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Environmental Policy for Engineers and Natural Scientists: A teaching module

This paper presents and discusses a teaching module entitled “Environmental Policy for Engineers and Natural Scientists” that is currently being developed in the Department of Environmental Sciences of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology. Its overarching goal is that students of the technical and natural sciences acquire skills for critically examining and assessing complex environmental policy issues and for expressing themselves clearly in writing and speech. The didactic concept of the project follows a blended learning approach and combines individual and web-based studying with team-oriented learning. The students acquire core contents of environmental policy individually in web-classes and write a position paper on a specific topic. Their statements are moderated and used for further debate in seminar sessions. Finally, the students elaborate “expert reports” on a controversial environmental issue in teams. Contents and didactic concept of the teaching module are developed in order to serve four key learning targets, which are: acquiring a sound knowledge of the basics of environmental policy; understanding areas of tension in environmental policy; analysing and assessing environmental policy processes; and strengthening analytical, conceptual and communicative skills for negotiation in environmental policy and for developing an expert opinion. The teaching module responds to the challenge of communication and knowledge transfer between academic education, technical and natural sciences, and environmental policy in practice.