

School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability  
Faculty of Environment  
University of Waterloo

# ERS 215

## Environmental and Sustainability Assessment I

**Instructor:**

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**Office Hours:** Please see LEARN announcements for posted times (due to this being an online course, on campus office hours will be by appointment only, weekly office hours will be via email)

**TAs:**

See the online course site for TA contact details.

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**Description:**

An introduction to processes and techniques for incorporating environmental considerations in planning and evaluating proposals for future undertakings that may have significant social and ecological effects. The course provides an overview of methodologies for, and controversies surrounding, the design and conduct of environmental impact studies, and the testing of reported findings. The main focus is on the purposes and design of environmental assessment processes, with particular reference to the Canadian federal and Ontario provincial environmental assessment systems, and the evolution of environmental assessments toward a sustainability-oriented framework. Further, students will get the opportunity to develop their skills on how to write a briefing note to a government decision maker. This assignment will develop the skills to quickly (concisely) and effectively convey key issues surrounding CEAA 2012.

**Intended Learning Outcomes:**

*By the end of this course, students should be able to:*

- Define the aims and objectives of environmental assessments, as well as key terms and concepts in EA
- Identify the role and relevance of EA as a potential venue that can contribute to sustainability;
- Describe the different steps and components of an EA process, particularly in Canada;
- Apply EA principles for best practices to case studies and critically analyze the strengths and weaknesses of environmental assessments; and
- Identify the important relationship between EAs and other environmental planning and management instruments (i.e., SEA, CEA, SA).
- An essential component of the course is developing the skills to write a briefing note to a government minister. Students will develop the skills to quickly (concisely) and effectively convey the key issues surrounding CEAA 2012 to a government discussion maker. Therefore, all students must complete the briefing note assignment.

**Approach:**

Modules will be used to provide an overview of key topics and also to highlight important themes. Key topics and themes will be elaborated on through videos and by regular attention to case studies. Assigned readings throughout the semester are critical for providing additional depth and breadth. Quizzes and the assignment provide an opportunity for integrating key topics and themes, as well as for linking them with the broader scholarly literature on environmental assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> When communicating via email, please identify the course (e.g. "ERS 215") in the subject line. Make sure to use your UW account.

**Website:** <http://learn.uwaterloo.ca> (LEARN, ERS 215)

You will need to access the course website frequently, as some of the course material will be made available and managed through LEARN (Desire2Learn)

### **Required Readings:**

Noble, Bram (2014). **Introduction to Environmental Impact Assessment: a Guide to Principles and Practice**, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Other required readings will be posted to the course website and will be available through course reserves.

### **Communication with Instructors and TAs**

Students' UW email accounts will be used for all communication. Students are responsible to check their UW email and LEARN accounts regularly. All course announcements will be posted to LEARN. An effort will be made by the TAs and the Instructor to deal with email requests, within two business days of receipt (48 hours). The instructor does not respond to emails outside of regular working hours (M-F ~8:30 AM- 5:50 PM). If you require a timelier response, post your question to the LEARN discussion board. The courses LEAD TA will be monitoring the discussion board daily. Further, other students in the course might respond quicker. All emails and communications with the TAs and course instructor must be respectful and professional. Any unprofessional and disrespectful emails will be reported.

Access to LEARN and Online Content for the Course:

Please note it is your responsibility to ensure that your computer is up to date and compatible.

### **IMPORTANT: Technical Support**

If you are unable to access Waterloo LEARN or course content you must contact Technical Support at [learnhelp@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:learnhelp@uwaterloo.ca). **Include your full name, WatIAM user ID, student number, and the course name and number.** Technical support is available during regular business hours, Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 4:30 PM (Eastern Time). Further, trouble shooting for LEARN can be found here: <https://uwaterloo.ca/learn-help/students>. Often, if you log out of LEARN and exit your web browser and then log back in, you can access LEARN again. Remember that your textbook has a lot of course material in it – so you can access a lot of course content without LEARN, should you need to study etc. Ultimately, if access issues are not due to any University of Waterloo changes/updates, it is your responsibility to fix the problem.

### **Course and University Policies**

#### ***Missed Examinations:***

All exams are mandatory, and thus, students are expected to be present at the time of each exam. If you miss an exam you must provide reasonable documentation explaining the reason for your absence, degree of incapacitation, dates covered by the note to be considered for an alternative arrangement. Please make a copy of this note and give the copy to your instructor by hand or scanned and sent by email (email to [cbarbeau@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:cbarbeau@uwaterloo.ca))

#### ***Requests for Extension on Briefing Note Assignment: Regular Deadline and Extended Deadline***

There is an extended deadline available to you for your briefing note assignment. You have 7 days past the assignment regular due date to submit your briefing note assignment with a 10% late penalty total. This extended deadline is available to everyone and therefore you do not need to ask me for an extension. After the 7 day extended deadline assignments will no longer be accepted. No further extensions will be granted.

