



An (even) broader perspective: Combining environmental processes and natural hazards education in a MSc programme

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Natural hazards are processes occurring in the natural environment that negatively affect human society. In most instances, the definition of natural hazards implies sudden events as different as earthquakes, floods or landslides. In addition, there are other phenomena that occur more subtly or slowly, and nevertheless may have serious adverse effects on the human environment. Hence, a comprehensive study programme in natural hazards has to include not only the conspicuous causes and effects of natural catastrophes, but of environmental processes in general.

Geography as a discipline is located at the interface of natural, social and economic sciences; the physical geography programme described here is designed to include the social and economic dimension as well as management issues. Modules strengthening the theoretical background of geomorphic, geological, hydrological and meteorological processes and hazards are complemented by practical work in the field and the laboratory, dealing with measuring and monitoring environmental processes. On this basis, modeling and managing skills are developed. Another thread in the transdisciplinary programme deals with sustainability and environmental policy issues, and environmental psychology (e.g. perception of and reaction to hazards). This will improve the communication and team working skills of students wherever they are part of an interdisciplinary working group.

Through the involvement in research programmes, students are confronted 'hands on' with the different aspects of environmental processes and their consequences; thus, they will be excellently but not exclusively qualified for positions in the 'natural hazards' sector.