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

New course 1: "Risk, Vulnerability and Resilience: Concepts and Understanding"

QUALITY ASSESSMENT
Quality criteria 1: Number of credit units for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning are appropriate to the contents
• *Evaluation* Credit units for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning are provided. Most part of the credit units are devoted to theoretical lectures, while the practical and self-learning part receive little attention. This is justified by the introductory character of the course to the field of vulnerability and resilience. It is assumed that the contents taught are worked from a practical perspective in other courses. This (i.e. whether the topic is addressed or not from a practical perspective in other courses) remains, however, unclear through the descriptions provided in the syllabus and should be cleared up in order to be able to provide a more accurate assessment. The focus on risk assessment particularly asks for practical exercises and self-learning activities that allow students to use the acquired knowledge in a professional way (in a practical case). Thus, especially if no practical courses on the topic are provided in the master's programme, theory and practice should be further integrated and interrelated in the course process (see suggestions for improvement below). • *Strategies for improvement* The provision of theoretical knowledge is required in order to establish a good knowledge basis on the topic. Nevertheless, the conversion of (part of) some theoretical sessions into practical sessions should be considered, not least those addressing methodologies for the assessment of risk/vulnerabilities. This is especially relevant so as to training future professionals that will not only be knowledgeable of the assessment tools and methodologies available but also capable of using them in real case studies. Practical sessions might include practical work with some of the software mentioned in the course, but also activities in the field and work with local actors in charge of risk management or having been exposed to hazards, among others. This would substantially increase the experience acquired by students and potentially translate into better skilled future professionals. In the syllabus, it is pointed out that "blended teaching and learning approaches for interaction lecturing" are used. Further details are, however, not provided, which makes it hard to offer strategies for improvement in this area. If not considered yet, it is suggested that some or at least a part of the theoretical sessions are conceived as in-class discussions. In-class discussions would provide dynamism to the course and give the students a chance to express themselves and better integrate their already existent knowledge on the topic with the new contents taught. The usage of games such as quizzes might also be considered, as it appears to be the case through the indications rendered in the syllabus. Again, further details should be provided in the syllabus on how and when quizzes are used, in order to be able to give you further strategies for improvement. All these amendments should involve the formulation of more practical assignments additional to the one suggested in the syllabus. These assignments should not only be based on a review of scientific literature (as it seems to be the case with the proposed assignment), but also constitute cases of exploration of risks, vulnerabilities, etc. in reality. Additionally, both teamwork and individual assignments should be offered to the student. All the assignments might additionally be linked to a final practical project that builds on all theoretical and practical aspects addressed.
Quality criteria 2: Total number of credit units in the course is correct and appropriate
• *Evaluation* The total number of credits awarded is too high if a workload of 56 hours is estimated. • *Strategies for improvement* As 1 ECTS is equal to circa 28 hours, the course should be awarded 2 ECTS, or the workload increased to approximately 120 hours. We would especially recommend increasing the workload for students, if possible. Indeed, the ratio of hours devoted to lectures is too high. Workload increases in the form of practice-oriented activities are desirable.

Quality criteria 3: Positioning of the courses in Curricula is appropriate based on the progressive level of difficulty
• *Evaluation* The positioning of the course in the first semester of MA studies in Disaster Studies is deemed as appropriate, given the introductory character of the course in the field of disaster management, on which (it is assumed) the master places the focus. The subject area addressed in the course constitutes the backbone of the master, the reason why it is considered primordial to position it in the first semester, before other courses are offered that go more in-depth into other aspects in the following semesters. • *Strategies for improvement* None. Everything is deemed correct.
Quality criteria 4: Tests are suitable and appropriate to support transferable skills
• *Evaluation* Eighty percent of the grade is based on the successful completion of a mid-term and a final written examination. Using this approach is reasonable in a theoretical introductory course, as it is the case here. However, it does not result appropriate to support transferable skills. Thus, it should only be utilised if practical courses do exist in the master's programme dealing with the topic of the course and using a completely different evaluation system (more practice-oriented). If this was not the case, the tests and grading system used in the course would not be appropriate (see strategies for improvement below). The usage of mostly only exams is not a suitable way to evaluate the level of understanding and skills gained by the students on the subject. Students might be able to successfully reflect on the theoretical and/or practical questions posed in an exam, but this doesn't automatically equate to the capability to use this knowledge to work on real cases in practice. • *Strategies for improvement* You can find strategies for improvement under "quality criteria 1", where the provision of more practical sessions and the related practical assignments is strongly recommended. Most part of the grade should be obtained through the evaluation of the quality of practical assignments. Practical assignments should include tasks involving workgroup, and the grade be a mix of written assignments, oral presentations, discussions and the final exam. Particularly interesting might be the involvement of local stakeholders during the practical assignments, given their specific knowledge upon the opportunities and challenges that appear in practice while using e.g. each of the introduced tools for risk assessment. This might widen the practical perspective of students. Through the provided descriptions in the syllabus, it appears that the proposed individual assignment will take place after the completion of the theoretical sessions, even though this should be further clarified in the syllabus. While this is a reasonable way to proceed, we would strongly recommend to proceed the opposite way, i.e. to mix lectures, seminars and practical sessions in the timeline. The reason is that the acquisition of practical knowledge on each of the subjects right after the corresponding theoretical sessions might enable students to better relate the theoretical concepts learned and its practical implementation. As students' memory is limited, this can potentially have an impact on the skills transferability.
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 introductory character of the course to the master Disaster Studies justifies the absence of prerequisites. The prerequisites for attending the master apply. However, the lecture materials should not be limited to a listing of recommended publications, some scientific papers and the lecture slides. • *Strategies for improvement* Since we do not have access to the e-learning materials, we do not know whether the suggestions that we make here can be useful. Maybe some of the suggestions mentioned have already been adopted. Our first suggestion concerns the desirability of providing videos on the theoretical sessions in the e-learning platform, so that students can re-listen and review the learnt contents anytime. This might allow a better understanding and encourage self-working at home. Second, an online chat as well as interactive online practical exercises might be created, which would make it possible to easily interact and discuss with the professors and other students via the chat, on the one hand, and make the learning experience more attractive and allow all students interested in the topic to learn more about it, on the other hand.

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 knowledge development, but this is not the case with practice-oriented components. The practice-oriented components should be further developed in the course planning and evaluation process to value the student work. This is especially required if the course contents are not further worked in other more practice-oriented courses during the master's programme. • *Strategies for improvement* The strategies suggested are pointed out under "quality criteria 1 and 4".