

MASTER'S PROGRAM "REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT" INFORMATION PACKAGE

Professional Field: Earth Sciences

Master's Program: Regional Development

Educational and Qualification Degree: Master

Professional Qualification: Regional Development

Form and Duration of Study: Full-time, two years, 4 semesters

The training in the specialty for the educational and qualification degree "Master" is four semesters with a total workload of 1125 hours, which corresponds to 120 ECTS credits in accordance with state requirements.

The specialty belongs to Professional Field 4.4 Earth Sciences. The training is carried out and administered by the Department "GEOECOS." The professional field and in particular the Master's Program "Regional Development" is accredited until 2025. The department offers training in the educational and qualification degrees "Bachelor" and "Master," as well as the educational and scientific degree "Doctor."

Students from all regions of the country and from other countries are trained. The training is conducted in Bulgarian.

The training provides:

1. In-depth scientific-theoretical and specialized preparation in the specialty.
2. Mastery of the fundamentals of research and applied scientific activity.
3. Conditions for student mobility, including international comparability of the acquired knowledge and skills.
4. Development of the ability to adapt in conditions of social, economic, and technological changes.

The program allows for the formation of skills for:

- independent interpretation of the acquired knowledge and its application in practice-oriented situations,
- critical perception, understanding, and interpretation of theories and concepts, as well as concrete factual information in their support,
- solving specific tasks and making informed managerial decisions through the application of learned methods and techniques,
- applying logical thinking, creativity, and a creative approach in solving non-standard tasks.

The Master's Program "Regional Development" provides solid theoretical-methodological and practical training that builds upon the knowledge and skills acquired in the educational and qualification degree "Bachelor" in Professional Field 4.4 Earth Sciences and other professional fields. The achievement of the educational goals is embedded in the structure and content of the curriculum. It is developed over 4 semesters and includes compulsory and elective disciplines.

The training in the compulsory disciplines during the first and second semesters creates a foundational preparation for students who have graduated from specialties in various professional fields, allowing this foundation to be built upon with knowledge, skills, and competences in the scope of regional development. The compulsory disciplines included in the third and fourth semesters provide in-depth theoretical and practical preparation in the field of regional development and regional policy. Knowledge, skills, and competences are acquired that ensure successful professional realization for graduates. Some disciplines provide qualifications on current issues related to contemporary societal development. Others are practice-oriented, guaranteeing the successful adaptation of future Master's graduates in conditions of accelerated social, economic, and technological changes. The curriculum includes disciplines that enrich the training of geography specialists with the necessary specialized regional, social, economic, territorial planning, urban planning, and managerial knowledge and skills, and expand the range of spheres in which graduates can realize themselves as skilled professionals.

The elective academic disciplines are related to specific areas of applied regional planning and management. They enrich and develop the competencies of regional development students for the practical application of their knowledge.

Students graduate after developing and defending a Master's thesis.

The Master's Program "Regional Development" prepares specialists for professional realization in all areas related to regional development and regional policy. Интердисциплинарният характер на специалността дава възможност на завършилите да се развиват в различни области на обществения живот – в български държавни и международни институции, неправителствени организации и др.

Emphasis is placed on enhancing professional competence and developing skills for making strategic and tactical managerial decisions; working on management programs and strategic documents in the field of regional development; conducting independent specialized scientific research; as well as developing creative abilities for teaching and expert activities.

Graduates of the Master's program acquire the knowledge and practical skills necessary for effective professional development:

- regarding the main patterns and trends in regional development and regional policy in the context of a market economy, globalization, and digitalization of social spheres and processes;
- fundamental knowledge of the main directions in regional studies, territorial planning, urbanization, and economics;
- knowledge and skills in the spirit of European standards for the realization of experts on issues of European regional policy and integration;
- knowledge and skills in the application of regional policies and strategies of the European Union;
- formation of abilities and attitudes for teamwork in various national and international institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The Master's Program "Regional Development" is a solid prerequisite for successful professional realization in all areas and activities related to regional development. Fields of professional realization include all units and institutions dealing with issues of regional

development—on European matters concerning regional development and regional policy in both the public and private sectors.

Graduates of the Master’s Program “Regional Development” can be employed as:

- specialists, experts, advisors, civil servants, and managers of units for managing regional development and regional policy in central state bodies, at regional (district administration), and local (municipal administration) levels of the administrative-territorial organization of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- employees in the Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Environment and Water, Ministry of Social Policy, Ministry of Economy, and others;
- in the structures of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local initiative groups (LIGs), and other organizations working in the field of local self-government and/or dealing with regional development and policy issues;
- researchers in scientific units and institutes and lecturers in higher education institutions in specialties focused on regional development and regional policy;
- in structures of non-profit public organizations, chambers of commerce, corporate representative offices, foreign companies, or those with mixed ownership;
- specialists in consulting firms engaged in the development of strategic documents in the field of regional development and regional policy, and in the development and management of projects at all levels.

