

Interactive comment on “Experiences from online and classroom education in hydroinformatics” by I. Popescu et al.

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We would like to thank the Reviewer2 for the comments to our manuscript and for taking time in reviewing it. Answers to specific comments follow:

Comment 1: 1) The main objective of this study is to report on the authors' experiences in conducting and comparing the delivery of hydroinformatics courses (FFM and DSS in this case) via two alternative settings: in-class and online. This is an important subject as many educational institutions are moving into using online settings for teaching engineering and earth-science subjects. However, as the reader starts to go through the manuscript, it seems that the focus and main objectives laid out earlier by the authors may have been lost throughout the manuscript. The authors need to go

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through a major re-structuring of the manuscript keeping in mind their objectives and what they intend to deliver to the readers. Many parts of the “Introduction” section and the “HydroInformatics education” section can be eliminated without loss of information. Information that is not relevant to the objectives of the study should not be included, even if such information is important in itself. Sections 3, 4 and 5 include the main contents that are relevant to the study objectives. However, even these sections need to be re-structured and organized significantly to clearly present the main differences in the structure of the two course settings. The evaluation/assessment methods followed in each setting should be clearly and concisely presented. The same needs to be done for the evaluation results. The Conclusions section should provide well-defined findings that are supported by the study, rather than very general statements.

Authors’ answer: The authors thank the reviewer for finding the comparison between on-line and face to face courses as an important topic to be addressed. We do take the criticism of the reviewer regarding the structure of the paper and its readability and will address as much as possible the issues raised in the final version of the manuscript, in such a way that the structure will not affect the whole manuscript, and it will still keep the valid points raised by all the other comments received during the interactive discussion. We will address the points raised by the reviewer concerning the lengths of the introductory part and clarification of the evaluation assessment methods will be done, as it was pointed out and answered to the comments of the first reviewer. We hope that the final version of the manuscript will meet the requirements of both reviewers regarding the structure of the manuscript and the presentation of the two courses modes of delivery and their evaluation.

Comment 2: The following are more detailed comments about the manuscript. Introduction Section: The “Introduction” section is fairly long and can be shortened without loss of relevant information. For example, detailed information about the Bologna agreement should be presented only as long as they are relevant to the study. The same applies to describing UNESCO-IHE; only relevant information should be in-

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cluded. The authors should limit this introduction to information that is directly related to their subject of study (online and classroom education).

Authors' answer: As mention in the answer to the previous comment we will shorten the Introduction and take into account the comments regarding the Bologna declaration and the description of UNESCO-IHE, though our initial intention was to present the institute, in order to make clear why there are two types of modes of delivery available in the institute, and how can they run in parallel for the same course content.

Comment 3: HydroInformatics education: I believe Section 2.2 on "The Master Science in hydroinformatics" is not necessary at all to this manuscript. I suggest taking it out, or at most, including a sentence or two about it with reference to the program description on the UNESCO-IHE site. Section 2.3 would flow smoothly after Section 2.1, and there is not much relevant that Section 2.2 brings to this manuscript.

Authors' answer: We will take into consideration the suggestion and shorten the sections, however Section 2.2 still needs to be maintained, though we will make it shorter and concise, because the main reason of introducing the two types of modes of delivery are coming due to the needs that a Master of Science in Hydroinformatics graduate has, while studying and few years after finishing his/her study. We will make this clear in section 2, before introducing the 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 sections. Comment 4: Findings: Section 5, last sentence on page 1328: "Finally, both online and face to face approaches to learning are evaluated quite well by the participants to the courses." Is this a conclusion presented by the manuscript? If it is meant as such, then I am afraid it is not actually supported by any of evaluation analysis reported in the manuscript. The only evaluation analysis reported in the manuscript deals with evaluating how the students feel about the group discussions they had during the online offering (Table 3). Evaluation of both online and face-to-face approaches, as claimed by this statement, has never been presented in the manuscript.

Authors' answer: The issue raised here was raised by the first reviewer as well, there-

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fore we have modified the manuscript to reflect how the two modes of delivery are evaluated by the students.

Comment 5: Conclusions Section: The conclusions reported in this section have very little to do with the objectives of the study. As formulated at the beginning of the manuscript, the main objective of this study is to compare the delivery of hydroinformatics courses (FFM and DSS in this case) via two alternative settings: in-class and online. The items presented in the conclusions section are mostly unrelated to this objective. (I also don't think it is very relevant to use the conclusions section, or any other parts of the manuscript, to talk about the UNESCO-IHE and what the authors think about it).

Authors' answer: This comment is similar to the one raised by reviewer 1, therefore in the revised manuscript we have updated the conclusion part, so that it will reflect the main objective of the paper, comparison between on-line and face to face courses. The authors looked into the raised issue of "talking about UNESCO-IHE" and we think that the conclusion might not have been presented clearly, and therefore misinterpreted. The main aim of the conclusion part was not to talk about UNESCO-IHE, but definitely to present UNESCO-IHE's lessons learned and opinions on how to improve the delivery of such courses. UNESCO-IHE has an extensive experience on delivering on-line courses and face to face courses and the authors do not intend to talk about the institution itself, however the main objective is to share the experiences and opinions in the conclusion part, hoping that they will be helpful for the academia in their efforts to identify which type of course delivery is more attractive for the learners.

Comment 6: Findings: Section 5, last sentence on page 1328: "Finally, both online and face to face approaches to learning are evaluated quite well by the participants to the courses." Is this a conclusion presented by the manuscript? If it is meant as such, then I am afraid it is not actually supported by any of evaluation analysis reported in the manuscript. The only evaluation analysis reported in the manuscript deals with evaluating how the students feel about the group discussions they had during the online

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Authors' answer: The issue raised here was raised by the first reviewer as well, therefore we have modified the manuscript to reflect how the two modes of delivery are evaluated by the students.

Comment 7: Review of previous work: The manuscript lacks adequate review of previous research on online versus classroom education in water resources. There are many studies

Authors' answer: The aim of the paper was not to present a review. We are making however reference to a previous paper that we wrote (Jonoski, A., and Popescu, I: Distance Learning in Support of Water Resources Management: an Online Course on Decision Support Systems in River Basin Management, Water Resources Management, DOI: 10.1007/s11269-011-9959-y, 2011) where such review is presented. We did not want to repeat that work. The reviewer does not point to any work in particular therefore it is difficult to assess at what studies reference is made.

Comment 8: Repetitions and redundancy: There are many examples of unnecessary repetitions in the manuscript that should be eliminated. The same information is repeated in several places in the manuscript. Many of the sections are too wordy and can be rather exhausting to the reader. The manuscript needs to be thoroughly revised to ensure conciseness and reduce redundancy. Writing and language style: The writing style, grammar, and the language style of the manuscript need to be revised. Several of the sentences are fragmented and need major restructuring. This issue is currently severe enough to make it difficult for the reader to follow the ideas and discussions presented in the paper in a smooth way.

Authors' answer: We will carefully revise the text and before the final submission it will be revised once again by a native English speaker.

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Comment 9: Other comments: Several acronyms are used in the manuscript without pre-defining them.

Authors' answer: We will carefully revise the text and address this issue.

All our responses to the questions raised by the referee will be included in the revised version of the manuscript.

Interactive comment on Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., 9, 1311, 2012.

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