



Faculty Board

Development plan for the Master' programme in International Development and Management (LUMID)

Background

During 2021, the Faculty of Social Sciences' Master's programme in International Development and Management (LUMID) was evaluated by an external expert group including Ashok Swain (chair, Uppsala University), Linley Chinowa Karlton (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences) and Esse Nilsson (Sida). The expert group was generally positively disposed to the programme, emphasising that LUMID is largely well-planned with a well-thought-out structure, that it is capable of attracting well-qualified and motivated students from a large pool of applicants and has a high completion rate, as well as that LUMID alumni succeed well in the labour market. Nevertheless, given the significant changes in international development that have taken place since the programme's inception 16 years ago, the expert group highlighted a number of areas for improvement if LUMID is to maintain its level of educational quality and relevance.

This plan is based on a self-evaluation and one on-site visit and an evaluation report submitted by the expert group. A meeting was also held to obtain feedback, attended by the expert group chair, the LUMID steering committee, including student representatives, and current LUMID staff and management.

Both the report of the expert group and the development plan have been discussed at a board meeting of the Department of Human Geography, at two LUMID staff meetings and at a meeting of course directors. Written opinions have also been submitted by the faculty.

Presented below are areas for improvement identified by the expert group:

- More time needs to be allocated to programme management.
- Frequent replacement of directors of studies on the programme should be avoided.
- A single window is needed for placement support.
- The programme should place greater emphasis on practical management skills.
- The supervision and teaching of research methods needs to be improved.
- A predominance of literature and perspectives from the Global North.

For each area of improvement, measures are stated that have been approved by the Department Board (2 November 2021). Responsibility for this work rests with the department and LUMID's director of studies and steering committee.

Specific measures

1. More time needs to be allocated to programme management

While the expert group's evaluation shows that the programme has a largely well-thought-out management structure, it also notes that more work and attention needs to be focused on maintaining the quality of education provided to the particularly diverse student group that makes LUMID so unique and is the programme's greatest strength. Many students in LUMID have spent periods away from study before beginning the programme and they come from varied multidisciplinary academic backgrounds and geographical areas. LUMID's programme goals include an overseas placement and field studies, often conducted under challenging circumstances. The expert group therefore believes that the unique aspects of the programme demand that 50% of the director of studies' working hours should be allocated to the task, rather than the current 30%.

Programme management shares the opinion that it is important to allocate sufficient time to ensure that LUMID's purpose and programme goals are fulfilled. The division of duties and the efficiency thereof should be reviewed in relation to the entire programme and other programmes at the faculty.

Measures

- a) Initiate an evaluation of management needs within LUMID coordinated by LUMID management and the department, and investigate flaws and potential changes to resources allocated to the management of LUMID.

Timetable: Spring 2022

- b) Initiate an annual LUMID dialogue between LUMID course directors and programme management in order to improve support to programme management and ensure that qualitative targets are achieved. In order to ensure the sustainability of this measure, programme management will examine the possibility of remuneration for those involved.

Timetable: Autumn 2022 and ongoing.

2. Frequent replacement of directors of studies on the programme should be avoided

The expert group noted that LUMID has been overseen by six different directors of studies over the past seven years, a situation they deem to have hampered the development of the programme. They highlight the need for stable management of the programme.

Programme management share the opinion that more stable management is crucial to maintaining and developing the programme. LUMID's strength lies in attracting directors of studies and staff who are also successful researchers and can contribute high-quality teaching and leadership; however, maintaining this balance demands a certain amount of coordination among staff within the programme.

Measures

- a) An associate senior lecturer was employed in 2020 and was appointed as LUMID's director of studies in August 2020. This should stabilise programme management until at least 2023 when the appointment will either be terminated or upgraded.

Timetable: Spring 2020 and beyond.

- b) The aforementioned LUMID dialogue will be arranged by LUMID management with the aim of promoting the development of the programme. This will cover issues such as coordination between course subjects and examinations, programme identity, etc.

Timetable: Autumn 2022 and ongoing.

3. A single window is needed for placement support

Placements play an important role in achieving LUMID's qualitative targets. Students are required to undertake a placement, usually abroad, with an organisation working with international development issues, so that the student has the opportunity to apply the various tools and theories learned during the first year of the programme in practice. Placements are also a springboard for fieldwork prior to writing their Master's thesis during the programme's final semester. The programme coordinator has dealt with all administrative issues (insurance, contact forms, memorandums of understanding, individual cases, etc.) and the course is convened and taught by other qualified members of staff. The expert group points out that the large number of staff involved has been a source of confusion for students.

Programme management concurs that placements are a significant aspect of LUMID; they attract students to the programme and constitute one of its most important educational assets. Alongside the staff issue highlighted by the expert group, it should also be noted that confusion and stress among students may have been exacerbated by the pandemic, in the context of which the evaluation was also performed. That said, staff coordination related to the placement course requires attention.