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CURRICULUM

Master’s Program: “Regional Development”

First Year			
First Semester	ECTS Credits	Second Semester	ECTS Credits
Fundamentals of Economic and Social Geography	4	Geography of Population and Settlements	7
Geography of the Production and Service Sector	6	Political Geography and Geopolitics	6
Socio-Economic Geography of Bulgaria	6	Physical Geography of Bulgaria	7
Landscape Science	6	Geography of Countries, Part II (European Union)	5
Geography of Countries, Part I	4	Soil Science	5

Hydrology	4		
Total	30	Total	30
Second Year			
Third Semester	ECTS Credits	Fourth Semester	ECTS Credits
Fundamentals of Regional Development	6	Environmentally Friendly Territorial Management	4
Regional Analysis	6	Planning and Regional Policy	5
Application of Geographic Information Systems in Regional Studies	6	Management of Regional Development Projects	3
Human Resource Development and Management	6	Elective Discipline 1 (from Group II)	3
Elective Discipline 1 (from Group I)	3	Master's Thesis Defense	15
Elective Discipline 2 (from Group I)	3		
Total	30	Total	30
Elective Disciplines Group I Students choose two disciplines.		Elective Disciplines Group II Students choose one discipline.	
Territorial Planning	3	Ecological Agriculture and Agrarian Policy	3
Regional and Settlement Infrastructure	3	Development and Management of Problem Areas	3
Development of Rural and Cross-Border Areas	3	Innovations and Regional Development	3
Urbanization Analysis	3	Non-Governmental Organizations and Regional Development	3
Regional and Geoecological Programs	3		

For the entire period of study – 120 credits (compulsory and elective disciplines).

COURSE ANNOTATIONS

COMPULSORY COURSES

FUNDAMENTALS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

ECTS Credits: 4

Semester: I

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Patarchanova

e-mail: emilia_patarchanova@swu.bg

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 1
practical exercise + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The lecture course “Fundamentals of Economic and Social Geography” is a compulsory discipline for students in the Master’s Program “Regional Development.” The theoretical course acquaints students with the scientific and theoretical foundations of economic and social geography. It examines the essence and main concepts of the discipline, its development and evolution over time and space. It introduces students to the world of globalization and mondialization.

Course Content

The macrostructure of the lecture course includes three sections. The first traces the conceptual basis of economic geography and builds upon it with the development of various location schools. The second section is oriented toward the development of social geography—its conceptual apparatus, the evolution of ideas, and the expansion of the economic foundation with new elements. The third section presents contemporary theories and concepts of economic and social geography, research methods, information resources, and others.

GEOGRAPHY OF PRODUCTION AND THE SERVICE SECTOR

ECTS Credits: 6

Semester: I

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Patarchanova

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Weekly Workload: 4 lectures + 1
practical exercise + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The academic discipline “Geography of Production and the Service Sector” is a compulsory course in the training of students in the Master’s Program. The aim of the lecture course is to develop the necessary conceptual and terminological apparatus, to explain the scientific essence of location theories, to familiarize students with the characteristics of economic productions, the forms of territorial organization of economic activities and the factors for their development, to clarify the regional differences in the organization and localization of production and service activities in the global economy, and the importance of geographical studies of economic sectors.

Course Content

The lecture material is structured into four sections. The first section clarifies the subject, objectives, and methods of the academic discipline. It examines the main categories and terms in socio-economic geography related to the production and service sector; the process of forming the national and global economy, its structure, and the social division of labor. The section concludes with a presentation of the main location theories and schools. The following three sections are dedicated to each of the three sectors of the global economy. The main types of production are studied. The significance and impact of the various groups of factors on their contemporary development are clarified; their sectoral and territorial structure is examined, and specific characteristics and regional differences are revealed. Special attention is given to the problems of the territorial organization of services, environmental issues, and the possibilities for sustainable development and regional efficiency. Directions for development are emphasized.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY OF BULGARIA

ECTS Credits: 6

Semester: I

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Vladimir Karadzhov

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Weekly Workload: 4 lectures + 1

practical exercise + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The academic discipline “Socio-Economic Geography of Bulgaria” is a compulsory course for students in the Master’s Program “Regional Development.” Its scientific and academic content is developed and applied in Bulgaria, which allows the educational process to address, explain, and study the general and especially the regional geopolitical, socio-economic, and environmental problems of the country. In this sense, the discipline “Socio-Economic Geography of Bulgaria” is fundamental to the professional competence and practical skills of students graduating with higher geographic education.

Course Content

The discipline “Socio-Economic Geography of Bulgaria” aims to provide students with

basic knowledge in this field and to ensure scientific preparation and competence for their participation in regional studies and forecasting developments, as well as in territorial management programs. The applied significance of the lecture course lies in providing extended scientific preparation, culture, and competence for students, enabling them to build upon this knowledge over time in the field. The practical exercises aim to reinforce the acquired knowledge and expand experimental knowledge and skills for work in modern practice and science.

LANDSCAPE SCIENCE

ECTS Credits: 6

Weekly Workload: 4 lectures + 0

Semester: I

seminars + 1 practical exercises + independent work

Assessment Method: Examination

Type of Exam: Written

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Prof. Dr. Stoyan Nedkov

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Course Annotation

The academic discipline "Landscape Science" aims to provide students with basic theoretical knowledge about the structure and functioning of the Earth's landscape sphere, as well as of natural complexes—landscapes—as a unified and interconnected whole resulting from the combination of all natural components of a given territory. Clarifying the nature and direction of the relationships between individual components is a prerequisite for tracking the sequence of changes in the landscape and forecasting expected transformations.

