

Promising practice – RRI in curricula

University: Leibniz University Hannover

Academic discipline: Transdisciplinary and cross-faculty but located at Sociology

Course title: Project Module (MA Science and Society)

Course description:

The Master „Science and Society“ is a consecutive, research-oriented and interdisciplinary course over 4 semesters (120 Credit Points). The program builds on professional expertise from different disciplines. Disciplines involved are Sociology, Political Science, Law, Social Policy, Labour Economies and Philosophy. Furthermore, the course of study is implemented in cooperation with the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (providing lecturers and function as partner organization).

The heart of the course is the so-called “Project Module” in the 2nd and 3rd semester. In this Project Module theoretical professional skills acquired in the basic and in-depth modules as well as methodological competences can be applied by the students and deepened by doing their own research. All seminars within the master course work towards the Project Module and impart useful theoretical and methodological knowledge.

Within the Project Module students realize a research or practice project in coordination with a self-chosen partner organization. They can choose the partner organization out of a partner network (approx. 16 partner organizations) e.g. Federal Ministry of Science and Culture, foundations, academic commission etc., or they can choose another organization they want to collaborate with. In the first part of the Module (2nd semester) students decide on the research question (suggested by one of the partner organizations or a self-chosen topic), elaborate the state of research, the theory and the analysis. In the 3rd semester, students undertake their research project under supervision of the partner organization: collection of data e.g. through a “survey” (survey, interviews, document analysis, observation, secondary analysis of existing data), analysis and evaluation. Finally, the results are documented in a report and an oral presentation.

Parallel to the Project Module students take a seminar where they receive theoretical and methodological support. Moreover, the seminar provides the framework to reflect on the experiences with the partner organizations.

Depending on the research or practice project different methodological knowledge is required. An individual consultation by lecturers is provided. The project is intended to lead to the master thesis.

Learning outcomes:

On completion of this module, the students will:

- have deepened their methodological and technical skills
- have learned how to apply theoretical knowledge in practice
- be able to develop and conduct a scientific research project beginning with the formulation of a research question and ending with the documentation of results
- have developed practical skills and knowledge in collaborating with external partners and working with different stakeholders (social component)

How students' learning is assessed:

Students have to write a report about the project and do an oral presentation at the end (25 credit points). The project report includes the implemented process steps so far, that is the development and sociological importance of the research question, state of research, theory concept, methodological approach, first results, preview on what is going to be investigated in the master thesis. Moreover, the report should reflect on the Project Module: How did the research process go? How was the cooperation with the partner organization? The oral presentation is structured in a similar way and is held in the framework of a final workshop. Everybody interested in the topic is invited to attend and to discuss (lecturers, students, partner organization etc.).

How students learn with civil society organisations (CSOs) through this course:

In the 1st semester of the master course, the (external) partner organizations introduce themselves and suggest topics for the research undertaken in the Project Module. In the 2nd semester (first part of the Project Module) students can decide on a topic for their research either from the suggested topics or a self-chosen topic. In the 3rd semester (second part of the Project Module) students undertake their research supervised by the partner organization of their choice. In some cases students even work at the premises of the partner organization during data collection and analysis. In this way students get to know other organizations besides the university and acquire social competences and learn how to think outside the box. They learn how to work collaboratively with different actors from various fields of practice.

How students learn about dimensions of RRI through this course:

To establish a common base and methodological orientation for all students, all seminars of the master course work towards the Product Module (e.g. seminar on organization & management). Students are introduced to theoretical and methodological foundations of (transdisciplinary) research processes.

In the Project Module students learn how they can apply their acquired knowledge for their own research. They learn how to work in interdisciplinary groups and thus how to deal with different opinions and how to engage with different stakeholders. They learn how to reflect critically on the topics and to take different perspectives into account. They learn how to evaluate their outcomes and how to advocate them.

RRI keys integrated in the course (ethics, governance, public engagement, science education, gender and open access):

Science education, public engagement, gender (depending on the research topic)

RRI process requirements integrated in the course (anticipation, reflexivity, inclusion, mutual responsiveness, diversity, meaningful openness, adaptive change):

Openness & transparency, anticipation & reflexivity

To find out more contact (EnRRICH partner):

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