

Development report Bachelor GSS, Master Environmental Sciences and Master Energy Science University Utrecht

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Multiperspectivity (worldviews/cultures) and the importance for sustainability: Bachelor GSS as an international programme with international students and teachers

This topic was not discussed during the development dialogue, as it had already been covered extensively during the various interviews.

Anchoring/strengthening of educating Change Agents & “anxiety” in students

- The programme clarified that some students, while learning to deal with world problems, can become discouraged and passive. The question is how to preserve the energy that students have when they start their studies.
- The panel agrees with the programme representatives that the idea of a ‘change agent’ can become a paralyzing burden for students. It advises not to place too much emphasis on this concept as a distinctive feature, as we are *all* change agents with a shared responsibility, but to embed the concept of change agency in the programmes. Students cannot solve world problems but they can improve or change the system.
- The programmes could also showcase best practices to inspire students with real-life projects.
 - o For example, by showing (the effects of) consultancy projects for clients, highlighting the strong link between problems partners face and what students can contribute. The panel advises to do this earlier than in period 4.
 - o Highlight successes, such as the (immense) progress on the SDGs in Europe.
- Being able to communicate/ interact with different actors is an important skill, as was confirmed by the diverse group of alumni the panel spoke with. The panel recommends continuing to encourage the development of this skill, and suggests that role-playing could be an effective way to teach students to adopt different perspectives.
- The programmes might benefit from a psychological approach by providing students with an action perspective (“change the world in small steps”).
- Other examples that were mentioned: organize a sustainability café; get students involved in businesses; use examples from the campus (Green Office), municipality, the study associations etc.
- Learning lines around skills could help well as well. Projects could be linked to these.

Reflection on innovations in programmes

- The panel is impressed with the innovative character of the programmes and appreciates the initiatives that have been or are being implemented, such as the 45 EC thesis, the new track Sustainable & Healthy Food in BGSS, and the focus on water and climate adaptation in the WSM specialization. An inspiring group of students has just started with the new track on Politics, Ecology, and Society (PES) in the Environmental Sciences master’s programme.
- The programmes focus on alignment with research from the Copernicus Institute, as is reflected in the PES track. The panel and programme representatives agree that it is important to make relevant research topics visible in education, and organize thesis supervision accordingly.

- As student numbers are decreasing and competition on a national level is increasing, the programmes are thinking about what sets them apart, and how to convey this to (future) students. The panel sees overlap between institutions and programmes, e.g. in their focus on sustainability, which together cover the entire field. According to the panel, prospective students tend to look at the content and focus of the programme, but also take into account other factors (city, atmosphere, study association etc). Students' interests may vary depending on their age group and nationality.
- The panel believes it is important to rely on and emphasize one's own strengths, such as the strong connection with Copernicus.
- The panel encourages the programmes to keep focussing on continuous curriculum innovation, responding to developments in the field. The fact that the majority of alumni find relevant jobs is an important positive indicator.
- The panel advises to keep working on strengthening the alumni network and to do this in consultation with the study associations.