

Land Evaluation (I002699)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2025-2026

A (semester 2)	English	Gent	peer teaching lecture group work seminar independent work
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Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Derycke, Anja	LA20	staff member
Verdoodt, Ann	LA20	lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

	crdts	offering
Master of Science in Sustainable Land Management (main subject Land and Groundwater Management)	5	A
International Master of Science in Soils and Global Change (main subject Physical Land Resources and Global Change)	5	A
International Master of Science in Soils and Global Change (main subject Soil Ecosystem Services and Global Change)	5	A
Master of Science in Sustainable Land Management (main subject Urban Land Engineering)	5	A
Exchange Programme in Bioscience Engineering: Land and Forest management (master's level)	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

soil quality, urban soil functions, land suitability, ecosystem services, GIS

Position of the course

Land evaluation is about the integrated assessment of climate, topography, soil and land cover. As such, it aims at evaluating (1) the sustainable performance of specific land use types and/or (2) the delivery of productive and regulatory ecosystem services. Land evaluation therefore supports strategic and tactical decision making.

It builds on general knowledge of ecology, plant physiology, climate and soil science, and deepens the insights in applied soil science. Understanding how soils co-determine the potential of the land for ecosystem service delivery and the requirements for land management is key to this application field.

Many land use and management decisions, taken at spatial scales ranging from the global to the enterprise level, rely on land evaluation approaches. Either the client has a particular land use in mind for expansion or optimisation, or land use/management changes are needed to solve problems with land degradation. In order to respect the multifunctional character of land and soils in particular, some tools assess the inherent capacity of land to deliver various kinds of soil functions, before taking land use decisions.

Land evaluation entails many different land uses and is applied in various natural and man-made ecosystems.

Contents

Students learn how to use the land evaluation terminology and concepts and how to judge and apply a number of existing tools. Interpretation of results is oriented towards land use planning, land consolidation and soil protection policies at local and regional scales.

The following aspects will be addressed:

- Origin, terminology, principles of land evaluation
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- Soil quality
- Urban soil functions/ecosystem services
- Land suitability
- Dealing with uncertainty in land evaluation

Initial competences

The student

- has insight in the composition of soils, can explain the behaviour of soils on the basis of their physico-chemical properties, and understands classification of soils on a basic level.
- has basic knowledge of meteorological processes.
- can perform spatial analyses using GIS software on digital maps representing vector and raster data structures

Final competences

- 1 Correctly use the specific terminology and principles in land evaluation techniques when communicating with experts.
- 2 Explain the selection and evaluation of different land characteristics or soil quality indicators as they are used in existing land evaluation techniques.
- 3 Critically evaluate the basic concepts, advantages/disadvantages, and output quality of existing land evaluation techniques, and use this to decide upon their applicability
- 4 Apply existing land evaluation techniques to evaluate land suitability, delivery of soil functions or soil quality
- 5 Judge the environmental and socio-economical uniqueness of each land evaluation study, and translate it into adapted land evaluation techniques.
- 6 Integrate soil degradation and climate change scenarios with land suitability assessment in a GIS environment
- 7 Display interest, insights and a critical attitude in/towards recent evolutions in land evaluation technologies and applications
- 8 Report and communicate (own) land evaluation research methods and results clearly, unambiguously, soundly, and critically
- 9 Collaborate with fellow students in a (interdisciplinary) team to solve land evaluation assignments

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Group work, Seminar, Lecture, Independent work, Peer teaching

Extra information on the teaching methods

Seminar: series of guided exercises (individual or in group)

Peer teaching: the groups present a scientific paper of their own interest (related to land evaluation) to the class.

Independent work: homework, being preparation of practical sessions by watching short instruction video's or reading guidelines and - when needed - finalisation of individual reports

Group work: homework being finalisation of group reports and preparation of microteaching activity

Study material

Type: Syllabus

Name: Land Evaluation
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Number of Pages : 300
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No
Additional information: Course notes - part theory

Type: Slides

Name: Land Evaluation
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No
Additional information: PowerPoint presentation (pdf-formaat) as used during lectures - part theory

Type: Software

Name: GIS software - QGIS
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Available on Athena : Yes
Online Available : Yes
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : intensive
Additional information: Intensively used during multiple exercises

Type: Other

Name: Digital materials in support of the practical exercises
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No
Additional information: Tasks, PowerPoint presentations, datasets, literature, and video-recording to support the exercises

