

IAIA08: Training Course #2

Title:	Understanding impact assessment: principles, methods, and emerging trends
Level:	Introduction
Prerequisites:	none
Language:	English
Duration:	2 days
Numbers:	no problem with small or large groups
Trainer:	Prof. Richard K. Morgan Centre for Impact Assessment Research and Training Department of Geography University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

Course description

Purpose of the course

This course is aimed at individuals who have started to work with some form of impact assessment, perhaps using impact assessments to help with their decision-making or having to provide information or other forms of input to an impact assessment process. One key purpose of the course is to broaden participants' understanding of the impact assessment process as a whole, and to appreciate the breadth of application, and what constitutes good practice impact assessment. In particular it aims to show that the basic principles of impact assessment are shared across all forms of the approach, and in different decision-making contexts (policies through to projects).

A second important aim is to highlight significant emerging trends in impact assessment, such as the promotion of the Equator Principles among private sector financial institutions, the increasing recognition of post-disaster and post-conflict strategic environmental assessment, and climate change impact assessment.

The first part of the course sets the scene, addressing the purposes and benefits of well grounded impact assessment. A generic model of impact assessment is then employed to explore the broad methods and approaches of IA. That model underpins the consideration, in the second part of the course, of the various forms of impact assessment: from social, cultural, and health, to ecological/biophysical; and from strategic assessment of policies to project level IA. The generic model emphasises an integrated perspective of impact assessment, and the various forms of IA are seen as being interdependent. This platform is then used to explore some of the more important trends in impact assessment.

Recognising that the IAIA conference draws a variety of people to its sessions, the course is also designed to provide a brief overview of IAIA as an organisation and a guide to the conference. It reviews the key themes addressed in the plenary forums, and in the section-oriented sessions, linking back to key issues discussed in the earlier parts of the course. This will assist participants derive greater benefit from the conference, especially for those relatively new to the field.

Part I (first day)

Introduction: Why do we need impact assessments? Who do they serve, who benefits? What are the implications for the information generated by the IA process?

The IA process: What are the main steps in an impact assessment? What are the guiding principles of good practice?

- v Scoping: how to focus an impact assessment on the important issues.

- v Forecasting the future: issues about the practice of impact prediction, and associated issues of mitigation, and monitoring .
- v Impact evaluation: significance, values, and trade-offs.
- v Public involvement: opportunities and purpose in impact assessment.
- v Quality control: why review IAs; a structured approach to reviewing IAs.

Part II (second day)

Forms of impact assessment.

- v Social and cultural impact assessment
- v Health impact assessment
- v Ecological impact assessment
- v Strategic environmental assessment

Emerging trends in impact assessment

[Specific topics will be decided closer to the conference, but will most probably include developments such as the Equator Principles, post-disaster/conflict SEA, climate change impact assessment, and biodiversity impact assessment, etc. Reference will be made, in the preceding session, to current themes and debates within each of the forms of IA so this session will address rather more substantive trends]

Making the most of the IAIA 07 conference

- v Introduction to IAIA, its aims and activities, and its sections
- v Review of main conference themes
- v Insight into plenary forums
- v Insight into key paper sessions

Approach

The workshop will be conducted through a series of short modules, with discussion of key ideas and principles, and the use of short practical activities, based on two or three running examples (examples that are returned to several times to illustrate different points or themes) to provide reinforcement of the key ideas. In the 2007 course I made particular use of an imaginary proposal for a sports stadium in the Maldives, plus a real cement factory proposal in New Zealand.

Question/discussion periods will provide an opportunity for participants to raise other issues of interest to them, or to introduce examples from their own experiences. This latter opportunity was very valuable in the 2007 course and I will place greater emphasis on in 2008.

The overall purpose is to stimulate thinking about the purpose and nature of impact assessment as a process of inquiry and social negotiation, and the challenges raised by embracing a wide range of impacts in an integrated assessment.

The first part of the course draws on my book (see below) and the second part draws on my experience with the various areas of impact assessment - I have researched and written on all of the main areas of IA - and my in depth understanding of IAIA.

Resources

Participants will be provided with a course work book, containing notes, key materials for practical and group work over the two days, plus a CD of specific resources relating to the forms of IA covered in the course. The purpose of the CD resources is to provide a basis for

continued independent learning after the course, so will comprise key guides and papers for each of the areas of IA addressed in the course.

About the trainer

Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Otago, New Zealand, with teaching and research interests in environmental impact assessment, environmental management, and the scientific study of human impacts on soil and vegetation systems. I am the author of an international text, "Environmental Impact Assessment: a methodological perspective", published by Kluwer Academic Publishers., 1998/1999, and numerous other papers and reports on aspects of impact assessment implementation and practice.

I established the Centre for Impact Assessment Research and Training (CIART) in early 1999, to promote the activities of the IA research group at the University of Otago and to support the development of better IA practices in New Zealand and the wider Pacific region. Convenor of the New Zealand Association for Impact Assessment 1999-2002, 2007 - .

President of IAIA 2003-4, President elect 2002-3, Past President 2004-5.

Previous training experience

I teach a 13 week (4 hours per week) graduate paper on impact assessment every year, which covers all the material proposed in this course (32 enrolled this year). In addition I have conducted one- and two-day training courses over the last decade for a variety of professional groups (planners, environmental health officers, forestry staff, environmental managers, conservation staff, banking staff, etc.) and have experience with training workshops in a variety of developing countries, especially in the Pacific and South East Asia.

I ran a similar course at Seoul, 2007, with 11 people. This proposal reflects lessons learnt from that course, especially the fact that participants were most interested in recent developments such as the Equator Principles. It was significant, I feel, that all the issues we touched on in the course also featured in the closing plenary address from Steve Lintner. The participants in my course were in a very good position to understand the points he made, having been briefed thoroughly about these issues beforehand!

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