#### ***Note for Students with Disabilities:***

The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

**Religious Observances:**

Students need to inform the instructor at the beginning of term if special accommodation needs to be made for religious observances that are not otherwise accounted for in the scheduling of classes and assignments.

**Academic Integrity:**

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See ([www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity)).

Students who are unsure what constitutes an academic offence are requested to visit the on-line tutorial at:

<http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ait/>.

**Discipline:**

A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>. For typical penalties, check Guidelines for Assessment of Penalties, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm>

**Grievance:**

A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>. When in doubt please contact your Undergraduate Advisor for details.

**Appeals:**

A decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 – (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should defer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals) <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm>

**Consequences of Academic Offences:**

Students are strongly encouraged to review the material provided by the university’s Academic Integrity office. See (<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infoacad/Students/index.html>).

**University Policies: Plagiarism**

Please familiarize yourself with the University of Waterloo’s policy dealing with plagiarism. Be especially careful when using materials from the internet, and be aware that software available to instructors can be used to check student submissions for plagiarism (e.g. www.Turnitin.com). Plagiarism offences are normally treated quite seriously by the University and can result in significant penalties being assessed (e.g. failing grade on an assignment, repeating a course, suspension or expulsion).

**Definition of Plagiarism:** “The act of presenting the ideas, words or other intellectual property of another as one's own.” - Source: University of Waterloo, Policy 71.

**To Avoid Plagiarism**

The use of other people's work *must* be properly acknowledged and referenced in all written material such as take-home examinations, essays, research papers, laboratory reports, work-term reports, design projects, statistical data, computer programs and research results. The properly acknowledged use of sources is an accepted and important part of scholarship. Use of such material without complete and unambiguous acknowledgement, however, is an offence under Policy 71.

**Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing** (source: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/1/>)

These three ways of incorporating other writers' work into your own writing differ according to the closeness of your writing to the source writing.

- **Quotations** must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author with page number.
- **Paraphrasing** involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly.

- **Summarizing** involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material.

**Turnitin:**

Plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) will be used to screen assignments and review questions in this course. Turnitin is primarily a plagiarism detection tool, but can also be used to help students understand academic integrity in written assignments. Turnitin generates ‘originality reports’ on student submissions, which can provide instructors with information about plagiarized sources, but the reports can also be used to help students understand the proper use of quotation marks, how to cite sources properly, and how to paraphrase.

Students will be given an option if they do not want to have their assignment screened by Turnitin. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin in this course. NOTE: any student not wishing to submit materials for Turnitin detection must contact the instructor within the first week of the term, to arrange for an alternate format for the review questions and assignment – including an annotated bibliography for each assignment.

**Unclaimed Assignments**

Unclaimed assignments will be retained until one month after term grades become official in quest. After that time, they will be destroyed in compliance with UW’s [confidential shredding procedures](#).

**EVALUATION:**

Your final grade will be based on one assignment, the completion of module comprehension questions/activities, two LEARN quizzes and a final exam. The professor determines the content and establishes the grading rules for all assignments and quizzes. The teaching assistants will assist the instructor with grading course work. The first quiz is mostly based on material covered in Modules 1 - 4 (including all readings for each module). The second quiz is mostly based on the second part of the course material (Modules 4 – 6, including all readings). Please note, that some key concepts are carried throughout the entire course, and therefore, can appear on both quizzes and the final exam. Both quizzes will include multiple choice and true/false questions. **These quizzes are to be done independently and are closed book.**

<i>Course Component</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<u>LEARN Quiz 1</u> (Opens: October 2 <sup>nd</sup> @ 12:00AM EST and Closes October 4 <sup>th</sup> @ 11:55 PM EST)	<b>15%</b>
<u>LEARN Quiz 2</u> (Opens: October 30 <sup>th</sup> @ 12:00AM EST and Closes November 1 <sup>st</sup> @ 11:55 PM EST)	<b>15%</b>
<u>Assignment: Briefing Note</u> (Due: November 10 <sup>th</sup> @ 11:55 PM)	<b>25%</b>
<u>Module Review Questions/Activities</u> (12 total) (Refer to the online course site for more information on the module review questions – Due each Sunday @ 11:55 PM)	<b>20%</b>
<u>Final Exam</u> (During final exam period)	<b>25%</b>

Numeric grades on a scale from 0-100 are used in grading all assignments at the University of Waterloo. The following list will give you an idea of the basis upon which numeric grades are assigned:

