

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

New course: “(ENVI802) Nature Conservation and Special Protected Area Management”

National University of Mongolia, School of Engineering and Applied Sciences

PhD Course

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"> <i>Evaluation</i> The course is split into twelve weekly lectures, twelve weekly seminars and includes independent workload during which students can deepen the theoretical knowledge gained from lectures in exercises and self-study works. The proposed units (lectures, seminar, self-study) and allocated workload are sensible and properly structured. <i>Strategies for improvement</i> No improvements necessary per se. The course is well structured and provides suitable learning conditions for students.
<p>Quality criteria 2: Total number of credit units in the course is correct and appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Evaluation</i> The total workload is 150 hours during the course, of which 40 hours are devoted to in-class activities such as lectures, discussions and seminar work, and 110 hours are allocated to independent work. This split is sensible and appropriate given the course’s aims. Considering that one ECTS is assumed at 25-30 hours of work, the proposed 6 ECTS is correct ($6 \times 25 = 150$ hours).
<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"> <i>Evaluation</i> Given that a course on Environmental Science and a course on Sustainable Development and Green Development are a prerequisite for this course on nature conservation and special protected area management, it seems that the course is properly positioned in the curriculum. It is perhaps questionable as to why this course would be restricted to PhD students as the course material should also be valuable to MSc students – who can also be expected to have the necessary background knowledge to participate in the course. <i>Strategies for improvement</i> It could perhaps be suggested that the course be also opened to MSc students, although it can also be argued that due to the intense practical workload (interviews, assignments, software usage) it might perhaps be best suited for PhD students. This would have to be a judgment call by the organizers of the course. But in general, the course is well situated and well structured.
<p>Quality criteria 4: Tests are suitable and appropriate to support transferable skills</p>

- *Evaluation*

Students will be graded based on attendance and activity during lectures (20%), a progress test (20%), a final assessment (30%) and a final exam (30%). The split is properly explained and allows for a high insight on students' progress during the course.

- *Strategies for improvement*

Attendance and academic activity makes up 20% of the students' grade and it is not exactly clear how that will be graded. Perhaps it could be mentioned how academic activity would be graded. In addition, the course will be very intense for students due to the high amount of grading intervals – it might be wise to increase the weighting of the final exam and report due to their relative greater importance than the progress test and activity. A preliminary suggestion would be to provide the final exam and final report with an equal 40% weighting and then allocate 10% each for the activity during lectures and progress report. This would allow examination to more properly reflect what students actually ended up learning at the end of the module.

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, case study discussions and practical exercises with a large group work at the end of the course. The intended structure of the course is thus well-designed to gauge student's progress. The prerequisite courses and reading materials seem highly relevant to the course's goals and as such are properly designated.

- *Strategies for improvement*

It should be noted that none of the lectures seem to focus on the two supplementary software tools (MIRADI and METT). It might be wise to allocate one lecture or seminar-unit to teach students on how to interact and use these tools – if this is not yet done. Based on the mentioned prerequisite courses, it is unclear if students have the necessary know-how to properly use the tools without active guidance during the seminar or lecture.

Some interesting references that could perhaps help to deepen the theoretical knowledge and relevance to the Mongolian context are listed below.

- Bedunah, D.J., Schmidt, S.M. (2004). **Pastoralism and Protected Area Management in Mongolia's Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park.** *Development and Change* 35:1, 167-191
- Farrington, J.D. (2005). **The impact of mining activities on mongolia's protected areas: a status report with policy recommendations.** *Integrated Environmental Assessment and Management* 1:3, 283-289
- Beket, U. (2009). **The vegetation of the Mongolian Altai: problems of sustainable land use and nature conservation.** *BfN – Skripten (Bundesamt für Naturschutz) No.257 pp.18 pp. + 317 pp.*

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

- *Evaluation*

The course components are properly explained and cover all necessary topics to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Practical seminars and independent (group) work play a major role in the course and help students to deepen their knowledge on the lecture topics. The intended use of two software tools will help in developing important skills for providing better nature conservation management plans through the use of relevant software tools.

- *Strategies for improvement*

No particular recommendations. The course seems well designed and the learning outcomes are clearly stated and well-documented.



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