



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

Work Package 2



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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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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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".