



**COURSE IN ECOLOGICAL
BUILDING AND DESIGN**

UNTUTORED COURSE GUIDE 2015

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Welcome

Welcome to this untutored online course in *Ecological Building and Design*. We trust you will find studying from home through Moodle rewarding and enjoyable. If you have not studied online before – or even if you have – read the following notes to help you work the website and understand what is required of you in this course.

Technical Matters

Access to the website is best with Internet Explorer, Firefox or Safari. Ensure you have a pdf reader installed on your computer to display and download some of the files.

You need to have your pop-up blocker either turned off altogether, or you need to have the Course URL listed as an exception. You will find these settings in your browser's Tools menu. If you need help, just ask. Never allow technical issues to affect your study schedule, get things sorted as soon as you can.

Who to Ask if you need Help

If you have any problems or questions about the course, please contact the course manager, Jenny Rattenbury (jenny@ecoprojects.co.nz) either directly or through the course website.

Effective Studying

Choosing the untutored version of this course means you are on your own: free to do it in any way you wish, but with this comes even more diligence to keep your study going. So the following tips might help you keep on track.

Set up a workspace – An important aspect of studying from home is to create an environment that will let you concentrate on studying, and make it seem that you are doing something a little bit different from ordinary life. You need to create a workspace: but although you probably won't all have a cute little garden studio made of earth bricks, you can be inventive and make something special. Provide yourself with a dedicated shelf, or a few new or revamped folders or boxes for your papers. Access to a computer is essential for the course, but don't worry if you don't have exclusive use of it. In fact, we encourage you not to spend long hours at the computer if you don't have to. Exposure to electro-magnetic radiation from computers for long periods may affect your performance. So plan your workspace to have a place to read and make notes away from the computer. Keep the computer box at least 1 metre away from you, and keep back a bit from the old cathode ray screens (flat screens are OK).

Create a study plan – We recommend that you work out a regular study plan. Each Module is divided into topics to help those that need a structure. This involves an

orientation week for reading and understanding the website, then a topic and question to answer per week for five weeks, and six weeks for the assignment. One Module takes approximately 6.5 hours per week of study for a twelve week period. You can of course proceed at a faster pace if you wish.

Avoid distractions – Working from home means you can be subject to distractions. Once you have chosen a block of time in which to study, treat it as if you had gone somewhere else to do so. Put the phone on zero rings, let the rest of your family (and your friends) know that you are “not at home” for that period of time. Organise your other activities so that they are done before you start, or can wait until you are finished, i.e. stop thinking about other things.

Print off the notes – Although the notes can be read in instalments online on a week by week basis, you may want to read them all first to get a better overall picture of the course. If you do not enjoy reading lots of notes on the computer, we have a version of all the notes that can be printed off (minus a few photos). That way you can write on them, refer back to them more easily, and most importantly choose a cosy corner to read them in. However in the interests of the saving the environment, get the notes printed at a photocopy place as they can do them double sided.

Learn from other sources – There are more ways to learn than just reading: talking, listening, creating, teaching, or doing other people’s workshops will all help you learn. And of course pictures are worth their thousand words – track down lots!

Engage with the course material – You DO need to read the course material, not just idly glance at the information here and there as you might do when surfing the net. You can print it out to make things easier. The viewing is also relevant, although you don’t have to watch all of the longer ones if you have limited access.

If there are forums, get in there and share your findings and views. Update your profile with a photograph of yourself and a mini bio. Your classmates will be interested to read about you and your previous experience.

Resources

The following highly recommended texts will assist you with your study programme:

Module 1:

- **Baggs**, Sydney, *The Healthy House*, (Harper Collins, Australia, 1996)
- **Bernhardt** , Johann (Ed), *A Deeper Shade of Green*, (Balasoglou Books, Auckland, 2008);
- **Pearson**, David, *The New Natural House Book*, (Fireside, New York, 1998)
- **Waitakere City Council**, *The Sustainable Home Guidelines*.

