

Finalist's case study

Cranfield University Courses and Learning Framework for a sustainable future: integrating technology, environment and management in policy-making

Section 1 About the project

Summary

Environmental problems require integrated policy solutions from current and future generations. Cranfield's MSc course in Environment and Public Policy (EPP) has been developed to prepare students for work in the policy arena, with Government, think-tanks, companies, corporations, and third sector organisations.

Project partners

'In-kind' course support included Birkbeck College, University of London, Ernst and Young, The Foundation for Science and Technology, The Piezo Institute, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The problem

Embracing sustainable development requires deep and pragmatic integration of social, economic and environmental policy. The EPP course prepares high quality policy specialists, literate in environmental technology, management and engineering, to lead the sustainable policy agenda.

The approach

Policy is often taught in an abstract and quite theoretical way. A key objective for Cranfield is to "bridge the gap between research and practice". Thus, the aim of EPP is to give students an applied learning experience in policy. In the first phase of their studies, students attend a series of modules to expose them to theory and cutting edge research in the environmental arena. In the second phase, the student's learning is through the Group Project and Thesis Project research, which links them directly with practitioners. Visits to individuals already working in policy are organized to inspire the students in their chosen area of study and the course is strongly supported throughout by exposure to Cranfield's extensive research portfolio.

Our goals

The specific educational goals are to offer students an excellent grounding in environmental science and sustainable development with a specific focus on: international, national and local political contexts; methods for designing new evidence-based policy, evidence assessment, strategic foresight, cost-benefit appraisal, and risk analysis; policy implementation including regulatory and other tools; policy review methods, and; communication and synthesis of environmental policies to inform strategic decisions.



Cranfield
UNIVERSITY

Profile

Example:

- HEI
- 4,423 students (includes full and part time students)
- 1559 staff
- Rural

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Obstacles and solutions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of applied approach to policy teaching and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selection of a range of modules incorporating a broad range of environmental issues and topics. Use of Group Project and Individual Projects linked directly to clients and sponsors, to whom the research outputs are important.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of interdisciplinary skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliberately challenging Group Projects and Individual Projects requiring research and assignments to be framed in an interdisciplinary context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of team working skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Projects requiring students from different MSc courses to work together in teams for a client. A "reflective review" requiring each student to identify and assess how self-identified team working skills improved during the Group Project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of flexible and adaptive analytical skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students encouraged to explore difficult and conflicting moral dimensions of real world policy making. Students encouraged and supported through the process of pushing their own boundaries and engaging in policy through their own research.

Performance and results

EPP started with 5 students in the 2013 intake. We hope to see more students take up EPP at Cranfield in the coming years as word of the course spreads through old scholars. A key feature of EPP is the Group Projects and the Thesis Projects. Through these, EPP students have contributed almost three years of research effort in the policy arena. For example, a dynamic modelling tool that quantifies policy effects on electricity markets is being used by Ernst and Young, and the Lazio Region Government will soon vote on a proposal for establishing a natural capital committee. Feedback from practitioner stakeholders on the quality of work done for them by EPP (and other) students has been highly complementary.

Lessons learned

The use of Group Projects and Thesis Projects to engage with real world practitioners in environmental policy is an excellent vehicle for learning, benefitting both students and practitioners alike. Students also greatly welcomed contact and access to policy practitioners and the chance to see a Select Committee in action.

Sharing our project

EPP has local, national and international reach, with students this year from Libya, Ghana, Italy and England. The students will return to become involved in environmental policy making. During the course, students shared the knowledge they gained to help solve policy relevant problems for practitioner stakeholders.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

This recognition is a wonderful reward for our hard work in setting up EPP. We aim to use it to achieve healthy numbers of students in a topic area in which Cranfield with its close links to practitioner stakeholders, has much to offer. The materials that we have developed for our case have stimulated a number of ideas that we will put into action. An example is the video which we will link to our EPP webpage. Ultimately, we hope to develop for future generations a planet as beautiful and inspirational as the one we have inherited.



AWARDING SUSTAINABILITY EXCELLENCE FOR 10 YEARS

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Dissemination supported by:



Further information

Anil Graves, EPP Course Coordinator
Phone: 01234 750111 extension 2727
Email: a.graves@cranfield.ac.uk

Tim Brewer, Environment Programme Director
Phone: 01234 750111 extension 2752
Email: t.brewer@cranfield.ac.uk

Cranfield University website: <http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/>
EPP course webpage: <http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/courses/masters/environmental-and-public-policy.html>