- >90%** Work that shows a high level of initiative and is clearly above and beyond what is expected. Referencing, style, grammar/spelling, content and the development of ideas are all superior. (similar to A and A+ in the previous system)
- 80-89%** Work that shows good initiative and is above what is expected. Referencing, style, grammar/spelling, content and the development of ideas are all good. (Similar to B+ and A- in the previous system)

70-79%	Work that shows initiative and is about what is expected, but one or more problems are evident in referencing, style, grammar/spelling, content and/or the development of ideas. (Similar to B- and B in the previous system)
60-69%	Work that does not demonstrate initiative, has a series of problems in referencing, style, grammar/spelling, content and/or the ideas, and overall, does not fully convince the reader that the topic has been well considered (Similar to C-, C and C+ in the previous system)
50-59%	Work that is substandard/sloppy in places, has many problems in referencing, style, grammar/spelling, content and/or the development of ideas, and overall, raises more questions in a reader's mind than the work answers. (Similar to D-, D and D+ in the previous system)
40-49%	Work that is of consistently poor quality, demonstrates gaps in comprehension of the assigned material, and/or indicates that not enough time was taken to properly address the assignment. (Similar to F and F+ in the previous system)
<40	Work that is clearly of poor quality, demonstrates a lack of comprehension of the assigned material, shows little attempts at a personal development of ideas or efforts to back up arguments with suitable evidence, and/or indicates that the work was completed 'at the last minute'

### **Requirements, Late assignments, Grade Penalties and Special Considerations:**

#### ***Readability and Clarity:***

Students are expected to present well organized, and properly written work. Penalties of up to **25%** may be applied in cases where readability and/or clarity are inadequate. There are campus resources to help with your writing. Please make an appointment with the writing and communication centre (<https://uwaterloo.ca/writing-and-communication-centre/>).

#### ***Lateness penalty:***

All assignments are due on the date set by the professor. The briefing note is an essential learning component of the course so you must hand in the assignment to receive a mark for the course. There is a 10% penalty off the final mark of the briefing note assignment for assignments submitted up to 7 days past the due date. ***Assignments submitted past the 7 day extended due date deadline will not be accepted and a mark of zero will be given. No extensions will be granted.*** The time of the quizzes and review module questions are set in the course. You are required to complete the quizzes and comprehension questions in the timeslots given. ***No extensions or exceptions will be granted for missed quizzes and review module questions.***

Please ensure that you are diligent in ***backing up computer files*** and making ***draft copies*** of all assignments, as computer/disk failures, printer problems, etc. will **not normally be considered a valid reason to waive the late assignment deduction**. NOTE: Perhaps the easiest way to prevent computer file loss is to send to yourself an email attachment of your assignment after each significant work session.

### **Course Notes: Information for Students Using LEARN**

LEARN is a web-based course management system that enables instructors to manage course materials (posting of course content, notes, etc.), interact with their students (drop boxes for student submissions, on-line quizzes, discussion boards, course e-mail etc.), and provide feedback (grades, assignment comments etc.). The degree to which LEARN is utilized in a particular course is left to the discretion of the instructor and therefore, you may find a large variance in how LEARN is being used from one course to another.

#### ***Logging Into LEARN***

Since LEARN is a web-based system, you will need a browser. Minimum requirements include:

##### *PCs running Windows:*

- Internet Explorer 7 or 8 ([Download Version 8](#))
- Firefox 2 or 3 ([Download Firefox](#))

##### *MACs running OS X:*

- Firefox 2 or 3 ([Download Firefox](#))

Once you have started up your browser, type in the following URL: <http://learn.uwaterloo.ca>. Provide your Quest/UWdir userid and password (case sensitive). Once you have logged in, you should see a list of your LEARN courses under the Courses header bar. Clicking on the course name will take you to that course.

**Multimedia Notes (DVDs, Videos, in-class internet-based videos, etc).**

Approximately 15% of course content is delivered through multi-media materials (DVDs, online audio or video clips), and ALL of this material is valid testing/quiz material. Therefore, each student should take comprehensive notes.

**PowerPoint Viewer**

The web addresses for Microsoft PowerPoint viewers (for those who do not have PowerPoint on their computers) is:  
<http://www.microsoft.com/download/en/details.aspx?id=13>

**Weekly Module Review Questions (20% of final mark)  
(Due each Sunday @ 11:55 PM EST in LEARN Dropbox)**

**\*\*The will be no extensions granted for module review questions. The drop boxes are set to close at the deadline.**

You have weekly module review questions (12 total – \*note module 12 and 13 are combined into one week of review questions, refer to the course website for due date). **It is vital that you reference with in text-citations** (ex. the course was first run in the Winter Term of 2019 (Barbeau, 2019)). **You must include a reference list at the very end of the module review questions.** If you fail to use in-text citations and/or you do not include a full reference list you will get a zero for that module.

