

Call for an MSc research project

Are Intro courses to Interdisciplinary Masters programs doomed to “fail”?

Requisite: Student of the Master in Interdisciplinary Studies in Environmental, Economic and Social Sustainability (MEISAES, ICTA-UAB) or alike. She/he must be fluent in English. She/he must be willing to do mostly desk work.

Research context: How to best integrate the highly diverse backgrounds of first-year students enrolled in Interdisciplinary Master’s programs while helping them fill disciplinary knowledge gaps? Answering this question has become a headache for teachers and program coordinators across European Universities every start of the year. The best solution so far has been the design of Introductory courses that somehow fit the backgrounds and needs of the incoming students. Designing effective courses, however, has proven to be particularly difficult for a variety of reasons. The challenge is particularly evident in sustainability programs because of the epistemological, ontological, and content differences that separate the natural sciences such as ecology, hydrology, or biology, from the social sciences such as anthropology, sociology, or geography. This study aims to synthesize challenges and highlight solutions to the “interdisciplinary integration” puzzle across European Interdisciplinary Master’s programs. The findings will be used to make recommendations to improve existing Introductory courses or design new solutions.

Description & Objectives: The student will 1) carry a coarse literature review of the literature on interdisciplinary teaching and learning in higher education organization; 2) design and implement an online based survey/carry interviews to interdisciplinary program coordinators across Europe with a focus on Sustainability Masters programs; and 3) synthesize the data and write her/his thesis highlighting the main findings.

Technical details: The thesis will be directed by Sergio Villamayor-Tomas (ICTA) and a second supervisor that will be co-chosen with the student. I expect that a revised version of the MSc Thesis will be published as a short 5,000 to 8,000 paper in a reputed journal.

If you are interested on writing your MSc thesis on this topic, please contact

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