Module 2:

- **Alexander**, Christopher, *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1977).

- **Hopkins** , Rob, *The Transition Handbook*, (Green Books, Totnes , UK , 2008)

It may take some time to get hold of some of these books, but don't worry, you can work on the course without them. They do however, improve your overall understanding of the subject and are worthwhile as general reference books for later.

A Deeper Shade of Green can be ordered through Aalto Books (aaltobooks@xtra.co.nz) or call 09 529 2211).

The Sustainable Home Guidelines can be downloaded from the course website under the *Library Resources* Folder.

The other books can be ordered second hand through www.amazon.com.

You may want to have a book allowance for books over and above the recommended reading if you get particularly interested in a subject.

The *Course Notes* on the website and the recommended reading provide sufficient basic information to complete the questions. However, you may want to supplement the level of detail with extra reading, as other books provide other viewpoints, ideas, technical details, pictures etc, which will enrich your knowledge, fire your imagination further, or just reinforce what you have already read.

The *Library Resources* folder on the website provides you with titles of books on relevant subjects as well as website addresses for information and purchasing books. These are for your interest and do not have to be read. Some of the listed books may be difficult to track down; unfortunately many are out of print.

Questions and Assignments

For each module there is a set of 5 questions and an assignment.

For the **questions** try and find information from as many sources as possible.

For the **assignment** spend time taking notes, collecting ideas and pictures, draw plans and diagrams. The course is designed to suit people with a wide range of experience in building and design. Choose your assignment projects to suit your experience, if you have more set yourself a challenge.

Using the Website

Familiarise yourself with the Module – during the Orientation week get yourself set up and ready to go. Take some time to read through everything in the course first so you have an idea of what is going on. That includes the general information on the Course Homepage. Locate or order some of the recommended texts. Fill out your student profile, so others have an idea of who you are.

Self tests – These are simple exercises to help with some of the aspects and definitions that tend to trip students up when writing their answers so have a go and see how you do. Make as many attempts as you wish.

Questions – As well as the actual question, these sections give some guidance as to how to approach answering the question, which is not included in the print off version of the questions. They also include sample answers from students to give you an idea of what is an appropriate answer, but with this course you can write as much or as little as want, depending on how fired up you are about the topic.

General Discussion Forum – If you want to discuss or share something or network with other students then feel free to add a post.

Assignment - during this part things are less structured, but keep up the routine so that you don't forget that you are meant to be studying.

How to Present Your Work

Take pride in your presentation, imagine each to be a reference or teaching tool, something you can show others to increase their understanding of the subject. Also the more of yourself you can put into your answers – ideas, aspirations, doubts, enthusiasms whatever – the more you will get out of the course.

Common Spelling and Grammatical Errors

Here are some common spelling and grammatical errors that crop up regularly.

Principle/Principal – in this course we are mostly dealing with *Principles*. The other concerns that old time pal of yours, the school *Principal*.

Effect/Affect – effect is the noun (the thing) and affect is the verb (the action). For example: The *effect* of noise through the wall is that it *affects* my sleep badly.

Lose/Loose – trees *lose* their leaves once they come *loose* at the base of the stalk.

Eve/Eave – houses have *eaves*.

Story/Storey – don't let the American spell checks con you into believing that the second *storey* of a building is spelt otherwise.

Pallet/Pellet – *pallets* are excellent broken up and put in the wood burner, however pellet burners only take *pellets*.

Oriented/Orientated – the root of the word is *orient*, whilst you can say *orientate*, you should only say *oriented*.

Which/That – if you get a green squiggly line after using the word *which*, you have two options. Use a comma before *which* if the next clause adds a new piece of information. It's like a slight pause in speech to introduce new information. For example: This time he used earth for the walls, *which* has excellent fire resistance qualities. If the next clause

doesn't offer new information use *that* instead of *which*. For example: The house *that* he built after the bushfire used earth for the walls.