Course Content

The significance of fundamental scientific concepts within the system of physical-geographical sciences is clarified, while gradually introducing new concepts specific to landscape science. An analysis is made of the main properties and characteristics of the landscape sphere as an object of all geographical research. The most important geographical patterns of the Earth are examined. The differences and specialized aspects of landscape research in the various branches of landscape science are defined. The specific features of the main approaches, methods, and stages of landscape research are clarified. An introduction is provided to the basics of landscape planning and forecasting. The assessment of the resilience of natural components to different types of anthropogenic impact makes it possible to propose measures to limit negative changes in landscapes and the manifestations and consequences of certain adverse natural processes. The acquired knowledge has practical applications in planning the rational use of natural resources, environmental impact assessment (EIA), and territorial-settlement and landscape planning.

GEOGRAPHY OF COUNTRIES – PART I

ECTS кредити: 4

Седмичен хорариум: 2л+0су+1пу

Форма за проверка на знанията: изпит

Вид на изпита: писмен

Семестър: I

Методическо ръководство:

Катедра ГЕООС

Природо-математически факултет

Лектори:

Доц. д-р Александра Равначка

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Course Annotation

The course “Geography of Countries” is one of the core courses in the training of students in the Master’s Program “Regional Development.” Its aim is to provide them with the most comprehensive knowledge possible about the socio-political and socio-economic development of countries around the world. The first part of the course covers all major and economically significant countries on all continents except Europe.

Course Content

The profile of each country includes an assessment of natural conditions and resources, a description of the specifics of the population (number, structure, dynamics, ethnic and religious composition, territorial distribution), and the development of the settlement network; the characteristics of the economy (formation and development of economic sectors, territorial distribution, formation of major economic regions, development of international economic relations). The geopolitical significance of each individual country within its region and its place in the global economy is revealed. In addition to specific knowledge, students acquire skills in applying methods of comparison and spatial-temporal analysis when characterizing the economies of different groups of countries. Emphasis is placed on the relationship between historical and political development in the various regions and their social and economic prosperity.

HYDROLOGY

ECTS Credits: 4

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 1 practical
exercises + independent work

Semester: I

Assessment Method: Examination

Type of Exam: Written

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Krasimir Stoyanov

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Course Annotation

“Hydrology” is one of the core compulsory disciplines for students in the Master’s

Program “Regional Development.” It is studied with the aim of expanding and deepening knowledge about the nature of hydrological processes and their connections with other natural processes and phenomena; about the main methods and approaches used to study the quantitative and qualitative parameters of various water bodies (rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans), and others.

Special attention is given to waters of different origins and the specifics of their formation, to the criteria and indicators for their classification, their genetic structure, the factors determining river runoff and its distribution across the territory of the country, the flow regime and its monthly and seasonal dynamics, the methods for measuring and determining the main characteristics of water currents and their drainage basins.

The academic program provides the necessary knowledge both about global hydrological processes and phenomena, and for carrying out observations, measurements, and procedures for determining and assessing the main runoff parameters for a given territory, as well as about the requirements and prospects for the use and protection of water resources, among others.

Course Content

Classification of waters and water bodies. Formation and regime of groundwater. Classification and distribution. Structure and hydrographic characteristics of rivers and their drainage basins. Genetic structure of river runoff. Factors and conditions for their formation. Hydrometry. Basic concepts. Organization of hydrometric measurements. Measurement of water levels, flow velocity, and other stream parameters. Main methods and tools. Main characteristics of river runoff. Norm, module, runoff coefficients, etc. Intra-annual distribution of river runoff. Minimum runoff. Floods and maximum river runoff. Genesis. Frequency and duration. Temperature regime and water chemistry. Lakes. Reservoirs. World Ocean.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE POPULATION AND SETTLEMENTS OF BULGARIA

ECTS Credits: 7

Semester: II

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Vladimir Karadzhov

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Weekly Workload: 4 lectures + 1 practical exercises + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The lecture course “Geography of the Population and Settlements” is a compulsory discipline for students in the Master’s Program. Through this course, students become acquainted with the scientific and theoretical foundations of demography and the philosophy behind the emergence and development of settlements. The macrostructure of the lecture course includes two sections. The discipline “Geography of the Population and Settlements” aims to provide students with fundamental knowledge in this field and to ensure scientific and practical preparation and competence for their participation in regional studies and forecasting developments, as well as in territorial management programs related to population and settlements.

Course Content

The first section is dedicated to the geography of the population, with emphasis on key terminological concepts, methods in demography, population laws in different societies, and the main characteristics and development trends of the population by continents and individual countries.

The second section—geography of settlements—covers topics with both methodological content and analysis of the emergence of settlements, their evolution, the processes occurring within them, the settlement network, and the latest requirements for their development in accordance with major international documents.

