



**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Social Sciences

## **MESS17, Methodology for Sustainability Science, 7.5 credits** *Hållbarhetsvetenskapens metodologiska grunder, 7,5 högskolepoäng* Second Cycle / Avancerad nivå

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### **Details of approval**

The syllabus was approved by The Board of the Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies on 2021-09-02 to be valid from 2022-08-24, autumn semester 2022.

### **General Information**

The course is a first term compulsory course within Lund University Master's Programme in Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science (LUMES).

*Language of instruction:* English

*Main field of studies*

Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science

*Depth of study relative to the degree requirements*

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

### **Learning outcomes**

Upon the completion of the course, the student shall

#### **Knowledge and understanding**

- understand and discuss crucial differences between fundamental approaches and perspectives in relation to the theory of science relevant to sustainability knowledge, including interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity
- demonstrate understanding of theory's function in sustainability research
- identify various quantitative and qualitative approaches, including their relative advantages and disadvantages
- demonstrate knowledge of theoretical and methodological approaches with specific relevance for sustainability research, including action research and collaborative processes
- demonstrate knowledge of and insights into the research process as a whole.

### **Competence and skills**

- appraise and use relevant theoretical approaches in the study of sustainability science research topics
- based on a scientific approach, identify, select and critically discuss different research methods
- demonstrate the ability to independently acquire, evaluate and compile information that is relevant for sustainability science research
- demonstrate basic proficiency in transdisciplinary research methods such as action research and co-creation.

### **Judgement and approach**

- evaluate the knowledge generated by sustainability science, including the theoretical and methodological approaches at its core
- compare and evaluate different methodological choices and how they influence the design and outcomes of the research process
- demonstrate the ability to justify the selection of method and theory in relation to specific sustainability topics
- reflect on the relationship between theories, concepts and methods in relation to relevant epistemological and ontological standpoints
- practice reflexivity in relation to the ethical and political aspects of sustainability research with reference to the researcher's role and responsibilities.

### **Course content**

The aim is to provide students with the fundamental methodological knowledge needed to understand and analyse sustainability challenges, as well as to contribute to knowledge on sustainability challenges. This includes both comprehensive theoretical and methodological aspects relevant to sustainability research and specialised knowledge of some of its primary methodologies. Students receive training to increase awareness of the importance of methods and theories and of the consequences of method selection for a given research task. The course also contains discussions on ethical aspects with particular relevance for sustainability research and action research. A practical approach, including exercises and group discussions, is used for both the theoretical and methodological aspects. Emphasis is on the essential aspects of sustainability science such as transdisciplinarity and action research.

### **Course design**

The course consists of lectures, seminars and both group and individual exercises. Group assignments and exercises are combined with individual work to develop the students' ability to understand, analyse, and apply various theoretical and methodological approaches. Discussions on theories and methods in relation to current sustainability topics and sustainability research permeate the entire course to give students improved knowledge and understanding of context and application.

## Assessment

Course assessment is based on:

- Written group take-home exam (2,5 credits)
- Written individual take-home exam (5 credits)

The course includes opportunities for assessment at a first examination, a re-sit close to the first examination and a second re-sit for courses that have ended during that school year. Two further re-examinations on the same course content are offered within a year of the end of the course. After this, further re-examination opportunities are offered but in accordance with the current course syllabus.

A student who has taken two examinations in a course or a part of a course without obtaining a pass grade is entitled to the nomination of another examiner, unless there are special reasons to the contrary.

Students getting a passing grade cannot re-take an exam or re-submit a paper to get a higher grade.

The examiner, in consultation with Disability Support Services, may deviate from the regular form of examination in order to provide a permanently disabled student with a form of examination equivalent to that of a student without a disability.

## Grades

Marking scale: Fail, Three, Four, Five.

The highest grade for the course is Five and the lowest grade for passing is Three. Grades for a non-passing result is Fail. The student's results are assessed with reference to learning outcomes of the course. For grade Five, the student must show an excellent result in all learning outcomes. For the grade Four, the student must show a very good result in all learning outcomes. For the grade Three, the student must show a sufficiently good result in all learning outcomes. The grade Fail means that the student has not reached the learning outcomes of the course.

At the start of the course, students are informed about the learning outcomes stated in the syllabus and the grading scale and how it is applied on the course.

### Overall course grade:

The grade for the entire course consists of the average grade of the two exams that are assessed according to the Fail-5-4-3 grading scale. The written group take-home exam is worth 30% of the final grade. The written individual takehome exam is worth 70% of the final grade. For a grade of 3 on the entire course the student must have been awarded at least 3 on both exams. The student must also have participated in all compulsory components to pass the course.

| Exam                         | Credits | Grades     | Part of the final grade for the course |
|------------------------------|---------|------------|--|
| Written group take-home exam | 2,5     | Fail-3-4-5 | 30%                                    |

|                                   |     |            |      |
|-----------------------------------|-----|------------|------|
| Written individual take-home exam | 5   | Fail-3-4-5 | 70%  |
|                                   | 7,5 |            | 100% |

Example: The student received the grade of 3 on the written group take-home exam and the grade of 5 on the written individual take-home exam. The final grade is  $4 \left( (3 \cdot 30) + (5 \cdot 70) \right) / 100 = 4,4$

## Entry requirements

To be admitted to the course, the student must hold a Bachelor's degree, including at least 180 ECTS.

A good command of spoken and written English, equivalent to English 6/B (advanced) proficiency in the Swedish secondary system, is required. Equivalent assessments will be made according to national guidelines.

## Further information

The course cannot be included in a degree together with MESS21 Methodology, Methods and Tools for Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science, 15 credits.