Measures

- a) A working group on teaching management skills will be appointed to reconsider how "management skills" are taught on the programme (also see below), including the possibility of introducing a single window for placement courses.

Timetable: Spring 2022, results to be reported at the LUMID dialogue in autumn 2022.

- b) Ensure the continuity of placement course management by recruiting a course coordinator with the potential to lead the course in the long term.

Timetable: Spring 2022

- c) Over the years, the programme coordinator has compiled a document titled Field Semester Guidelines to support students during the placement process.

This document will be simplified to avoid causing confusion among students.

Timetable: Spring 2022

- d) Placement course staff have met on several occasions during and after the evaluation and are currently revising the syllabus in dialogue with the director of studies.

Timetable: Autumn 2021

4. The programme should place greater emphasis on practical management skills

The expert group believes that greater emphasis should be placed on teaching “management skills” during the first year of the programme. According to students, while “management skills” are an important “selling point” and motivation for applying to the programme, the way these skills are currently taught leaves something to be desired. The expert group offers many specific proposals, including reviewing which skills are taught, ensuring coordination throughout the programme all the way to degree projects and, even more importantly, creating a more clearly defined conceptual framework regarding what can be considered “management skills” in LUMID.

Programme management is in agreement regarding the importance of the programme delivering what it promises. While the manner in which the programme conveys “management skills” has changed over the years, the instability of programme leadership has hindered the integration of these changes into the programme. This work needs to begin by clarifying for staff how LUMID defines “management skills” and then choosing which skills students should be taught.

Measures

- a) The aforementioned working group on teaching management skills will explore which management skills are to be selected and how these are to be taught in LUMID, including any necessary restructuring of the programme or individual courses, improved interaction between students and practitioners through lectures, study visits and the Master’s in Development Practice (MDP) network, of which LUMID is a member, the consolidation of the web seminar series Dilemmas of Development that began in 2020, etc. This measure will also be based on wider discussions in the Swedish Development Research Network (SweDev).

Timetable: Spring 2022, with scenarios to be reported to and adopted by LUMID management at the LUMID dialogue in autumn 2022.

- b) The programme syllabus for LUMID and relevant course syllabi will be updated accordingly.

Timetable: Autumn 2022

- c) The LUMID website and fact sheet will be updated accordingly.

Timetable: Autumn 2022

5. The supervision and teaching of research methods needs to be improved

The primary educational ambition of LUMID is to unite theory (research) with practice. While the expert group confirms that LUMID students produce high-quality degree projects, it also points out that the programme structure and teaching of management skills could be more effective in terms of bridging the gap between the programme's goals for management and research.

Unstable programme management has had a negative impact on the development of the supervision and teaching of research methods. Although course syllabi and other documents are continuously updated, this has not always been coordinated and the teaching of research methods needs to be adapted to maintain a high level of quality in education and results.

A working group on teaching research skills will be appointed to explore which research skills are to be selected and how these are to be taught. Particular attention will be paid to research skills of relevance to practitioners working in development and organisational change.

Timetable: Spring 2022, with scenarios to be reported to and adopted by LUMID management at the LUMID dialogue in autumn 2022.

Relevant course syllabi will be updated accordingly.

Timetable: Autumn 2022

The LUMID website and fact sheet will be updated accordingly.

Timetable: Autumn 2022

6. A predominance of literature and perspectives from the Global North

The expert group highlights the importance of the programme including a diversity of perspectives on what “development” actually is. Since the programme was established, the professional and academic field of international development has changed significantly in a number of important ways, so that a greater diversity of “voices”, both academic and professional, can be included in LUMID.

Representation of the existing diversity is an ongoing discussion in LUMID and gender and gender equality perspectives are undoubtedly key assessment criteria for the faculty. The predominance of perspectives from the Global North has also been acknowledged as an issue internationally, and one that must be addressed by leading study programmes in international development worldwide. Programme management agrees that this issue demands continuous and improved institutionalised attention in LUMID.

Measures

- a) One priority for the working groups on teaching management skills and research skills will be the inclusion of diverse perspectives in the work of reconsidering which of these skills are to be selected and how these are to be taught.

Timetable: Spring 2022, with scenarios to be reported to and adopted by LUMID management at the LUMID dialogue in autumn 2022.

- b) The management group will strive to institutionalise a system of checks and balances to deal with this issue in the long term, perhaps through the annual LUMID dialogue, which is to act as a support network for course directors in working with literature lists, syllabi and teaching.

Timetable: Autumn 2022 and ongoing.

- c) Specific courses will be allocated a few hours for the development of literature lists that avoid a predominance of perspectives from the Global North.

Timetable: Spring 2022

This development plan has been decided by the Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences and will be followed up by the Faculty Board after two years.

The development plan is published on the faculty’s website along with the statement of the expert group.