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY AND GEOPOLITICS

ECTS Credits: 6

Semester: II

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Patarchanova

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Weekly Workload: 3 lectures + 1

practical exercise + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The academic discipline “Political Geography and Geopolitics” is one of the compulsory courses in the training of students in the Master’s Program “Regional Development.” The main goal of the lecture course is to acquaint students with the emergence and establishment of political geography and geopolitics as a scientific field within the system of geographical sciences; the stages of its development; key theories and geopolitical schools, and more. Special attention is given to global and regional geopolitical models and their influence on contemporary interstate relations, as well as to the interrelations between political geography, geopolitics, geostrategy, and national security. The course plays a key role in the formation of political culture. It directs students’ attention to the practical application of scientific geopolitical analyses and forecasts.

Course Content

Structurally, the topics are grouped into three sections. The first covers the development and periodization of political geography and geopolitics. It traces the evolution of the main ideas, theories, and schools related to political-geographical knowledge. Emphasis is placed on the more progressive scholars and the directions they established, which have had a significant influence not only on the development of political geography but also on the political culture and behavior of humanity. The second section is dedicated to the emergence and development of the state in geographic space, types, functions, and stability of state borders. A geopolitical classification of the states in the world is substantiated. Topics on the geopolitical balance of the contemporary world, international organizations, the protection of national interests, and the national security of the state are also included. The third section analyzes the major key regions of the world from a political-geographical and geopolitical perspective.

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF BULGARIA

ECTS Credits: 7

Semester: II

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nadezhda Nikolova

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Weekly Workload: 4 lectures + 1 practical exercises + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The academic discipline “Physical Geography of Bulgaria” is one of the important courses in the training of students in the Master’s Program “Regional Development.” Its aim is to provide fundamental knowledge about the history and factors of formation, the specifics and characteristics of the components of the natural environment in Bulgaria—relief, climate, waters, vegetation, animals, and soils—as well as the features of their regional differentiation across the country’s territory.

Course Content

Structurally, the discipline consists of two main parts – component-based and regional characteristics. The first is devoted to the description of the individual natural components, and the second – to the characterization of the physical-geographic regional units at the level of region and subregion. The component-based part provides knowledge about the natural regularities of the formation, spatial distribution, and specific features of the main morphostructures and relief forms, climatic elements, water regime, soils, vegetation cover, and wildlife within the territory of the country, against the background of general geographic patterns manifesting on a pan-European and planetary scale. The regional part provides knowledge about the methods and principles of physical-geographic regionalization, as well as the individual characteristics of the complex regional units of different taxonomic rank. Their genesis, structure, natural resource potential, and the degree and trends of anthropogenic change are clarified.

During the practical classes, students draw, analyze, and compare different versions of both component-based and complex regional schemes. In this way, they consolidate their knowledge and acquire skills for analysis and synthesis in the field of physical-geographic research. This helps to improve their level of preparation for conducting independent research on current issues of rational use of natural resources and environmental protection, with a view to achieving sustainable regional development in the country.

GEOGRAPHY OF COUNTRIES – PART II (EUROPEAN UNION)

ECTS Credits: 5

Semester: II

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 1 practical exercises + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aleksandra Ravnachka

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Course Annotation

The academic discipline "Geography of Countries – Part II (European Union)" is one of the core disciplines in the education of students in the Master's program "Regional Development." The aim of the lecture course is to introduce students to the largest politico-economic organization in Europe – the European Union, including its main institutions and policies. Selected European countries are studied according to an established algorithm, focusing on their resource potential, political and administrative structure, socio-economic development, and regional structure.

Course Content

The lecture material is structured into two sections. The first examines the emergence and stages of enlargement of the EU, the principles, goals, and mechanisms through which it operates. Special attention is given to the institutions that perform coordinating and governing functions within the EU, as well as to the geodemographic and ethno-religious characteristics and structure of the Union's member states. Emphasis is placed on the problems and trends in the development of the EU, especially those related to its most recent enlargements. The significance of the common European policy is assessed as an important stabilizing geopolitical factor.

The second part introduces students to the European countries. Special attention is paid to regional disparities in the level of socio-economic development among countries, the characteristics of natural conditions and resources, their demographic potential, and state structure. The effectiveness of the EU's measures and programs to overcome internal regional disparities among the member states is analyzed. An assessment is provided of the importance of the common European economy in the global economic system, with comparisons made to other major global economic centers and regions. Development directions are outlined.

SOIL SCIENCE

ECTS Credits: 5

Semester: II

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Miroslav Ivanov

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Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 1 practical exercises + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The discipline "Soil Science" is one of the compulsory courses for students in the Master's program. The discipline provides students with basic knowledge about the origin and development of soils. Topics are covered related to soil science as a scientific field and academic

discipline, which studies soil as a natural body and an important part of the ecosystem where terrestrial organisms spread and develop, as well as a primary means of production in agriculture.

The aim of the course is to acquaint students with contemporary concepts in the field of soil science on a global scale and with the changes that have occurred in Bulgarian agriculture in recent years. The general task of soil science as a discipline is, based on scientific knowledge about soils, to ensure their most rational use and conservation, with a view to maximally increasing crop yields and livestock productivity, while strictly adhering to the principles of sustainable development in the sector.

Course Content

Soil formation and development. Soil properties. Soil fertility and classification.

