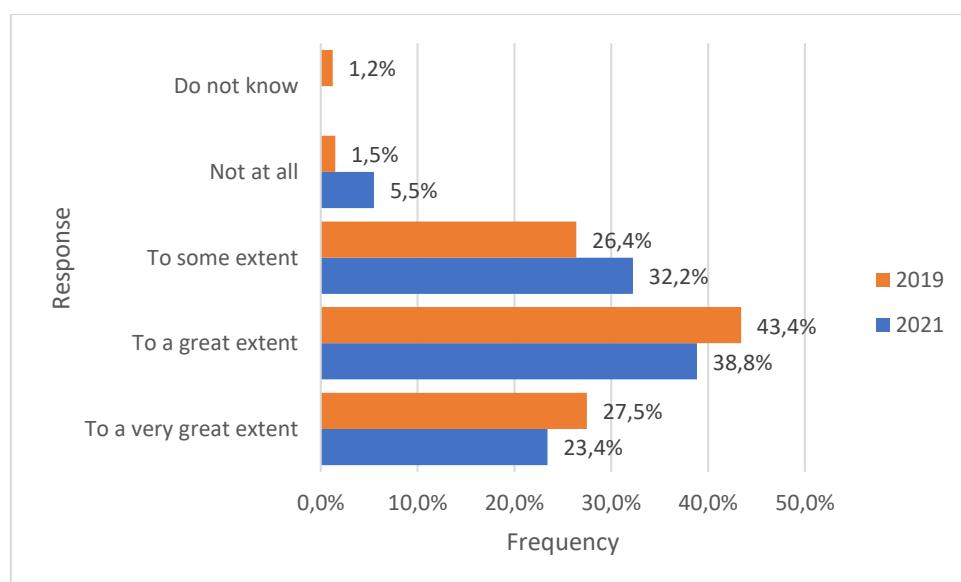


Figure 10: Responses to the question "To what extent does the social environment support your learning?"

The text responses reveal that students' experience of the social learning environment was to some extent determined by whether they had had the chance to meet their classmate before the move to online studies. New students who participated in the social activities at the start of their studies as well as returning students who had already formed social groups before the pandemic began reported greater satisfaction. This is because they found it easier than others to stay connected using digital tools. Some students stated that they found it difficult to connect to their classmates in an online setting without ever having met said classmates in person. This shift to distance learning has limited students' ability to meet each other, and students found that this reduced group cohesion in their cohort.

7.1 Strengths

Supportive social environment. Students felt that it was relatively easy to get to know other students and teachers and that the social environment at BTH was a great source of motivation.

Digital tools (partly) bridged the gap. Teachers' use of digital resources such as social media platforms helped between students and their classmates and teachers during the pandemic. Students found that the use of group activities has helped bridge the gap between students. Students who had the chance to work on group project remotely stated that this helped them get to know some of their classmates.

7.2 Areas for improvement

Teachers take a more active role in improving group cohesion. Some students suggested that teachers could design classes in a way that promotes interaction between them outside of lecture hours.