

# UC-SIS

## Proposed Masters Program

### Some Comments from USP

As the London meeting is approaching, we would like to share some of our thoughts on the three items that have been highlighted by Fazal in one of his recent communications.

#### 1. Regulations for Masters

##### a) USP Situation Analysis

- *PG Programs:*
  - Currently USP has a Masters in Environmental Studies and a Masters in Environmental Sciences.
  - In addition, there are Masters Programs in Development Studies, Education, Marine Studies, Geography, Chemistry, Physics, Earth Science, Engineering, Economics, Population Studies, Tourism, Law, and Agriculture which focus on different aspects of Environment and Sustainable Development topics.
- *Admission Regulations:*
  - GPA of 3 or equivalent (B average) for undergraduate degree, or
  - A degree and 3 years relevant work experience, or
  - Admission with standing (mature entry - at least 5 years relevant experience), or
  - Professional qualifications deemed excellent/excellent professional achievements.
- *Fees*
  - USP has a three-tier fee structure:
    - Regional fee (what students from the USP member countries, 12 PICs pay – this is subsidized by member countries).
    - Third country awards (usually scholarship given to one of the member countries by an outside country, this fees is usually 3x the regional fee
    - International fee (charged for students from outside USP region; usually about 4x the regional fee). This is the full economic coast.
  - Regional Fee: Usually ~USD500/course
  - Third Country Fee: ~USD1500
  - International Fee: USD 2000
  - At the moment DFL courses have slightly lower fees (about 10%) than the f-2-f mode but both will be harmonized by 2010.
- *PG Degree Structure*
  - Taught courses and supervised research projects which lead to *thesis* or *dissertation*.
  - Two courses for PG Certificate, four courses for PG Diploma, four courses and a *thesis* or 6-7 courses and a *dissertation* for Masters Degree.
- *Mode of delivery*
  - At the PG level, mostly f-2-f
  - Some courses have f-2-f and DFL components (DFL details: *vide infra*)

- *Assessment,*
  - Course work and final examination (course work consists of lab work, field work, assignments, topic tests etc. final exam is usually a three hr written paper).
  - For thesis work both internal and external assessments; usually no viva or oral examination.
- *Quality Assurance/ committees:*
  - Every PG course has a course coordinator and research students will have one or more supervisors.
  - Courses and research proposals have to be approved by the departments first.
  - Faculty PG Committee has overall responsibility for PG work.
  - At the university level the Academic Quality and Standards Committee has overall responsibility for PG students affairs.
  - Students graduate during one of several graduations conducted by USP in the region.
- *Course Cross-crediting*
  - Courses taken within USP under some other program or those completed from other recognized institutions may be cross credited to USP Masters program.
  - Either a one-to-one credit or unspecified credits are available.
  - For a given program, only 50% of the courses may be credited this way.
  - Courses from certain established programs in the region are approved standing credits by the Senate. Students may take these courses in consultation with program coordinators.

#### **b) USP Masters and UC-SIS: Value Addition**

We are strongly of the view that the proposed masters program can add a lot of value to our program here and vice versa.

- *Taught courses:* Usually, our PG programs have compulsory (core) courses and electives. For a start, we would like to use UC-SIS courses as electives, and also to offer a limited degree of choice for the core course/s. For example,
  - Our masters in *Env Studies* is currently being revised with a view to making it an 'environment and sustainable development' program with a proposed name change to - *Dip/Masters in Sustainable Islands and Oceans Development*. We are seriously considering the possibility of 'streaming' into areas such as climate change, biodiversity/conservation, tourism, energy, economics, environmental engineering, ESD, ICM, IWM etc depending on the course combinations. However, at the moment there are not enough relevant courses in the elective pool for streaming to be implemented effectively. In order to partly address this situation,, we are reorienting one of our climate change courses, developing new courses in conservation, integrated waste management and EIA/SEA.
  - This is where we see UC-SIS adding value to our program.
  - USP could also make a number of its own courses and resources materials available for use by UC-SIS.
- *Supervised Research:* Masters research is usually linked to graduate scholarships provided by the university or major externally funded projects, the former being more common in traditional disciplinary departments and the latter in research Institutes and Centres of USP.

- The collective wisdom of the consortium may be used to enhance targeted action research that will help address SD challenges of our respective regions.
- In addition to some of the research USP conducts in climate change, marine/coastal ecosystems, biodiversity/conservation, waste, tourism etc, we would most welcome collaboration for further work in areas such as cleaner/renewable energy, climate change scenario generation, integrated solid waste management and in particular large scale composting, food and water security issues, urbanization, education for sustainable development, and economics of environmental change.