FUNDAMENTALS OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ECTS Credits: 6

Semester: III

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Patarchanova

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Weekly Workload: 3 lectures + 1

practical exercise + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Gergana Nikolova

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Course Annotation

"Fundamentals of Regional Development" is a compulsory academic discipline for students in the Master's Program "Regional Development." The main goal of the course is to familiarize students with the scientific-theoretical and regulatory foundations of regional development and its connection with regional policy. Students gain scientific training and competence for analyzing, organizing the planning process, and the overall activity of regional development, its management, and the resolution of arising problems.

Course Content

The first part is dedicated to the subject, tasks, and main goals set before regional development, as well as to processes related to the development of economic, social, and territorial changes. The second part encompasses topics related to regional development and regional policy of the EU and individual countries, regional planning systems, mechanisms, instruments, and policies in EU member states. Particular emphasis is placed on familiarizing students with various strategic documents used in the field of regional development and regional policy in the European Union. The final part has a methodological orientation. Students become acquainted with the most important methods for researching and analyzing regional development, as well as approaches to identifying existing spatial differences in socio-economic, political, territorial, and cultural aspects.

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

ECTS Credits: 6

Semester: III

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Patarchanova

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Weekly Workload: 3 lectures + 1
practical exercise + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Gergana Nikolova

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Course Annotation

The lecture course is a compulsory academic discipline for students enrolled in the Master's Program "Regional Development." The main goal of the course is to acquaint students with the scientific-theoretical and methodological foundations of regional analysis. Through the presented topics and acquired knowledge, students become familiar with the key methods used in regional research for studying regional development. They are introduced to approaches for identifying existing spatial disparities in the socio-economic, political, territorial, and cultural life of a given area. The applied significance of the lecture course "Regional Analysis" lies in providing the scientific preparation and competence of the master's students in analyzing, organizing, planning, and carrying out the overall activities of regional development and policy, as well as managing and resolving existing issues.

Course Content

At the beginning, students are introduced to the subject, tasks, and main objectives of regional development. Emphasis is placed on current issues of the regional economy, such as: strengthening and structuring the regional economy under contemporary conditions; studying the spatial aspects of development, regularities, principles, and factors of localization; determining the economic, social, and environmental efficiency of the territorial organization of production; the resource provision of territorial units, the protection and reproduction of the natural environment; analysis and evaluation of territorial concentration, specialization, diversification of production, and management of the economy of territorial units. The second part is dedicated to the methods: economic-mathematical methods – correlation analysis, graph theory, cluster analysis; heuristic methods in management, fishbone diagram, problem tree, morphological analysis, typological analysis of complex objects, etc. The third part examines strategic planning and the methods related to this process – SWOT analysis, STEP analysis, Delphi method, brainstorming method, scenario method, as well as modeling of economic and social processes, and others.

APPLICATION OF GIS IN REGIONAL STUDIES

ECTS Credits: 6

Semester: III

Assessment Method: Examination

Weekly Workload: 3 lectures + 1
practical exercise + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aleksandra Ravnachka

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Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. GalinaBezinska

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Course Annotation

The academic discipline “Application of GIS in Regional Studies” presents the general concepts for building and implementing GIS. The lecture course complements the knowledge from the core GIS course covered in the Bachelor's degree by expanding on fundamental theoretical areas. The aim of the course is to provide specific knowledge about the emergence, application, and growing role of GIS in the field of regional planning and the management of various territorial units.

All knowledge is directly oriented toward systems for mapping, management, analysis, and decision-making support in the administration of geographic objects and territories with local or regional distribution. The practical exercises aim to equip students with skills for working with GIS software—structuring the database, drawing (vectorizing) the cartographic content, mastering interpolation algorithms for cartographic modeling, generalization, and other cartographic procedures, and performing spatial (vector and raster) analyses.

Course Content

Theoretical Foundations: The studied material includes fundamental topics related to the development and implementation of GIS, associated with regional development in Bulgaria. Various application areas of GIS in regional planning are examined (economic development and planning, demographic planning, social planning, environment, spatial planning, development and planning of infrastructure networks). Emphasis is placed on the methods for representing three-dimensional objects and surfaces. Of particular importance for students is conducting geographic analyses using GIS when addressing various problems in the management of the country's economic life.

Students are placed in a real-world situation by presenting their vision for the creation of a future GIS project for managing a pre-defined territory and its implementation. The final outcome is a presentation of the developed topic by each student and a discussion.

DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

ECTS Credits: 6

Semester: III

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Vladimir Karadzhov

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Weekly Workload: 3 lectures + 1 practical exercises + 0 seminars + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The course “Development and Management of Human Resources” is a compulsory discipline for students in the Master's Program "Regional Development". Its main goal is to provide students with fundamental theoretical knowledge and practical skills related to the management of human capital in regional, institutional, and organizational contexts.

The course focuses on modern concepts, strategies, and tools for effective human resource planning, recruitment, motivation, development, evaluation, and retention. Particular attention is paid to the influence of regional economic and social conditions on labor market dynamics, workforce mobility, and demographic trends, as well as to human resource strategies within public administration, NGOs, and private sector entities involved in regional development.

