
MINOR IN PLANETARY HEALTH

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in collaboration with Aletta Jacob School of Public Health, and ENLIGHT

Rationale

The extreme weather manifestations of climate change are increasing in intensity and frequency at a faster than predicted pace, all around the globe [1]. This poses new challenges for researching the complex relationship between human and planetary health [1]. What are the mid- and long-term consequences of climate change on human health, beyond catastrophic events? What are the strategies of climate change adaptation that people are adopting in different area of the world and their environmental impact and health consequences?

While these questions become central in many public health research contexts, the specific education in planetary health lags behind. The topic requires an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach, which is enriched by interculturalism and promotes critical thinking via horizontal (peer-to-peer) teaching [2]. A recent research conducted among the students of the BSc in Global Responsibility and Leadership at Campus Fryslân suggested that a transdisciplinary approach to teach Planetary Health can be started as early as during the undergraduate programmes [2].

Minor structure and innovative aspects

The Minor in Planetary Health is designed in collaboration with Aletta Jacob School of Public Health and the ENLIGHT consortium. It is a 30 ECT minor offered in term 1A and 1B at Campus Fryslân. The minor will be open to undergraduate students of any academic background, during their third year of education. The minor will also host exchange students from the ELIGHT consortium.

The minor is focused on the reciprocal interaction between the planet health and human health touching upon how the planet health is threatened by human activity (i.e. pollution) and how planet's reaction is threatening human health (i.e. climate change), without overlooking the unequal distribution of both effects.

The course is transdisciplinary and it is focused on the topic intrinsic interconnectedness, and how this generates intricate systems to be analysed in all their complexity. It is structured around some taught component, some peer-to-peer learning, and some interdisciplinary group work aimed at producing an entry for **virtual idea incubator on co-benefits in health**. Co-benefit in health are interventions aimed at improving the health of both humans and the planet at the same time. Examples are cycling schemes and the promotion of vegetarian diets. The virtual idea incubator will consist of an interactive website where the work of the students can be mapped according to relevant characteristics and traced. This is will be a think-tank open to potential stakeholders which promotes the initiatives and citizens agency in the field of co-benefit in health.

The minor is structured in six courses during nine weeks each, spread over two half terms (term 1A – September/November; and 1B – November end of January) (Figure 1).

Term 1A	Planetary health 5 ECT	Embodied experiences of planetary health 5 ECT	Skill lab 5 ECT
Term 1B	Horizontal learning in Planetary Health 5 ECT	Electives 5 ECT	Group work 5 ECT

Figure 1: Structure of the courses within the minor

The taught/self-taught component

There are a total of four courses centred on taught material or self-taught horizontal learning opportunities.

These are as follows:

The **Planetary Health course** is structured around a number main abstract concepts (i.e. equilibrium, scarcity, common good, tipping point, belonging and risk) which will serve as starting point for a number of mini-lectures of experts coming from many different fields, from ecology to ethics, from governance to epidemiology. This will allow the students to gather knowledge around key concepts of planetary health while appreciating the extent of the overlap and synergies between different disciplines.

Highlight of this course are: 1) the co-presence of at least two teachers from different background in the class interacting among themselves and with the students on a common theoretical concept; 2) space for student reflection, share ideas, and elaborate what they have learnt after each session; 3) a contribution to a collaborative diary.

The **Horizontal learning in Planetary Health course** capitalises on the different backgrounds of the students participating. It is built as a course where students learn how to communicate their own backgrounds while learning from other students. Previous experience showed that students believe this is an ideal approach to develop critical thinking when learning [2]. Students will be clustered according to their background (sociologists, geologists, psychologists, etc) and invited to lead a number of sessions on topics with which they are familiar and which are relevant to planetary health. Some of the topics will be suggested by the teachers, others by the students.

The **Embodied experiences of planetary health** course is a course where a reflective activity on the intimate relationship with the nature will be proposed to the students with activities done at individual and collective level. A field trip will also be organised to reflect of the process of embodiment of the relationship between humans and nature.

A number of **Elective courses** will be available for the students to choose from in order to better connect with their intended personal learning outcome. These will be 4.5 week minicourses so that the students can choose up to two of them within the minor.

The applied component

The applied component of the course is developed in interdisciplinary groups led by the students themselves. The ultimate aim of this component is to create an entry in the **Idea Incubator** website. This component is developed in two stages.

During term 1A the students will be invited to explore common interests in interdisciplinary groups to work on one idea of co-benefit. They will be offered a number of **skill labs** depending on their chosen area of interest and need to producing some proof of concept. This will be followed in term 1B by some time allocated to **group work** to produce their final entry in the idea incubator.

The **co-benefit idea incubator website** will be a dynamic website which will position itself as a think-tank open to potential stakeholders which promotes the initiatives and citizens agency in the field of co-benefit in planetary health [3].

Potential partnership with ENLIGHT

The development of this Minor is currently work in progress. There is room for contribution from many partners institutions and individual academics.

Possible routes of contributions are:

1. Contribute mini-lectures on agreed topics within the course in Planetary Health from many disciplines (social science, environmental science, philosophy and humanities, STEM, medicine, etc.)
2. Develop and teach a 4.5 week mini-course (2.5 ECT) on any topic relevant to Planetary health
3. Give your availability to teach one or more **skill labs for the** applied component.
4. Suggest a contribution to any other teaching activity listed here

References

- 1 Haines A, Frumkin H. *Planetary Health - Safeguarding human health and the environment in the Anthropocene*. Cambridge University Press 2021.
- 2 Dambre C, Strack Diaz J, Orhan R, *et al*. Applying a transdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning Planetary Health – a collective reflection. *Frontiers of Public Health*
- 3 Vineis P, Beagley J, Bisceglia L, *et al*. Strategy for primary prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCD) and mitigation of climate change in Italy. *J Epidemiol Community Health* 2021;**75**:917–24. doi:10.1136/jech-2020-215726