

Quality concept Master Ecology

Program objectives

The aim of the master's program in Ecology is to offer students a training that qualifies graduates for careers in ecological research but also for careers outside research. Overall, the study program is concept-focused, multidisciplinary and research-oriented. Students acquire competences which combine the knowledge of ecological concepts with modern research methods. Based on this foundation, students can specialize in different subsections of the discipline.

Training in ecological concepts is coupled with advanced statistical data analysis, experimental and sampling design, and with molecular and bioinformatic tools. The master's program applies methods of inquiry-based learning to enable students to develop a high degree of independence.

Furthermore, the study program focuses on developing the students' abilities to apply and implement their acquired ecological knowledge in future professional fields. Intensive networking between the sub-fields of the subject takes into account the complexity of the research field and yet enables individual profile tracks with different foci, e.g. in terrestrial community ecology, marine ecology, microbial ecology, sustainability, or environmental risk assessment. In this way, the program promotes excellence in the field of ecology research.

Evaluation concept

The quality management of the Master of Ecology program follows a PDCA cycle. Annual meetings of the teaching staff of the Master's discuss the state of the art of the modules with respect to learning scenarios and forms of examinations and in response to feedback from students and surveys. This in turn leads to changes in the module descriptions or, if larger alterations are planned the examination regulations. Course questionnaires are the standard tool to collect student feedback on the quality of teaching within modules. They are carried out electronically and in anonymized form via the course management system Stud.IP. At the end of each course, the study program coordinator organizes a questionnaire and notifies students by email to take part. If need be, this is repeated until such time as a sufficient response quota has been achieved. As a rule, evaluation is implemented by means of a standard questionnaire that can be supplemented or adapted to fit the module in question. Other tailored means may be applied to fit the special situation of certain courses. The results of such student surveys are available to members of the teaching staff via the Stud.IP system. Currently, no general attempt is made to communicate results to the students directly, although members of teaching faculty are free to do so and

possible feedback is communicated in the annual meetings between teaching staff and students. At the end of semester, the questionnaire results are collected and made available to the master's examination board and the QM Commission for perusal and possible action.

Additionally, the teaching staff of the Master's invites the student cohort for discussions about the program modules once a year. This open exchange often leads to a more detailed feedback by students and allows to collect feedback from students beyond the scope of individual modules. To this end, the program also takes part in the annual study program survey that is organized by the department of teaching and studies in the central university administration.