Through lectures, discussions, and practical exercises, students acquire competencies necessary for designing and implementing policies for sustainable human resource development and gain the ability to apply analytical approaches and management techniques to real-world regional development scenarios.

Course Content

The curriculum is divided into three main sections:

- **Section One:** Introduction to human resource management – concepts, evolution, and characteristics in the EU and Bulgaria;
- **Section Two:** Human resource systems and approaches – strategic HRM, organizational culture, workforce planning, recruitment, training and development;
- **Section Three:** Practical aspects – performance evaluation, motivation, compensation, career development, organizational behavior, and HR in public and regional administration.

The course aims to equip students with analytical and managerial competencies applicable in regional governance, local administration, NGOs, and the private sector engaged in sustainable regional development and socio-economic planning

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT

ECTS Credits: 4

Semester: IV

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Prof. Dr. Stoyan Nedkov

e-mail: snedkov@swu.bg

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 0

seminars + 1 practical exercises + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The academic discipline “Environmentally Sustainable Territorial Management” is studied by students in the Master's program “Regional Development” with the aim of acquiring knowledge about the principles and methods of applying the ecological approach in regional

policy and territorial management. The topic is particularly relevant in relation to the implementation of the strategic concept of sustainable development and the realization of its main priority “Think globally, act locally” in management policy.

Course Content

The academic discipline acquaints students with the fundamental principles of environmentally sustainable territorial management and with the experience of several European countries – directives, conventions, the system and levels of governance, the coordination of activities, the specifics and instruments for reconciling the requirements for environmental sustainability, economic growth, and social prosperity. The methodology for creating databases and compiling maps for the functional zoning of the territory is examined, along with the justification of measures for maintaining the necessary ecological condition of the natural environment.

PLANNING AND REGIONAL POLICY

ECTS Credits: 5

Semester: IV

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Patarchanova

e-mail: emilia_patarchanova@swu.bg

Weekly Workload: 3 lectures + 1

practical exercise + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Gergana Nikolova

e-mail: gergananikolova@swu.bg

Course Annotation

The lecture course is a compulsory academic discipline for students enrolled in the Master's Program "Regional Development." The main objective of the course is to familiarize students with the scientific and theoretical foundations of regional policy and the mechanisms of its planning. The practical significance of the lecture course is related to the acquisition of competencies by the students associated with the organization, planning, and management of regional development and regional policy of administrative-territorial units at various hierarchical levels.

Course Content

At the beginning, students become familiar with the subject, tasks, and goals of regional planning and policy, with methodological aspects and programming. The following topics are related to the main policies implemented within the European Union. Emphasis is placed on the National Framework of the Cohesion Policy, the National Strategic Reference Framework, and other strategic documents concerning regional development and policy in Bulgaria. Focus is also given to the various operational programs and their complementarity. Part of the lecture material is oriented toward the necessity and essence of strategic planning, modeling of planning, the purpose and scope of the strategic plan, the process of developing the strategy (Development Plan), and the monitoring of its implementation. Students also become familiar with and study in relatively detailed fashion the main issues in planning and managing regional policy.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ECTS Credits: 3

Semester: IV

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aleksandra Ravnachka

e-mail: al.ravnachka@swu.bg

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 0
practical exercise + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Vladimir Karadzhov

e-mail: karadzhov@swu.bg

Course Annotation

The lecture course is a compulsory academic discipline for students enrolled in the Master's Program "Regional Development." The main goal of the course is to acquaint students with the scientific and theoretical foundations of project management for regional development. The practical significance of the lecture course consists in providing scientific training and competence to master's students in analyzing and organizing the planning of the overall activity of managing a regional project.

Course Content

It is dedicated to projects and programs, as well as to the phases of the project cycle, the main principles, the form or structure of the project and the programs. The main part of the lecture material encompasses topics that explain the logical framework, its matrix, the approach, and the stages of planning. Students become familiar with the complete construction of the logical framework for planning complex interventions, their implementation, and management.

ELECTIVE COURSES

TERRITORIAL PLANNING

ECTS Credits: 3

Semester: I

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Miroslav Ivanov

e-mail: m_ivanov@swu.bg

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 0 practical
exercises + 0 seminars + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The academic discipline “Territorial Planning” briefly presents territorial spatial planning as a necessary modern foundation for the proper development of both urban and non-urban areas.

The aim of the lecture course is to provide students with the necessary minimum of systematized knowledge and some creative guidelines, so that they can participate—according to their specialization—in the complex process of planning and developing settlements and their adjacent territories.

Course Content

Section I. Nature and tasks of territorial planning activities:

The lecture material includes a general overview of settlements, with a study of their elements and the areas outside of settlements. Considering the specifics of the specialty, the general spatial structure and zoning of the territories are examined.

Section II. Territorial spatial planning of urban and non-urban areas:

The main types of plans and project materials for the planning, spatial design, and development of urban and non-urban areas are discussed. Attention is paid to the technologies for preparing and implementing the plans.

Section III. Implementation and control of spatial plans:

Students become familiar with the regulatory framework related to territorial planning and the stages of adoption, approval, and amendment of spatial plans.