It is not sufficient to simply cite the module content or the course instructor (the instructor often cites other sources, so go to them and reference them). You can reference the textbook, but make sure you reference it properly. There are different authors for each chapter. See the APA reference guide posted to the course site. Regarding the use of quotes, you can use some quotes, but use them sparingly, and make sure you include a page number with the citation. The TAs want to see you are critically thinking about the key concepts from the week's modules and readings. This is an opportunity to show some synthesis of concepts and critical perspectives.

Turnitin will be used to screen all module review question responses, not only between all students in the class, but all students from previous classes. This to be *individual work* and any evidence of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and will be immediately reported.

**QUIZZES (two quizzes each worth 15% of final grade)**

You will have two quizzes throughout the term in ERS 215. These quizzes will be multiple choice/true false and taken on LEARN. **These quizzes are to be done independently and are closed book** – therefore, you are not to use any sources, modules information or your textbook. See LEARN for quiz dates.

**ASSIGNMENT: Briefing Note (25% of final grade)**

The Briefing Note Assignment is worth 25% of your final grade. This is an essential course component. You will write a briefing note to the Environment Minister regarding improvements to the current CEAA 2012 (federal EA process).

- **IMPORTANT:** You should present your paper in an academic research paper format, based on adequate and appropriate reading and reflection, and it must acknowledge intellectual indebtedness through proper citations.

**Required format for your assignment (marks will be deducted if these guidelines are not followed):**

- Your assignment must have a plain title page with the title of your assignment, your name, course number (ERS 215), the date, your student number, and the term instructor's name.
- Include your name & student ID number on each page (inserting this into a 'header' is the easiest way to go!).
- Please number all pages
- Typed/word-processed, with 1" margins.
- Submit your assignment as a word doc.
- Please read over further instructions/information posted on the online course site

**Important.** You are responsible for ensuring your assignment is uploaded correctly into the LEARN dropbox. Failing to submit your assignment will result in late penalties. Double check that your submission uploaded by 11:55 PM (EST).

### ***Briefing Note for the Minister***

In this **individual** assignment, you will prepare a briefing note suggesting how to improve CEAA 2012. The briefing note must be addressed to the Cabinet Minister (Minister of Environment and Climate Change). You should include at least 3 main points that should be addressed during a possible review of the current CEAA.

Use the “How to Write Briefing Notes” document and briefing note examples (LEARN) as guidance for assignment 1.

- **Length:** The maximum page length for this assignment is 3 pages (single-spaced)

**Deadline: Electronic copy (MS Word file):** November 10<sup>th</sup> @ 11:55 p.m. (LEARN dropbox).

NOTE: It is critical to provide **evidence** throughout your paper. Thus, you will need to cite all ideas, facts/dates, identified trends, etc. that are not yours throughout your paper. Papers written without reference to appropriate evidence **will have many marks deducted**. It may be helpful to think of writing your paper like a lawyer argues a court case: a systematic presentation of documented evidence that eventually convinces the ‘jury’ (i.e., the reader) to believe you. Do not just cite the modules or the course instructor.

#### ***Handing in your Assignments:***

- **\*\*You are responsible for making sure that your professor receives your work.** The assignment is to be submitted via LEARN dropbox using the course website.
- **Lost or misplaced assignments:** It is your responsibility to make more than one electronic copy of your work. Excuses are not accepted in the case of crashed computer and lost or misplaced work.

#### ***Tips/Hints:***

- Seek out help from your TAs – they are there to help you
- Begin well in advance of the deadline – last minute work is usually obvious to markers.
- As you write, use the concepts, language and ideas presented in module materials as a source of inspiration/discussion in your assignment.
- Create sub-headings for each of the main sub-sections (you can remove these or keep these later...they are intended as a guide to writing to ensure you address each sub-section!).
- Cite all materials/information you obtain from sources other than your own personal knowledge. The **APA reference** format should be used for all references, including electronic sources.
- Proofread and spell-check your work before submission, please.
- Read “How to Write Briefing Notes” posted in your briefing note resources online. Also, read over the examples of good briefing notes from previous students.

#### ***Marking of your Module Review Questions and the Briefing Note Assignment:***

Marking will follow the marking rubrics posted to the course website. If you have questions regarding your mark, you must first discuss this with your TA. You must email your TA with a specific concern and a written response as to why you believe you deserve more marks. The fact that you are simply not happy with your mark is not a valid reason for asking for a re-mark. If you still have questions/concerns after talking with your TA, and you would like the instructor to remark your assignment or module review questions, please note, that a re-mark will be for the entire assignment/module - possibly resulting in a higher or lower mark. *You have 14 days from the time the mark is posted to ask for a re-mark.*