



SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

SFGS390 Making foreign aid work: Managing tensions between top-down and bottom-up approaches, 5 credits

Framgångsrikt bistånd: Spänningen mellan top-down och bottom-up ansatser vid biståndets genomförande och implementering, 5 högskolepoäng

Third-cycle level / Forskarnivå

Confirmation

This syllabus was confirmed by the Department of Global Studies on 2022-12-07, and was last revised on 2022-12-09. The revised course syllabus is valid from Spring semester 2023.

Responsible Department

School of Global Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences

Entry requirements

In order to be eligible for the course the applicant must fulfil the general entry requirements for postgraduate studies. A good command of English is vital.

The course is open for PhD students in Peace and Development Research or other relevant fields of study, or equivalent.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course, the third-cycle student is expected to be able to:

Knowledge and understanding

- Identify and describe the strength and weaknesses of various top-down and bottom-up approaches to public policy in general and foreign aid in particular.
- Identify the role of the most important actors throughout the policy cycle in various policy fields, types of foreign aid and recipient contexts.

Competence and skills

- Analyze some of the most influential top-down and bottom-up foreign aid approaches and strategies.

- Use theories and concepts to understand and analyze the management and implementation of foreign aid strategies across various policy fields, types of foreign aid and recipient contexts.

Judgement and approach

- Critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the most influential top-down and bottom-up foreign aid approaches and strategies.
- Critically evaluate the drivers, dynamics and effects of different foreign aid strategies across policy fields, types of foreign aid and recipient contexts.

Course content

There is an inherent tension between top-down and bottom-up approaches in the management and implementation of foreign aid. Donors generally want control over goals, funds, policies and results, which has generated a wide range of top-down approaches to foreign aid, as illustrated by strategies related to development planning, public management and various results-based management approaches. At the same time, proponents of bottom-up approaches emphasize that foreign aid will work better by giving field agents the authority and power to use their own discretion and judgement in the delivery of foreign aid. Proponents of bottom-up foreign aid also emphasize the need for context-sensitivity and recipient ownership or the role of local institutions for achieving effective and sustainable development.

This course deals with the tensions between top-down and bottom-up approaches to foreign aid and practical solutions to overcome the contradictions. While the main focus is placed on conventional Official Development Assistance (ODA), consideration is also given to multilateral foreign aid (e.g. UN, EU), new donors (e.g. China and India) as well as non-state development agencies. The whole policy cycle is taken into account, from agenda-setting and policy design to policy implementation and evaluation.

The course consists of two main parts. The first part identifies and discusses the most important top-down and bottom-up approaches that currently dominate the debate in both the academic and policy-making communities. The second part provides students with hands-on and concrete knowledge about why and under what circumstances top-down and bottom-up approaches to foreign aid are likely to be effective across different policy fields, contexts, types of donors and aid modalities.

Types of instruction

The main forms of teaching on the course are seminars, lectures and group work.

Language of instruction

The course is given in English.

Grades

The grade Pass (G) or Fail (U) is given in this course.

Types of assessment

The examination will be conducted through a written assignment with an oral presentation, active workshop participation (including a group work) and an examination essay.

- Written assignment and oral presentation (1 HEC)
- Active workshop participation and group work (1 HEC)
- Examination essay (3 HEC)

Pass is required on all three parts of the examination for a Pass on the course as a whole.

If a student, who has failed the same examined component twice, wishes to change examiner before the next examination, a written application shall be sent to the department responsible for the course and shall be granted unless there are special reasons to the contrary.

In cases where a course has been discontinued or has undergone major changes, the student shall normally be guaranteed at least three examination occasions (including the ordinary examination) during a period of at least one year from the last time the course was given.

Course evaluation

The course coordinator is responsible for systematically and regularly collecting the students' views of the course, and for making sure that the results of the evaluations are taken into consideration when developing the course.