Given the specificity of the topics discussed, the lecture material is supported with numerous practical examples, including real projects.

REGIONAL AND SETTLEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

ECTS Credits: 3

Semester: I

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Vladimir Karadzhov

e-mail: karadzhov@swu.bg

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 0 practical exercises + 0 seminars + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The course is elective for students enrolled in the Master's Program "Regional Development."

The main objective of the lecture course is to acquaint students with the substantive aspects of the terms used, with the characteristics, importance, and development of infrastructure, with its classification, and with regional and urban infrastructure and its practical application.

In practical terms, the course provides master's students with competencies for analyzing, evaluating, organizing, and planning the overall activities involved in managing regional and urban infrastructure.

Course Content

The first module is dedicated to the economic essence, content, and scope of infrastructure, its classification, types, methodological tools for studying and analyzing infrastructure, management, and efficiency.

The second module brings together topics that explain the infrastructure of urban planning and development.

The third module acquaints master's students with the overall development of technical, social, market, recreational, production, and environmental infrastructure.

DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AND CROSS-BORDER REGIONS

ECTS Credits: 3

Semester: I

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Patarchanova

e-mail: emilia_patarchanova@swu.bg

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 0

practical exercise + 0 seminars + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The academic discipline is focused on providing theoretical and practical problems related to the planning, development, and management of two of the types of functional regions. It builds upon the knowledge and skills from the bachelor's degree and provides specialization for future master's students in regional research, management, and planning of rural and cross-border regions.

Students who complete this course will be able to characterize and analyze the existing hierarchy in the territorial organization of regional planning for the needs of rural and cross-border regions. To propose alternatives for solving problems described in the municipal development plans in their regional part. To work in teams, to create competitive options on a given problem or topic. To create textual and cartographic products for the governing bodies of public administration and business. To propose forecasts in various fields of regional development by offering competitive alternative solutions.

Course Content

The lecture material is structured in two sections. The first is dedicated to rural areas. The topics introduce students to the essence, distinctive features, and the various nuances in the content of the concept of rural areas, both in historical and territorial aspects. From a theoretical perspective, sets of indices, indicators, and criteria for the classification of rural areas are

examined. Attention is given to the national characteristics of these territories in different EU countries. Some of the topics are oriented toward the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Rural Development Policy (RDP), and the regional policy of the EU. Emphasis is placed on their impact on the development of rural areas. Students become familiar with the main programming documents regulating these policies of the Union. They study the experience of different EU countries in RDP and regional policy.

The second section is dedicated to the issues of border regions. The history of their emergence and establishment in the policies and practices of the EU is traced, as well as their significance for European integration and integrated territorial development. Emphasis is placed on their main characteristics and the measures of territorial cooperation. EU programs for territorial cooperation and integrated development are studied. The European and Bulgarian theory and practice related to the development and management of border regions and processes are summarized, with emphasis on the experience of leading European countries involved in this process.

URBANIZATION ANALYSIS

ECTS Credits: 3

Semester: I

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Vladimir Karadzhov

e-mail: karadzhov@swu.bg

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 0 practical exercises + 0 seminars + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The academic discipline "Urbanization Analysis" is an elective course for students enrolled in the Master's program "Regional Development." Its primary goal is to provide students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills for analyzing the processes of urbanization and their impact on spatial, economic, social, and environmental development.

The course covers the main concepts and theories of urbanization, the historical development of urban systems, and the dynamics of urban growth. It places particular emphasis on the spatial structure of urban areas, urban hierarchy, and urban networks, as well as on the functional specialization of cities.

Students become familiar with methods for analyzing urbanization levels and trends, including demographic, economic, infrastructural, and environmental indicators. The course includes the study of contemporary urbanization challenges such as suburbanization, re-urbanization, urban sprawl, shrinking cities, and the sustainable development of urban areas.

In addition, attention is paid to urban planning models and the interaction between cities and their surrounding territories. Practical exercises focus on applying methods for spatial

analysis and cartographic representation of urban structures, as well as on conducting case studies of specific urban regions.

The acquired competencies enable students to participate in the assessment, planning, and management of urban development at local, regional, and national levels.

Course Content

The first module is dedicated to the subject, tasks, and main goals set for settlement development, including aspects such as the sustainability of emerging processes during expansion, planning, and the implementation of urban planning norms.

The second module brings together topics explaining localization activities in the organization of residential areas, landscaping, cultural and historical heritage, sports and recreation, social services, technical infrastructure and facilities, the development of residential zones, and central urban areas in the context of environmentally sustainable settlement planning.

The third module introduces master's students to the planning and dimensioning of non-urbanized areas – agricultural, forested, disturbed territories, and areas occupied by technical infrastructure.

REGIONAL AND GEOECOLOGICAL PROGRAMS

ECTS Credits: 3

Semester: II

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Prof. Dr. Emilia Varadinova

e-mail: emilia.varadinova@swu.bg

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 0

practical exercise + 0 seminars + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The academic discipline "Regional and Geoecological Programs" provides students in the Master's Program "Regional Development" with knowledge and competencies related to current European and national programs focusing on the development of territory, different types of functional regions, urbanized areas, and more. Special attention is given to the regional and ecological approach in regional policy and territorial management. The subject matter is particularly relevant as it is closely linked to the implementation of the sustainable development concept through the realization of successful best practices, aligned with the principle "Think globally, act locally."

