QUALITY ASSESSMENT BY EU PARTNERS (PARTNER P4 Martin-Luther University Halle)

New course: "Ecosystem Approach for Disaster Risk Reduction"

Jawaharlal Nehru University, Special Centre for Disaster Research (SCDR)

MSc Course

QUALITY ASSESSMENT
Quality criteria 1: Number of credit units for lectures, practical sessions and self-learning are appropriate to the contents
• *Evaluation* The course is primarily dependent on lectures and presentations provided by the lecturers to the student. However, the students also have the possibility to use interactive and self-reflective teaching methods to further deepen their understanding of the subject. The course follows a balanced approach between face-to-face teaching methods and of individual assignments (i.e. self-study hours). The course provides students with an extensive overview of ecosystem management and its integration into landscape planning with the goal of reducing the risks of disasters. The number of credits for lectures and self-learning are correctly listed and reflect the respective workload properly. • *Strategies for improvement* No major suggestions necessary. The course is well-structured and solidly planned.
Quality criteria 2: Total number of credit units in the course is correct and appropriate
• *Evaluation* The course is expected to provide 4 ECTS, and according to the syllabus, the estimated workload for the course is 56 hours for lectures and 56 hours for independent self-study and individual assignments. As such, the total expected workload for the course is 112 hours. Given that one ECTS is valued at ~25-30 hours of workload, the course is correctly valued at 4 ECTS. • *Strategies for improvement* No additional strategies for improvement are necessary, as the workload corresponds to the documented ECTS.
Quality criteria 3: Positioning of the courses in Curricula is appropriate based on the progressive level of difficulty
• *Evaluation* Other than the fact that this is a Master's level course and its thematic focus on understanding how ecosystem and landscape management can help reduce the risk of disasters, little information is provided with regard to how the course is positioned in the curricula. Based on the provided reading material and the described learning outcomes, the course seems to be of an adequate level for Master's students. It clearly builds upon prior knowledge on ecosystem services and landscape-based disaster risk reduction, and as such, corresponds well with a Master's level course. • *Strategies for improvement* It would be beneficial if the syllabus contained information about related and relevant courses, both from prior Bachelor's courses as well as sensible and related courses from the Master's programme. This would

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allow a more precise evaluation of the course's fit into the study programme. However, the proposed topics and learning outcomes seem sensible and in line of what can be expected of a Master's course.

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

- *Evaluation*

Grading is dependent on four separate grading segments. There will be Quizzes and unannounced test (10%), a mid-semester examination (30%), an end-semester examination (50%) and individual assignments during the course period (10%). This is absolutely sufficient and allows instructors to easily gauge students' progress and their retention of taught materials due to the frequency and volume of grading segments.

- *Strategies for improvement*

Surprise tests is a controversial means of examining students and could lead to frustrations among the student body. Moreover, it is not clear what would happen if a student is missing from a lecture during which a surprise test takes place. It might be more sensible to switch to announced tests or other forms of quizzes during the course period. Another suggestion for improvement would be to describe the planned individual assignments in greater detail. The syllabus mentions these assignments but only refers to them as "interviews in the field" and "article reviews with given objectives". It would be helpful to describe both these activities in greater detail. A preliminary list of tasks and topics for both interviews and article review would be of great use.

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

- *Evaluation*

Teaching and learning methods are mixed and include taught classes and practical exercises with individual assignments for the students. The intended structure of the course is thus well-designed to gauge student's progress. There are no required courses for this particular course.

The reading list contains a great variety of articles and reading material and should provide an excellent foundation for students to read up on the material.

- *Strategies for improvement*

The provided reading list is excellent and the description of lecture topics is sufficiently detailed as well. However, considering this is a Master's course, it is somewhat interesting to note that there are no prerequisite courses to participate in this course. It might be sensible to require a course on landscape management, ecosystem services or similar topics as a necessary prerequisite. Otherwise, students might be overloaded with new information and find themselves confronted with having to spend many hours reading up on concepts that should be already known. It would be excellent if a few courses from the BSc and MSc programme could be added – at least in the form of "recommended courses".

Some interesting references that could perhaps help to deepen the theoretical knowledge are listed below, but their use ultimately depends on the instructors.

- Ogra, A., Donovan, A., Adamson, G., Viswanathan, K.R. and Budimir, M. (2021). **Exploring the Gap between Policy and Action in Disaster Risk Reduction: A Case Study from India**. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction 63, 102428*
- Sanyal, S. and Routray, J.K. (2016). **Social capital for disaster risk reduction and management with empirical evidences from Sundarbans of India.** *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction 19, 101-111*

- Johnson, R.M., Edwards, E., Gardnes, J.S. and Diduck, A.P. (2018). **Community vulnerability and resilience in disaster risk reduction: an example from Phojal Nalla, Himachal Pradesh, India.** *Regional Environmental Change 18, 2073-2087.*
- Le Masson, V. (2015). **Considering vulnerability in Disaster Risk Reduction Plans: From Policy to Practice in Ladakh, India.** *Mountain Research and Development, 35(2).*

Quality criteria 6: Theory/Practice-oriented components are sufficient to cater the learning outcomes and skills development
• *Evaluation* The practice-oriented components of the course are mentioned, but not described in detail. The learning outcomes and skills development however are properly described and listed. Given the nature and topic of the course, the intended skills to-be-developed are correctly categorized and would be a great asset for students to learn. • *Strategies for improvement* It would be good to describe the intended individual assignments in greater detail. It would be good to know what approach is planned and which tasks are awaiting the students during the individual assignments of the course. This information is currently missing.