



COURSES REVISED AND NEWLY CREATED BY PARTNER P7 (GORNO-ALTAISK STATE UNIVERSITY)

UNIVERSITY)

Work Package 2







QUALITY ASSESSMENT BY EU PARTNERS (PARTNER P2: UNIVERSITY OF SALZBURG)

Course revised: "Environmental Design and Expertise"

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Quality criteria 1: Number of credit units for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning are appropriate to the contents

Evaluation

The number of credits for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning is appropriate. Due to the high importance to acquire practical knowledge complementing the theoretical knowledge gained in-class in the environmental design and expertise field, in order to create professionals able to deal with different complex situations in practice, a high number of credits for practical sessions and self-learning is required. Indeed, this is a highly practically-oriented subject. Thus, a high number of credits for practical sessions and self-learning ensures the education of highly capacitated professionals. We consider that this idea has been captured very well in the proposed course, with a high number of credits devoted to practical sessions and self-learning.

Strategies for improvement

None. Everything is deemed correct.

Quality criteria 2: Total number of credit units in the course is correct and appropriate

Evaluation

The total number of credits awarded is too low if a workload of approximately 108 hours is estimated.

• Strategies for improvement

As 1 ECTS is equal to circa 28 hours, the course should either be awarded with 4 ECTS or the workload reduced to approximately 80 to 90 hours. Given that the number of credits has been very well distributed among theoretical sessions, practical sessions and self-learning, we would strongly recommend to increase the number of ECTS awarded to 4, if possible, rather than reducing the workload associated to the course. If this would not be possible, some contents from all three categories should be removed.

Quality criteria 3: Positioning of the courses in Curricula is appropriate based on the progressive level of difficulty

Evaluation

The course is appropriately positioned in the curricula. Its positioning in the last year of BSc students majoring in Ecology and Environmental Management is deemed as appropriate due to the deep knowledge provided, which requires some basic understanding on ecology and environmental management, which has to be previously acquired during the first years of the bachelor's degree.

• Strategies for improvement

None. Everything is deemed correct.

Quality criteria 4: Tests are suitable and appropriate to support transferable skills

Evaluation

The designed tests and grading system is appropriate to support transferable skills in practice. This is clearly shown by the weight given to each of the tests suggested: while 20% of the grade of students comes from the final theoretical test, the rest of the mark comes from practical/ self-learning assignments. The high relevance given to the acquisition of a practical perspective additionally to theoretical knowledge is very valuable to make the skills acquired transferable in practice.

• Strategies for improvement

We only have some minor suggestions, as the general idea has been very well developed. Our major concern relates to the assignments proposed, as a focus has been basically put on quantitative assessments and the analysis of air and water pollution. Thus a constraint practical vision is offered to students, who might not be able in practice to deal with completely different topics also related to environmental assessment and design, such as ecological

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connectivity, visual impact, noise and light pollution. Social aspects are also extremely relevant here, like the sense of place of inhabitants. Though some of these aspects might be worked during the role play, we consider that the thematic of the assignments should be widen, in order to educate professionals capable to deal with a wider range of environmental problems in practice. Thus, a different topic might be selected for each of the three assignments, rather than 3 topics that are very close-related. This would definitely improve the way tests support the transferability of skills in practice. We must, however, say that we don't know whether these other themes are taught in other courses.

Quality criteria 5: TLM and assessment strategy support students in undertaking the course i.e. prerequisites are helpful and relevant, assessments helps gauge students understanding etc.

Evaluation

The prerequisites set up are relevant: the knowledge obtained during all the courses established as a prerequisite will substantially help students to better follow and easily understand the contents provided. Also the provision of learning materials online, with videos, presentations, etc. is very supportive for students, when it comes to undertake the course. On the other hand, the assessment methods suggested are deemed as very appropriate to evaluate the students practical and theoretical knowledge gained while participating in the course.

• Strategies for improvement

The only think we would suggest (if it has not been done) is to add additional interactive online practical exercises (e.g. how to assess certain environmental issues) in the e-learning platform, so that all those students that are really interested on the topic and want to learn more can use these materials. It is also relevant that all courses established as a prerequisites should have taken place during a semester preceding the semester when the course is held, but we assume that this is already the case.