### **c) How do we make this happen?**

- Course work:
  - Fess: USP believes that international students at UC-SIS partner institutions will have to pay international fee, adjusted for distance mode. However, we admit that this will deter a number of prospective students, particularly those from our own region, simply because they cannot afford such high fees. This is where the Consortium could play a critical role. We should consider seriously the possibility of establishing a *"UC-SIS financial facility"* for capacity building using which partial student scholarships may be offered to offset any extra tuition expenses for the Consortium students. A fund-raising drive should be launched to attract as many development partners as possible to contribute to the financial pool so that the income from such endowments may be used to sustain the training programs. This will be a win-win situation in which students pay only the normal fee they would have paid anyway while participating institutions will be encouraged to offer quality courses to attract as many students to their courses as possible.
  - Delivery Mode: We should endeavour to provide as much flexibility as possible to the students in accessing the courses. USP will try to maximize the use of its DFL/USPNet facilities for this.
  - Copy right, IPR: We should seek some innovative ways to address this important issue. If our courses are taken by others paying international fee, will this still be a major concern? In some exceptional circumstances, a reasonable royalty payment may be considered.
  - Tutoring: In order to provide effective tutoring across the regions, it will become necessary to organize special training for the staff involved, using roving trainers and through staff exchange as appropriate.
- Research:
  - Joint research supervision may be considered as much as possible.
  - Some student exchange during research will become essential.
  - For projects involving substantial field/laboratory work campus residency conditions are particularly important.
  - Staff and student exchange among Consortium members should be considered.

## **2. Study Units**

USP's courses are normally 14 week (semester) study units, in some cases extended to 30 weeks for DFL courses. There are about 3-4 hrs/week contact hrs + an equal no of hrs for lab/field work, assignments, project work etc for all courses in general.

Usually, continuous assessment and final exams (50-50%) or some variation of this division is used for final course grading. Some courses have no final exams, only continuous assessment. A list of useful courses for UC-SIS is given below; the details of these courses have been provided earlier in the study unit matrix.

**a) Existing Courses**

- MS415: Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment (V&A) I
- MS416: Climate Change Vulnerability And Adaptation Assessment (V&A) II
- SE 444: Pacific Islands Community-based Conservation
- ED461: Global Education Instruments
- EC 415: Environmental and Natural Resource Economics
- BI442: Biodiversity and Conservation
- TS311: Sustainable Tourism Development
- DG 417: NGOs, Civil Society and Development
- JN 405: Special Topics in Journalism
- SE 441: Regional Management of Marine Resources
- ES 405: Field and Laboratory Techniques in Environmental studies

**b) New courses under development**

- Climate Change V&A (reoriented from MS415 and MS416)
- Conservation/Biodiversity 1
- Conservation/Biodiversity 2
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) /Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- Integrated Waste Management (IWM).

**3. Distance Tuition Arrangements**

More than half of USPs approximately 22,000 students study through distance and flexible (DFL) learning supported by 14 DFL Centres (in-country campuses) via USPNet.

**a) USPNet**

- A private educational VSAT communications system owned and operated by USP. (Satellite circuits leased from INTELSAT);
- Integrates all technologies (satellite, PCs, telephones, faxes, advanced control software, various e-learning software such Web-CT);
- Allows 4 video broadcasts of lectures at one time (3 from Laucala, one from region); reduces duplication; makes courses available quickly;
- Allows reliable audio and video-conference tutorials.
- USPNet allows: Interactive video and audio lectures and tutorials, and time-delayed rebroadcast of taped lectures;
- Student Internet access for general use and on-line courses (WebCT, Law, post-grad);
- Greater student interaction via on-line platforms (discussion groups, e-mail, chat rooms);
- Data transmitted to support teaching, learning, research and administration (digitized library resources, research database exchanges, etc).

**b) AARNET**

- An advanced, global, peer-to-peer network linkage via 155 Mbps on Southern Cross Cable.
- Support for connection from Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii universities
- AARNet connection provides for VoIP to international destinations, easing connection constraints felt by satellite licenses.
- AARNet connection provides gateways to other advanced networks (Abilene-Internet 2, PeaceSat, APRUNet, APAN, JUCC - Hong Kong, JICA-Net, etc)
- AARNet connection enables partnership with the World Bank's Global Development Learning Network.

**c) Pacific ICT Centre**

- Talks continue concerning a proposed Japan-Pacific Centre for ICT.
- The FJ\$30 million centre would create a hub for e-education, e-commerce, e-governance, and ICT research and development.
- Plans call for student labs (600+ computers), GIS labs, video-conference facilities, a 1,000-seat lecture theatre, a business incubator, and a performing / cultural arts space, all with USPNet broadcast.

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