References

- UNEP (2016). Unlocking the sustainable potential of land resources: evaluation systems, strategies and tools. A report of the working group on land and soils of the international resource panel.
- Nguyen, T.T., Verdoodt, A., Tran, V.Y., Delbecque, N., Tran, T.C., and Van Ranst, E. (2015). Design of a GIS and Multi-criteria Based Land Evaluation Procedure for Sustainable Land-use Planning at the Regional Level. *Agriculture Ecosystems & Environment* 200: 1-11.
- Constantini, E.A.C. (2009). *Manual of Methods for Soil and Land Evaluation*. Science Publishers.
- FAO (2007). Land evaluation. Towards a revised framework. FAO Land and Water Discussion paper n°6. FAO, Rome. (http://www.fao.org/NR/man abst/man_070601_en.htm)
- Lehmann, A., David, S., Stahr, K. (2006). TUSEC – Technique of urban soil evaluation in city regions – a method for the assessment of natural and anthropogenic soils. Hohenheim.
- FAO (2003). *Global agro-ecological assessment for agriculture in the twenty-first century* (CD-ROM). FAO Land and Water Digital Media Series n° 21, FAO, Rome.

(<http://www.fao.org/ag/agl/agll/gaez/index.htm>)

- Verdoort, A. and Van Ranst, E. (2003). A Two-Level Crop Growth Model for Annual Crops. Ghent University, Laboratory of Soil Science, Ghent (available in library)
- Sys, C., Van Ranst, E., Debaveye, J. and Beernaert, F. (1991, 1993). Land Evaluation. Part I, II and III, Agricultural Publ. N° 7, ABOS, Brussels (being revised)

Course content-related study coaching

Personal coaching before and after the lectures and during the guided exercises.
Feedback about the corrected applications during the guided exercises.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment, Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Skills test, Participation, Presentation, Peer and/or self assessment, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

End-of-term assessment:

The end-of-term assessment is a written examination (closed book) comprising theoretical questions with more emphasis on general comprehension of the basic principles, boundary conditions, and scope of application of the different land evaluation tools than on encyclopaedic knowledge, as well as questions that check the students individual understanding of the practicals.

Continuous assessment:

During the course of the semester, students have to submit **individual and group assignments**. Deadlines for submission need to be strictly respected. Depending on the task, up to four aspects can be evaluated:

- the acquired **skills**, evaluating to what extent calculations, software were correctly done/used (**skills test**),
- the ability to critically and thoroughly analyse specific cases, come to integrated conclusions (**assignment**),
- the group dynamics (planning, tasks, individual contributions summarised in a report = **participation**), and
- an assessment on your performance and growth as team member in different roles by your peers (**peer assessment**).

At the end of the semester, students will present the scientific paper of their interest to the fellow students (**peer teaching**). Each student contributes by presenting part of the paper, and participating in question and answer sessions (= **presentation**).

Each student is held responsible for the timely submission and reporting of (a part of) the practicals. Each student is expected to contribute to all practicals, group reports and microteaching. The group members can organise themselves and agree upon a fair task distribution (reflected in the reports). Through peer assessment they help each other in understanding and exploiting/correcting their strengths and weaknesses when working in a team.

Calculation of the examination mark

Combined final score = a score on the continuous assessment (i.e. assignments, presentations, participation being 60%) and a score on the end-of-term evaluation (i.e. written exam, 40%)

Attendance of the practical sessions is obligatory. In case of foundedly eschewing a practical session, (an) alternative task(s) can be provided. Unfoundedly eschewing a practical for this course unit can lead to a score of 0 for that assignment.

The lecturer can decide to deviate from or not consider the **peer assessment** scores at all when determining individual scores per student for the group tasks.

A student that is **not participating in the end-of-term evaluation**, can not pass for this course. Should, in this case, the final score calculation result in a score of at least 10/20, the final score will be changed into the maximum non-deliverable score (7/20).

If there is an obvious difference in input between the different group members, the marks for the **group assignment** might differ among the students belonging to the same group.

In case of **non-passing in the first exam session**, but passing on the continuous assessment, the scores obtained on the continuous assessment are transferred to the second session exam. If the student would have a non-passing score for the continuous assessment, an alternative task will be developed, taking into account the observed knowledge/skills gaps.