Quality criteria 6: Theory/Practice-oriented components are sufficient to cater the learning outcomes and skills development

Evaluation

Theory/Practice-oriented components are sufficient to cater the learning outcomes and skills development. The highly interactive sessions are to be stressed, which are very well interconnected to the theoretical sessions. Through both all relevant theoretical and practical themes are covered for the acquisition of the promised learning outcomes and skills. The only issue detected is the fairly limited thematic focus of assignments, which is expected to be, however, complemented with the topics developed during the role play and the research paper (this has already pointed out above).

• Strategies for improvement

The strategies suggested are pointed out under "quality criteria 4". Additionally, the provision of some knowledge on communication strategies to population on environmental design might be relevant, given the relevance of communication/ participation of populace in environmental projects, but this might be out of the scope of this course.

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QUALITY ASSESSMENT BY EU PARTNERS (PARTNER P2: UNIVERSITY OF SALZBURG)

New course 1: "Sustainable Development of Mountain Territories"

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Quality criteria 1: Number of credit units for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning are appropriate to the contents

Evaluation

The number of credits for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning is appropriate. Due to the high importance to acquire practical knowledge complementing the theoretical knowledge gained in-class in the sustainable development field, in order to create professionals able to deal with this important topic in practice, a high number of credits for practical sessions and self-learning is required. Practical knowledge is also especially important in master's degrees. Moreover, a reflexive way of thinking, which is crucial for the attainment of sustainability, is much better developed through the participation in discussions, etc. than lectures; the reason why the higher number of ECTS attributed to discussions, etc. when compared to lectures is very positively valued. Thus, a high number of credits for practical sessions and self-learning ensures the education of highly capacitated and critical thinking professionals. We consider that this idea has been captured very well in the proposed course, with a high number of credits devoted to practical sessions and self-learning.

• Strategies for improvement

None. Everything is deemed correct.

Quality criteria 2: Total number of credit units in the course is correct and appropriate

Evaluation

The total number of credits awarded is too low if a workload of approximately 108 hours is estimated.

• Strategies for improvement

As 1 ECTS is equal to circa 28 hours, the course should either be awarded with 4 ECTS or the workload reduced to approximately 80 to 90 hours. We would especially recommend to increase the number of ECTS awarded, if possible. Otherwise, the number of hours should be more or less equally reduced for practical sessions and self-learning: a reduction in the workload given to the various self-learning tasks/ assignments would then be recommended. A possible strategy would be to mix the 3 assignments suggested together with the work related to the final paper, given their thematic closeness. As the number of hours devoted to lectures is low, a reduction in this category would not be acceptable; the high ratio of hours devoted to the acquisition of practical knowledge would still be kept.

Quality criteria 3: Positioning of the courses in Curricula is appropriate based on the progressive level of difficulty

Evaluation

The course is appropriately positioned in the curricula. Its positioning in the first year of MSc students majoring in Ecology and Environmental Management is deemed as appropriate, as this theme constitutes a basic thematic pillar for all future environmental professionals: basic knowledge on sustainable development and sustainability strategies. The location of the Gorno-Altaisk State University in a mountainous area justifies the necessary focus on mountainous regions of the course and the need to place this course in the first year of the master's degree. Most specialised courses building on the contents of this course can thus afterwards be provided during the following semesters, in order to more deeply deal with specific topics related to sustainable development in mountainous environments. The acquisition of all basic knowledge required to follow the course needs to have already been offered to students during the bachelor's degree.

• Strategies for improvement

None. Everything is deemed correct.

