

The Sustainable Development Goals in Higher and Further Education

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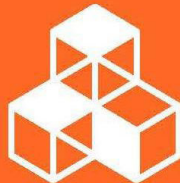
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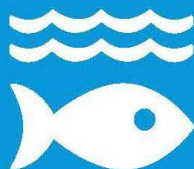
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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

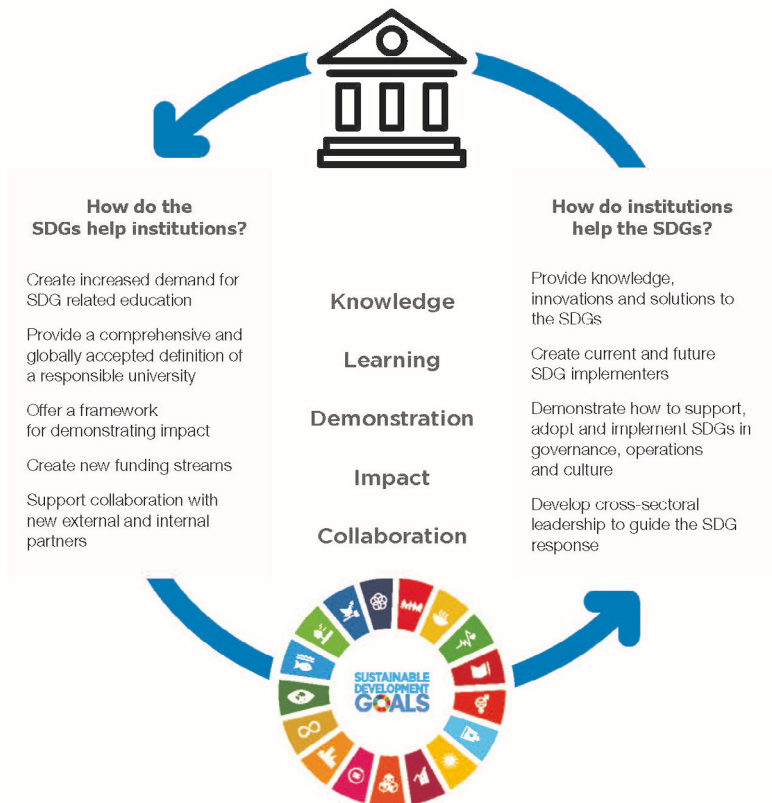
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Higher and Further Education: What does this look like?

It is widely agreed that integrating the SDGs into universities and colleges is both necessary and mutually beneficial. There are several reasons for this, best explained through [Figure 1 created by SDSN Australia Pacific](#). The SDGs offer institutions an easily communicable sustainability blueprint that shows the education, awareness and behaviour change required to succeed in a world affected by continued global issues such as modern slavery, inequality, over consumption of finite resources and widespread pollution. They also help combat new challenges like the rapidly approaching climate crisis and its consequential extreme weather patterns. These Goals are relevant to every single person on this planet, but particularly students, as they will bear the brunt of inaction on these issues.

The SDG targets are very quantitative, they are designed to produce data from nation states to make sure progress can be benchmarked. Some of the SDG targets ask for data on education, but for the most part they do not. So how can education institutions contribute? Education must be integrated into every single SDG. Without education, progress will not be sustainable. Therefore, it is essential that the Higher and Further Education sector realises they have a key role to play in the SDGs and starts to integrate them holistically across their curriculum and campus, and into their research, leadership, operations, administration and engagement activities.

There is no singular correct way to integrate the SDGs into an education institution. It is recommended that the best place to start with the SDGs, is to look at what you are already doing and map it, before looking at where you could contribute more. The SDG targets are fairly quantitative, and there must be a degree of interpretation. In this resource, we have outlined ways that Higher and Further Education institutions could take action on each SDG with examples from the sector. These examples are predominantly from the SDG Accord case studies provided to us, and as such, have a UK-based leaning. We have added some other best practice and international examples where possible. It is important to remember that the SDGs were designed to be symbiotic and not viewed in a standalone sense, and therefore most of the examples could fit under several of the SDGs. The SDGs work together to create holistic Sustainable Development, just as an institution must. There is no right or wrong way to start contributing towards the SDGs. But the education sector must accept responsibility to play a central and transformational role in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and they must have a plan on how to do this with a reporting mechanism.