Course Content

The academic discipline introduces students to the main characteristics of regional and geoecological programs at both the European and national levels, the principles of environmentally sound territorial management, and the potential of these programs to impact regional development and regional policy. In a practical context, the course discusses the experience of European countries in implementing such programs and their effects on specific

territories, their assessment by beneficiaries, and the approaches and tools used to balance the requirements for environmental sustainability, economic growth, and social prosperity.

DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF PROBLEM AREAS

ECTS Credits: 3

Semester: II

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emilia Patarchanova

e-mail: emilia_patarchanova@swu.bg

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 0

practical exercise + 0 seminars + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The course builds upon the knowledge and skills acquired during the Bachelor's level, providing specialization for future Master's graduates in regional studies of problem areas, with a focus on the management and forecasting of the most important socio-economic processes of public life.

Problem-based regionalization is a specific method that will find increasing application in the practice of regional development in Bulgaria at all levels. It is an element of modern regional policy and its scientific support. Foreign experience is utilized, particularly the regionally oriented socio-economic research in EU countries. Common problematic regional schemes for the European Union are examined, with attention also given to national specificities and policies in the individual EU member states.

Course Content

In general, the subject matter is divided into three sections. The first is theoretical and introduces students to the essence, principles, and approaches of problem-based regionalization. The second thematic section focuses on understanding the development policy experience for these informal territorial communities within the European Union. In the concluding section, students examine in more detail the Bulgarian legacy, becoming familiar with the contemporary theoretical foundations and practical solutions related to problem-based regionalization in Bulgaria.

A central focus of the course is placed on socially significant socio-economic problems and their regional study in our country. Students learn about the outputs of regional policy and planning for the development and management of the country and its regions in the past and present. The course thoroughly examines the processes of planning, development, and management of regions at various territorial levels (according to the NUTS classification), with special emphasis on targeted intervention areas – their types, territorial scope, and substantive characteristics.

INNOVATIONS AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ECTS Credits: 3

Semester: II

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Vladimir Karadzhov

e-mail: karadzhov@swu.bg

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 0 practical exercises + 0 seminars + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The lecture course is an elective academic discipline for Master's students majoring in "Geography." The main objective of the course is to acquaint students with the scientific-theoretical and practical foundations of innovations and technology transfer in the development of regional policy. The macrostructure of the lecture course includes three sections. The practical significance of the lecture course "Innovations and Regional Development" consists in providing scientific training and competence to Master's students in analyzing, organizing, and planning the overall activity of implementing and managing innovations and technology transfer.

Course Content

The first module is dedicated to the economic essence, content, and scope of innovations in the EU and in the Republic of Bulgaria. The second module brings together topics explaining the transfer and application of new technologies, the cooperation between the scientific-technological sector and business, the measures for implementing the innovation strategy at the regional level, financial and non-financial instruments, as well as the competitiveness of Bulgarian enterprises. The third module acquaints Master's students with improving knowledge and innovations for growth, underdeveloped regions and innovations, project financing, subsidies for scientific-technological projects, and subsidies for SMEs, as well as the stages for implementing a financial scheme for an innovation project.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ECTS Credits: 3

Semester: II

Assessment Method: Examination

Methodological Supervision: Department of Geography, Ecology, and Environmental Protection, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Lecturers:

Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Gergana Nikolova

e-mail: gergana_nikolova_77@abv.bg

Weekly Workload: 2 lectures + 0 practical exercises + 0 seminars + independent work

Type of Exam: Written

Course Annotation

The lecture course is an elective academic discipline for students enrolled in the Master's Program "Regional Development." The main objective of the course is to acquaint students with the essence and conditions for the emergence and functioning of NGOs in relation to the implementation of regional policy for successful regional development. The lecture course is structured into four sections.

The applied significance of the course "NGOs and Regional Development" lies in providing scientific training, competencies, and skills to master's students for studying the important interconnection between the development of the civil sector as a factor for the democratic advancement of the regions, in line with addressing contemporary societal issues. The course also familiarizes students with standards for good governance of civil society organizations.

Course Content

The first module is related to clarifying the role, importance, goals, and means of achieving them for NGOs. A significant place in the conceptual framework of the content is devoted to the argumentation of the component "civil sector" in regional development as an example of a democratic vision of contemporary society.

The second module examines the structural model of the establishment and functions of NGOs in the context of regional development. It includes familiarization with the Law on Non-Profit Legal Entities and the legal framework for NGOs.

The third module introduces master's students to the types of NGOs. Emphasis is placed on the differences between civil organizations according to the nature of their activities—those working on short-term issues, human rights organizations, those defined by regional scope, etc. The goal is to highlight the practical and applied nature of NGOs in the specific development of regions, taking into account their resource capabilities and their influence in the implementation of regional policy for local development.

The fourth module explores the interactive connections between NGOs and modern requirements for regional development. The module presents in detail the requirements for the development of the civil sector depending on contemporary information technologies and marketing concepts, which underpin the goals of NGOs.