Quality criteria 4: Tests are suitable and appropriate to support transferable skills

Evaluation

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The designed tests and grading system is appropriate to support transferable skills in practice. This is clearly shown by the fact that the grade that students get is almost entirely derived from the quality of practical/ self-learning assignments. Only one theoretical question is posed to them during the final exam. The high relevance given to the acquisition of a practical perspective is very valuable to make the skills acquired transferable in practice. Here there are two aspects of the course which have to be stressed and that are considered as very well developed by the reviewers: 1) the carrying out of round tables and the invitation to local stakeholders to participate in these round tables; and 2) the designed assignments. The former not only enables to draw attention of local stakeholders on sustainable development, but can also be very enriching for students, as it can widen their practical perspective on sustainable development. The structure and topics of the latter can be very helpful to students for the development of sustainability analysis and proposals latter in their career. We value very positively how the assignments build on the previous ones (they are very well interrelated) and how they enable to learn on the analysis required to analyse the problems and suggest strategies for a more sustainable future.

Strategies for improvement

None. Everything is deemed correct. We would only suggest to increase the weight that the 3 assignments suggested receive when calculating the final grade of the students, given the importance of such analyses in practice.

Quality criteria 5: TLM and assessment strategy support students in undertaking the course i.e. prerequisites are helpful and relevant, assessments helps gauge students understanding etc.

Evaluation

The prerequisites set up are relevant: the knowledge obtained during all the courses established as a prerequisite will substantially help students to better follow and easily understand the contents provided. Moreover, all knowledge set up as a prerequisite for the participation in the course is considered as necessary for any students wanting to attend a master in Ecology and Environmental Management, of which the course is part. Also the provision of learning materials online, with videos, presentations, etc. is very supportive for students, when it comes to undertake the course. On the other hand, the assessment methods suggested are deemed as very appropriate to evaluate the knowledge gained while participating in the course. On the other hand, the assessment methods suggested are deemed as very appropriate to evaluate the students practical and theoretical knowledge gained while participating in the course.

Strategies for improvement

As we don't have access to the e-learning materials, as a passport is required to access them, we don't know whether the suggestions that we will mention here can be useful or not, as this all might have already been carried out. Again, everything looks really well thought and prepared. The only think we would suggest is to add additional complementary literature and interactive online practical exercises in the e-learning platform, so that all those students that are really interested on the topic and want to learn more can use these materials. It is also relevant that all courses established as a prerequisites should have taken place during a semester preceding the semester when the course is held, but we assume that this is already the case.

Quality criteria 6: Theory/Practice-oriented components are sufficient to cater the learning outcomes and skills development

Evaluation

Theory/Practice-oriented components are sufficient to cater the learning outcomes and skills development. The highly interactive sessions are to be stressed. Through both theoretical and practical sessions all relevant theoretical and practical themes are covered for the acquisition of the promised learning outcomes and skills.

Strategies for improvement

None. Everything is deemed correct.

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QUALITY ASSESSMENT BY EU PARTNERS (PARTNER P2: UNIVERSITY OF SALZBURG)

New course 2: "Waste Management"

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Quality criteria 1: Number of credit units for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning are appropriate to the contents

Evaluation

The number of credits for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning is appropriate. Due to the high importance to acquire practical knowledge complementing the theoretical knowledge gained in-class in the waste management field, in order to create professionals able to deal with this important topic in practice, a high number of credits for practical sessions and self-learning is required. Moreover, practical knowledge is especially important in master's degrees. Thus, a high number of credits for practical sessions and self-learning ensures the education of highly capacitated professionals. We consider that this idea has been captured very well in the proposed course, with a high number of credits devoted to practical sessions and self-learning.

• Strategies for improvement

None. Everything is deemed correct.

Quality criteria 2: Total number of credit units in the course is correct and appropriate

Evaluation

The total number of credits awarded is too low if a workload of approximately 108 hours is estimated.

Strategies for improvement

As 1 ECTS is equal to circa 28 hours, the course should either be awarded with 4 ECTS or the workload reduced to approximately 80 to 90 hours. We would especially recommend to increase the number of ECTS awarded, if possible. Otherwise, the number of hours should be more or less equally reduced for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning, in order to keep the high ratio of hours devoted to the acquisition of practical knowledge. As the number of hours devoted to lectures is low, however, a major reduction in the other two categories would still be acceptable.

