

# **A global graduate school in Biosphere studies?**

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# Outline

- Concept – global questions need global solutions
- Research as core biosphere business
- The proposal: linking biospheres and universities
- Technical stuff:
  - Types of programme
  - Organisational concepts
  - Pre-requisites
  - Joining the network
- Implications and possibilities



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# Concept

- Biosphere Reserves as ‘living laboratories’ that generate new understandings of, and potential approaches to, the management of complex terrestrial and coastal ecosystems
- Research (in its widest and most inclusive sense) – and the communication of research findings – is thus at the core of the BR concept
- Yet there is no current comprehensive approach to this – thus the learning potential of BRs remains uncertain – as does the potential scalability of BR solutions
- The global reach and significance of BRs demands a global approach to research and its communication



# The proposal

- That we create a virtual Global Graduate School in Biosphere Studies:
  - That provides higher level skills training in all areas relevant to the management and governance of Biosphere Reserves;
  - That acts as a repository and communication hub for BR research outputs;
  - That fosters and supports a global community of BR researchers and scholars;
  - That offers flexible and accessible learning opportunities for all; and
  - That fosters the visibility and global awareness of biosphere reserves and the universities that actively support them as living laboratories.



# Scoping the GGSBS

- A virtual school with administrative hubs and a on-line presence with open access modules available to all;
- Some physical centres that support staff and offer conventional learning environments;
- A common governance framework that can be customised for national or other requirements;
- Institutional membership is dependent on meeting key criteria and agreeing to abide by the common governance framework;
- All members can offer graduate qualifications, which are awarded to students completing their programmes;
- Credit accumulation & transfer will operate, and the facility will be available for bi-lateral dual awards



# Programmes

- Only research degrees – limited teaching requirement; emphasis on research skills training and application;
- MRes/MPhil/PhD
- Potential for ProfDoc Biosphere Studies or International Doctorate in Biosphere Studies/Science?
- Potential for short courses and non-certificated programmes



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# Organisational Concepts

- Single governance framework – generated from pioneer network members – but with the potential for customization;
- Students enroll once, with the GGS, and can study free on-line or by paying fixed fees (teaching and examining) to host universities. To progress to a degree, students must obtain sufficient credits and must present an acceptable research proposal;
- Research proposals must be linked to a specific degree and the host institution(s) must demonstrate that it has/they have the capacity to supervise and support the student in their chosen mode of study;
- All institutional members agree to provide both on-line and face-to-face content;



# Funding and finances

- Start-up finance will require grant funding – eg Erasmus+ KA2 or from a foundation;
- Operational finance will need to be generated primarily from fees; this will be a question of scale, and whether all fees are pooled, or are levied individually by members of the GGS;
- Value-added activities can be initiated by grant applications – eg Newton Fund network grants
- Proposal for operational financing: all member institutions pay an annual fee to the administrative hub(s) and recoup this by charging fees for modules, assessments and supervision of research.





# Implications and Possibilities

- Biosphere research can be recognised as a significant field of study;
- Questions of global scale and significance can be addressed at the appropriate scale;
- All BRs will have access to the latest research – and BR research can be communicated beyond the BR network;
- Anyone can register and study – including BR staff and volunteers – and the GGS will promote both virtual and actual mobility;
- The institutional members of the GGS will gain visibility and profile;

