

DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSE “INTRODUCTION IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE”

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Distance education course “Introduction in Environmental Science” is updated learning tool of learning course “Environmental Science” itemized on the Riga Technical University list of study courses (KNF481.0BI.). The students of Riga Technical University study it as optional course. Credit corresponds two points.

New version of course has been worked out following the recently developed principles of distance education theory. The work was managed with the PHARE programme support during the years 1998 –2000.

The contents of the course correspond to comprehensive scope. At Riga Technical University the target group includes the students of all faculties, who are interested in government’s and municipal policy, economics, the man’s place in society and in nature.

The body textbook of the distance education package is Andreas Steigan “Future comes on today”. Original Norway edition is rich in coloured illustrations, schemes, and tables, which give precious references about the most important environmental problems.

Latvian edition (edition house “Nordiks”) corresponds closely to the qualities of the Norway edition due to the co-operation of two edition houses. The basic idea stated in A. Steigan’s book is that police, economics, activities of state and regional administration could be carry out in conformity with the realities of our situation. It means that the development must **be sustainable**.

To arrive to this aim the knowledge about the processes in ecosphere and society are necessary. The specialists might be educated not only as traditional professionals but also as members of society, who are well informed on interdisciplinary complexions where basics of ecology, biology, energy, technology, economics, and sociology are integrated. Such type of education is disseminated among the European students as well as the students from developed countries.

At Riga Technical University students follow studies in separate courses such as “Ecology”, “Environment Protection”, “Environmental Chemistry and Engineering”, “Nature Conservation” and others. Usually these courses are delivered in faculties, where the students graduate as professionals aware of idea of the sustainable development. Other students do not follow studies in this field. However, a rational use of the natural resources (especially non-renewable resources), implementation of non-waste production, waste utilization, environmental legislation and similar problems urge on everybody to understand and take part in resolving such tasks. That’s why it is so important to introduce environmental education in Latvian education system.

Hitherto in Latvia there were not any good textbook in general environmental science. A. Steigan book covers this lack.

The fundamental principles of environmental science are given in A. Steigan’s book. The material concerning the statistics and other kind of information about Latvia’s situation are included in the distance education package. These raise learners understanding and illustrate the principles. These are indispensable for preparing the report about the case study, where the general principles are used to analyse a particular student’s experience taken from real life. The course topics are:

- Life on the Earth;
- Environment and Energy;
- Environmental Physics, Chemistry and Biology;
- Sustainable Development;
- Environment and Society, Police, Legislation, Ethics;
- Latvia’s Environmental Problems.

Distance education studies requires more unassisted work of learners then in conventional training and education. That’s why the special study system is developed. It includes learning package and learner’s support system.

Learning package package is composed of body textbook, study materials and study guide.

Study guide gives detailed admonition how to organize the studies including following tasks:

Studies work plan;

How to start the studies;

Motivation of learning;

What means study

Where and when to study?

How to study?

How to pass the tests?

What is home work (case study)?

How to prepare the final exam?

Distance Education Study Centre is managing the learners support system. There the tutors, counsellors and subject experts from learning staff are involved

The phone and e-mail contacts are assured. In future an internet study forum method will be introduced.

Duration of studies is 14 weeks. Total 80 hours are necessary to master the course. During the studies the learners have to present two tests in written form. On the final stage of studies case situation analyse must be presented. After that the students have to pass examination.

Studies progress is resumed in following way:

- Two class session (face to face meetings);
- Learners mastering the course material;
- Specific time slots (two hours per week) for contacts (usually by phone or e-mail) with tutors;
- Presentation of two written test reports in due time;
- Presentation of the written case study during the second class session;
- Final exam.

The first class session is organised at the beginning of course. There the needs of learners are considered. Special attention has been paid to self-assessment role in mastering the course material, the way how to prepare the test report and the home work (case study).

The second class session occurs on the end of studies. There the presentation of home works and the examination will take place.

The course package has been worked out by the specialists presented several fields which cover all the course topics. The material was tested, evaluated and accepted by specialists from various institutions and public offices dealing with environment protection and distance education problems.

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Abstract

Recently disseminated distance education course "Introduction in Environmental Science" is discussed. Distance education course "Introduction in Environmental Science" has been worked out at Distance Education Study Centre of Riga Technical University during the years 1988-2000. The Phare Multi-country Programme has supported the project for Distance Education. Now this course is delivered to all profile students as non-vocational alternative subject. The target group is the students as well as the adults interested in environmental problems. The package includes: body-text-book (A. Steigan "Future comes on to-day"), Study Guide, learning materials (police, economics, statistics) about the situation in Latvia. The key point of the course is the **sustainable development**. It is clearly set out in the textbook. Study Guide advises the learners how best to use the package. There the proposals for study timetable, the summaries of every textbook topic, item of additional references, detailed self-assessment questions with answers are given.

Comments of students and peers about the course are positives.

Implementation of course "Introduction in Environmental Science" will be advantageous for further diversifying and development of Latvia's education system.

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Tālmācības kursa “Ievads vides mācībā” studiju materiālu un studiju nodrošināšanas sistēmas
izstrādē iesaistītie speciālisti

Vārds, uzvards	Darba vieta	Zin. un akad.grādi	Veids	
Ilmars SLAIDIŅŠ	RTU, dekans	Dr.ing. sci.	Kurss Studijvedis	Eksperts tālmācībā Ievads, redakcija
Atis KAPENIEKS	RTU, Tālmācības studiju centra direktors	Dr.phys. sci.	Kurss	Eksperts
Jānis ZAĻOKSNIS	Rīgas dome, Gaisa monitoringa nodaļa vadītājs	Dr.chem.	Kurss, Studijvedis	Eksperts
Juris AVOTIŅŠ		Dr. chem.		
Augusts RUPLIS	RTU asoc. prof.	Dr. habil. chem.	Studijvedis	
Dagnija CĒDERE	LU Didaktikas centra direktore	Dr. chem.	Studijvedis	
Uldis ALKSNIS	LU docents	Dr.chem.	Studijvedis	
Līga NEIMANE	Natālijas Draudziņas gimnāzijas bioloģijas skolotāja	Mag. paed.	Studijvedis	
Vineta LABKOVSKA	Liepājas pedagoģiskā universitāte	Mag. biol.	Studijvedis	
Eduards TEIVĀNS	LU Pieaugušo pedagoģiskās izglītības centrs. lektors	Mag. paed.	Studijvedis	