Quality criteria 3: Positioning of the courses in Curricula is appropriate based on the progressive level of difficulty

Evaluation

The course is appropriately positioned in the curricula. Its positioning in the first year of MSc students majoring in Ecology and Environmental Management is deemed as appropriate, as this theme constitutes one of the basic thematic pillars in environmental management. Thus, knowledge on this basic topic needs to be offered already during the first semesters of the master, so that most specialised courses building on the contents of this course can be provided during the following semesters. The acquisition of all basic knowledge required to follow the course needs to have already been offered to students during the bachelor's degree.

Strategies for improvement

None. Everything is deemed correct.

Quality criteria 4: Tests are suitable and appropriate to support transferable skills

Evaluation

The designed tests and grading system is appropriate to support transferable skills in practice. This is clearly shown by the fact that the grade that students get is entirely derived from the quality of practical/ self-learning assignments. The high relevance given to the acquisition of a practical perspective is very valuable to make the skills acquired transferable in practice.

• Strategies for improvement

The structure of the course suggests that all theoretical lectures will first take place, followed by seminars, practical sessions and the development of individual projects. While this is a reasonable way to proceed, we would strongly recommend to mix lectures, seminars and practical sessions in the timeline. The development of the corresponding

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seminars and practical sessions right after the lecture where theoretical knowledge on the concepts worked is provided will help students to better integrate this knowledge and clearly relate the theoretical concepts/ vision and its practical implementation. Students memory is limited and many concepts would be lost in the way before practical sessions take place, which would impact on the skills transferability.

We don't see clear that the individual project is devoted to the exploration of the best location, etc. of a solid wastes landfill, even though we understand this example might be the best example for the practical application of all concepts learned during the course. However, we consider that the construction of solid wastes landfills should be considered the last option in waste management, due to its environmental impact. Thus, as we also want to provide sustainability values to our students and that skills for more sustainable approaches are transferred into practice, we would suggest changing the kind of installation evaluated in the individual project. Maybe a recycling plant or an organic waste composting plant could be appealing alternatives.

Quality criteria 5: TLM and assessment strategy support students in undertaking the course i.e. prerequisites are helpful and relevant, assessments helps gauge students understanding etc.

Evaluation

The prerequisites set up are relevant: the knowledge obtained during all the courses established as a prerequisite will substantially help students to better follow and easily understand the contents provided. Moreover, all knowledge set up as a prerequisite for the participation in the course is considered as necessary for any students wanting to attend a master in Ecology and Environmental Management, of which the course is part. Also the provision of learning materials online, with videos, presentations, etc. is very supportive for students, when it comes to undertake the course. On the other hand, the assessment methods suggested are deemed as very appropriate to evaluate the knowledge gained while participating in the course. While no test is foreseen specifically for the evaluation of theoretical knowledge, the suggested evaluable activities allow assessing whether the theoretical concepts have been assimilated or not by the students.

• Strategies for improvement

As we don't have access to the e-learning materials, as a passport is required to access them, we don't know whether the suggestions that we will mention here can be useful or not, as this all might have already been carried out. Again, everything looks really well thought and prepared. The only think we would suggest is to add additional complementary literature and interactive online practical exercises in the e-learning platform, so that all those students that are really interested on the topic and want to learn more can use these materials. It is also relevant that all courses established as a prerequisites should have taken place during a semester preceding the semester when the course is held, but we assume that this is already the case.

Quality criteria 6: Theory/Practice-oriented components are sufficient to cater the learning outcomes and skills development

Evaluation

Theory/Practice-oriented components are sufficient to cater the learning outcomes and skills development. The highly interactive sessions are to be stressed. Through both theoretical and practical sessions all relevant theoretical and practical themes are covered for the acquisition of the promised learning outcomes and skills. The only issue detected is a certain low level of attention from a practical perspective to the methods for reducing the negative impact of production and consumption waste to the environment.

• Strategies for improvement

The strategies suggested are pointed out under "quality criteria 4" and especially relate to the interconnection among practical and theoretical sessions. In order to solve the low level of attention from a practical perspective given to methods for reducing the negative impact of production and consumption waste to the environment, one of the assignments suggested can be exchange, so that this so important aspect in practice is also worked.

