

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

New course: “Risk, Vulnerability and Resilience – Theories, Concepts and Practices”

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	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Evaluation</i> <p>The course consists of two main teaching units which are lectures and interactive discussions and is complemented by individual assignments such as reviews of scientific articles. The course follows a balanced approach between face-to-face teaching methods and interactive teaching methods such as discussions or self-study hours. The course provides students with an extensive overview of the fundamental concept of vulnerability and vulnerability assessments. The number of credits for lectures and self-learning are correctly listed and reflect the respective workload properly.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Strategies for improvement</i> <p>No major suggestions necessary. The course is well-structured and solidly planned.</p>	
Quality criteria 2: Total number of credit units in the course is correct and appropriate	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Evaluation</i> <p>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.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Strategies for improvement</i> <p>No additional strategies for improvement are necessary, as the workload corresponds to the documented ECTS.</p>	
Quality criteria 3: Positioning of the courses in Curricula is appropriate based on the progressive level of difficulty	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Evaluation</i> <p>Other than the fact that this is a Master's level course and its thematic focus on understanding concepts of vulnerability in socio-economic, cultural and biophysical terms, only sparse information is provided with regard to how the course is positioned in the curricula.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Strategies for improvement</i> <p>The course begins by introducing the key terms and definitions of vulnerability. As such, it can be assumed that no prior knowledge is necessary, which could mean that the level of difficulty might be perhaps better suited to a Bachelor's course. This is of course difficult to evaluate from an outside perspective, but great care should be placed upon providing a level of detail and challenge to the students that is in line with a Master's course.</p>	

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 allow a more precise evaluation of the course's fit into the study programme.

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 are 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 "book reviews" and "article reviews with given objectives". Not only are those two assignments strikingly similar, the specific tasks and learning outcomes for these assignments are not adequately described. A more detailed explanation of which tasks students would have to carry out would be excellent.

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. This could be explained by the fact that the course begins by introducing core concepts that are necessary to follow the theoretical input, but this might be better suited to a Bachelor level course. As such, it would be wise to ensure that the taught material is in line with what can be expected of a Master's course and that assignments are sufficiently challenging.

While the provided literature list is quite exhaustive, below are some interesting references that could perhaps help to deepen the theoretical knowledge, but their use ultimately depends on the instructors.

- Kumar, S., Mishra, A.K., Pramanik, S., Mamidanna, S. and Whitbread, A. (2020). **Climate risk, vulnerability and resilience: Supporting livelihoods of smallholders in semiarid India.** *Land Use Policy* 97, 104729
- Singh, C., Deshpande, T. and Basu, R. (2016). **How do we assess vulnerability to climate change in India? A systematic review of literature.** *Regional Environmental Change* 17, 527-538

- Das, S. and Goswami, K. (2021). **Progress in agricultural vulnerability and risk research in India: a systematic review.** *Regional Environmental Change* 21(24)

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. The differences between the book review and article review should be stated as well as their intended learning outcomes and the related tasks for the students listed.

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