



COURSES REVISED AND NEWLY CREATED BY PARTNER P11 (KUMAUN UNIVERSITY)

Work Package 2



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

New course 2: “Integrated Mountain Development with Special Reference to the Indian Himalayan Region”

QUALITY ASSESSMENT
<p>Quality criteria 1: Number of credit units for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning are appropriate to the contents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Evaluation</i> The number of credits devoted to lectures, practical sessions, and self-learning do not suit the course's contents. Most part of the course is in the form of theoretical lectures, whereas the practical and self-learning part receive little attention. The theoretically-gained knowledge is fundamental for the provision of basic knowledge on mountain development, but using the knowledge outcomes in a professional way (the "on the field" aspect) through the provision of practical exercises and self-learning is also very relevant. A lack of interaction is detected with local stakeholders, governance institutions, etc. Theory and practice should be further integrated and interrelated in the course process.</li> <li><i>Strategies for improvement</i> The theory-oriented component allows the student to understand the theme. However, to let the students better integrate the contents and experience the existent hurdles and opportunities for their practical implementation, several practical sessions involving field trips and individual and group practical work should be developed in the lecture plan. This might include work with local stakeholders (during both the excursions and the carrying out of practical exercises), which would be very desirable. For example, a practical exercise might be incorporated in unit IV “Mountains Institutions and Environmental Governance”, through which the students had to work with the different tools and indexes presented during the theoretical session for the resolution of a real-life problem. This will enable the students to also get knowledge on the practical implementation of the theoretical concepts learned. Furthermore, in-class discussions should be an essential component of the theory-oriented sessions. Finally, it would be advisable to link all the assignments to a final practical project that builds on all theoretical and practical aspects acquired. This final practical project might be the short interdisciplinary dissertation that you mention in the syllabus. However, more detailed descriptions should be offered in the syllabus on the topics, methods, etc. that are embraced in the assignments that you suggest (questions and short interdisciplinary dissertation), in order to be able to give you further strategies for improvement.</li> </ul>
<p>Quality criteria 2: Total number of credit units in the course is correct and appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Evaluation</i> The total number of credits awarded is too high if a workload of approximately 60 hours is estimated.</li> <li><i>Strategies for improvement</i> 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. As the ratio of hours devoted to lectures is too high, increases in the workload in the form of practice-oriented activities are desirable. This will, for sure, also imply an increase in the number of marks awarded.</li> </ul>
<p>Quality criteria 3: Positioning of the courses in Curricula is appropriate based on the progressive level of difficulty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Evaluation</i> The positioning of the course in the first semester of MSc and MA is entirely appropriate. This is due to the fact that general knowledge on environmental management is gained through the participation in this course, which is required before going deeper into more specific topics in the following semesters. The location of Nainital justifies the specific focus on the Himalayan regions.</li> <li><i>Strategies for improvement</i> No improvement needed</li> </ul>

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

- *Evaluation*

The tests and grading system are not appropriate to support transferable skills. This is shown by the fact that 75% of the grade that the students get is based on the successful completion of a single final written examination. The usage of one final exam is not a suitable way to evaluate the level of understanding and skills gained by the students on the subject.

- *Strategies for improvement*

Strategies for improvement are pointed out under “quality criteria 1”: they concern the provision of more practical sessions, which remain very limited in the course. Most part of the grade should be obtained through the evaluation of the quality of practical assignments. Working on practical cases will improve the students' motivation and interest and allow the lecturers to better evaluate if the theoretical knowledge has been correctly understood. Practical assignments should include tasks involving workgroup, and the grade be a mix of written assignments, oral presentations, discussions and the final exam.

Further, we would strongly recommend to mix lectures, seminars and practical sessions in the timeline. The development of 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. The provided structure of the course suggests that first theoretical lectures take place and afterwards the short interdisciplinary dissertation is written, whereas the questions posed on each of the units during the course seem to be theoretical. This should, however, be further clarified in the syllabus, so that strategies for improvements can be more objectively made.

**Quality criteria 5: TLM and assessment strategy support students in undertaking the course i.e. prerequisites are helpful and relevant, assessments help 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 follow better and easily understand the contents provided. However, the lecture materials should not be limited to a listing of recommended publications.

- *Strategies for improvement*

As we do not have access to the e-learning materials, we do not know whether the suggestions that we will mention here can be useful. It might be the case that some of our suggestions have actually already been implemented. First of all, we would suggest providing videos on the theoretical sessions in the e-learning platform, to let the student re-listen and review the contents as a means to enable a better understanding and encourage self-working at home. Furthermore, interactive online practical exercises and an online chat should be developed: to make the learning experience more attractive and allow all students interested in the topic to learn more about it, on the one hand, and to easily interact and discuss with the professors and other students via the chat, on the other hand.

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

- *Evaluation*

The theory-oriented components are sufficient to cater the learning outcomes and knowledge development, but this is not the case with the practice-oriented components. The practice-oriented components should be developed in the course planning and evaluation process to value to the student work.

- *Strategies for improvement*

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