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QUALITY ASSESSMENT BY EU PARTNERS (PARTNER P2: UNIVERSITY OF SALZBURG)

New course 3: "A Special Course in a Foreign Language"

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Quality criteria 1: Number of credit units for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning are appropriate to the contents

Evaluation

The number of credits for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning is appropriate, even though the number of credits for practical sessions is slightly residual. This might be justified by the introductory character of the course and the fact that it is directed at Bachelor students. Due to the high importance to acquire practical knowledge complementing the theoretical knowledge gained in-class in the sustainable development field, it is expected, however, that practical knowledge will be provided in subsequent courses or during the offered Master studies. This is crucial to create professionals able to deal with this important topic in practice. Otherwise, an increase in the practical contents offered during the course should be considered (see the suggestions below).

The high number of credits devoted to self-learning is very positively valued. This is not only limited to the proposed assignments, but also includes the conception of the theoretical lectures as interactive sessions, where the presentations of the lecturer are kept as short as possible, and students have the chance to read and listen to other materials and self-evaluate the level of understanding acquired through different kinds of exercises. Moreover, the development of a reflexive way of thinking on the topic is also ensured, which is crucial for the attainment of sustainability. This is much better developed through the participation in discussions, etc. than theoretical lectures, the reason why the incorporation of in-class discussions during the course constitutes another of its strengths. A high number of credits for in-class discussions and self-learning ensures the education of highly capacitated professionals.

• Strategies for improvement

As strategies for improvement, we would suggest slightly increasing the number of credit units allocated to in-class discussions, as the number of hours for in-class discussions is clearly lower than the number of hours for theoretical sessions. An option might be the conversion of some of the short presentations of the lecturer, succeeding the reading and watching of materials during each of the theoretical sessions, into in-class discussions. As a result, not only a more critical way of thinking might be developed by the students, but also a better integration of their already existent knowledge on the topic with the new contents taught/red/watched.

On the other hand, following the recommendation to increase the number of credit units for practical sessions that we have mentioned above, we would suggest converting some of the foreseen assignments and exercises into practically-oriented exercises/ assignments. As an illustration, assignment 1 might not only be limited to the description of one Sustainable Development Goal, but the students might also reflect on possible strategies to attain this goal in their region/ city and the challenges that they might face.

Quality criteria 2: Total number of credit units in the course is correct and appropriate

Evaluation

The total number of credits awarded is correct and appropriate, given the number of hours devoted to the course (72 hours) and the fact that 36 hours are equal to 1 ECTS in Russia.

• Strategies for improvement

None. Everything is deemed correct.

Quality criteria 3: Positioning of the courses in Curricula is appropriate based on the progressive level of difficulty

Evaluation

The course is appropriately positioned in the curricula. Its positioning in the last year of BSc students majoring in Ecology and Environmental Management and Geography is deemed as appropriate due to the focus of the course on a very particular aspect of the sustainability discourse: the ecosystem services concept and their implementation in mountainous areas. The emphasis on English professional vocabulary in the field also justifies its positioning. The

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Quality assessment



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course requires that the students have some basic understanding on ecology and environmental management and English language, which has to be previously acquired during the first years of the bachelor's degree.

Strategies for improvement

None. Everything is deemed correct.

Quality criteria 4: Tests are suitable and appropriate to support transferable skills

Evaluation

The mixture of theoretical lectures and different kinds of exercises (including thematic tests for self-evaluation) and the programming of all these exercises right after each of the short theoretical lectures is considered a very appropriate strategy to support the integration of concepts and skills. The usage of a wide range of evaluation tools, not only including self-evaluation tests and other written tests, but also assignments and in-class discussions for the evaluation of the students' performance is considered a very good strategy for knowledge integration and transferability. Moreover, assignments encompass individual and workgroup tasks, as well as oral presentations, all of them needed in order to educate skilled professionals able to work in different contexts (individually and within a team) and clearly communicate their ideas and results. The mixture of all these activities in the timeline is particularly striking, as students' memory is limited and many concepts would be lost in the way before all these activities take place, if all these activities would occur by the end of the course, once all theoretical sessions had already been completed. This would certainly impact on the skills transferability. Thus, the reviewers resolve that all these aspects have been very precisely considered in this course.

However, there is some room for improvement regarding the designed tests and grading system, if skills are actually to be transferred in practice. This is clearly shown by the fact that 60% of the grade that the students get is based only on the successful completion of different (we assume) basically theoretical tests. Given the fact that one of the assignments suggested is also basically a theoretical assignment (assignment 1), this seems a limited approach to support transferable skills in practice. Too much emphasis seems to be given to theoretical knowledge, whereas practical knowledge remains more residual (as theory and practice do not always match that well). The reviewers understand, however, that this is an introductory theoretical course and more practical skills might be provided in other courses on the topic, the reason why this might not be a big issue.

• Strategies for improvement

In order to improve the transferability of practical skills through the attendance of the course, three strategies are suggested. First of all, we would suggest to increase the weight that the 2 assignments suggested receive when calculating the final grade of the students, and slightly transform assignment 1, so that some practical reflections are made by the students. Especially interesting might be the invitation of local stakeholders to listen to and actively participate in the session when the results of the assignments are orally presented. This can enable to draw attention of local stakeholders on sustainable development and ecosystem services, but can also be very enriching for students, as it can widen their practical perspective on the topic. Local stakeholders might use this chance to share their experiences on the topics that are being discussed.

Second, some of the thematic tests might also be changed from theoretical to practical tests, and used for the exploration of case studies by the students, related to the concepts learned in each of the sessions. Rather than asking them "What does the following term mean?", questions such as "How would you implement (...)?" might be included.

Finally, the weight that in-class discussions receive might also be increased. This should occur, if the number of credit units devoted to the discussion of different topics in the classroom is also increased, as suggested under "quality criteria 1"

Quality criteria 5: TLM and assessment strategy support students in undertaking the course i.e. prerequisites are helpful and relevant, assessments helps gauge students understanding etc.

Evaluation

The prerequisites set up are relevant: the knowledge obtained during all the courses established as a prerequisite will substantially help students to better follow and easily understand the contents provided. Also the provision of learning materials online and in-class, with videos, presentations, reading materials, additional online exercises, self-evaluation tests, etc. is very supportive for students, when it comes to undertake the course. A wide range of different

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teaching tools are, indeed, used, which will increase the motivation of students and give them a wider range of perspectives, as e.g. visions from different authors are integrated in the course through the different videos and text materials used. Moreover, the course has been very well organised, and the needs of all students have been very carefully taken into account. Both students that can follow the lectures in the classroom and students that can only attend the course remotely are offered a wide range of possibilities so that they all have a very enriching experience. On the other hand, the assessment methods suggested are deemed as very appropriate to evaluate the students' theoretical knowledge gained while participating in the course. Improvements are, however, needed, in order to better foster the gain of practical knowledge on the topic and its evaluation. This latter issue has already been mentioned under "quality criteria 1" and "quality criteria 4" and might be related to the fact that this is an introductory theoretical course, whose practical side will be developed in another course.

Strategies for improvement

None. Everything is deemed correct. The course has been very well organised and prepared. The only thing that we would suggest is to add additional complementary literature (if this has not been done yet), so that all those students that are really interested on the topic and want to learn more can use these materials. It might also be good to establish some more courses as a pre-requisite to attend the course, related to the theoretical contents of the course and not just to the English language. Maybe some course on basic knowledge about management of ecosystems might be included.

Quality criteria 6: Theory/Practice-oriented components are sufficient to cater the learning outcomes and skills development

Evaluation

Theory-oriented components are sufficient to cater the learning outcomes and skills development. The highly interactive sessions are to be stressed. Through the theoretical sessions all relevant themes are covered for the acquisition of the promised learning outcomes and skills. However, some improvement might be undertaken regarding the practice-oriented components, as it has already been mentioned under "quality criteria 1" and "quality criteria 4".

Strategies for improvement

The strategies suggested are pointed out under "quality criteria 1 and 4".

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