Figure 1: The case for university engagement in the SDGs



1 NO POVERTY



GOAL

To end poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Maximise employability for graduates by ensuring the graduate framework is fit for purpose by liaising with employers on the skills they are looking for.
- Offer skills training for students on how to budget and make money go further.
- Ensure all staff are paid the National Living Wage.
- Ensure your institution has funding and scholarships in place for those from lower income and disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Collaborate on initiatives (or create) within the community that look to tackle poverty locally.

EXAMPLES

[University of Bath, The Students' Union – Skills training provision](#)

[Cardiff University – Research into in-work poverty](#)

[The University of Manchester - Want Not Waste Shop](#)

[The Applied Research Institute, Jerusalem - Sustainable Agriculture Program \(SAP\)](#)

[New College Lanarkshire - an accredited Living Wage employer](#)



2 ZERO HUNGER



GOAL

To end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Improve cookery skills of students to lessen waste of leftovers and improve nutrition by offering lessons.
- Make sure there is a proper food waste disposal process and if catering is outsourced that they follow it too.
- Collaborate on initiatives (or create) within the community that look to end hunger locally.
- Create initiatives that raise awareness of food and where it comes from i.e a project where students help to grow food on campus
- Reduce the quantity of red meat on catering menus – and hold vegetarian and vegan days.

EXAMPLES

- [University of Nottingham – food waste initiatives including anaerobic digester](#)
- [De Montfort University Leicester \(DMU\) – Feeding Leicester](#)
- [SGH Warsaw – introduced 'Fruity Mondays', in which fruit is available in all social areas across campus](#)
- [University of St Andrews – Sustainable Food Policy](#)
- [Cranfield University - Research to reduce food waste](#)
- [University of York – Edible Uni](#)



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



GOAL

To ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing at all ages

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Promote healthy lifestyles, mindfulness activities and campaigns
- Policies to encourage health, happiness and wellbeing among staff
- Invest in mental health services
- Make sure campus shared spaces are optimised through design and furnishing to foster wellbeing of those that use them
- Sign the Okanagan Charter – an international charter for health promoting universities and colleges
- Create a local healthy lifestyle network for the community

EXAMPLES

- An assortment of universities and colleges worldwide committed to the Okanagan Charter – promoting health in tertiary education
- The UK Healthy Universities Network – a collection of institutions working together to develop and implement 'whole university' approaches to health, wellbeing and sustainability
- University of Exeter – Mindfulness
- TERI School of Advanced Studies (India) – WASH initiative that focuses on improving sanitation in deprived areas
- Canterbury Christ Church University – Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



GOAL

To ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Educate the next generation with high quality learning – to be measured through survey results, such as the employability of students and the results of the NSS.
- Create a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy with regular evaluation
- Embed Education for Sustainable Development into the curriculum
- Create lifelong learning opportunities for the community and build partnerships with schools
- Encourage research into Sustainable Development by engaging with academics and pushing for academics to include references to the SDGs.
- Promote distance learning and the digitisation of the curriculum to ensure inclusivity.

EXAMPLES

- [Keele University – Equality and Diversity Strategy](#)
- [Plymouth University – Embedding Education for Sustainable Development in teacher training](#)
- [Aalto University – Integration of Sustainability into all education](#)
- [University of Manchester – Founding partner of Tutor Trust which works with over 200 schools across Greater Manchester to tutor children from disadvantaged backgrounds](#)
- [Bridgend College - Launched the 'community college' for lifelong learning](#)



5 GENDER EQUALITY



GOAL

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Support gender equality by paying male and female staff the same and ensuring senior positions are reflective of the diverse society in which we live
- Provide flexible working and supportive maternity and paternity policies
- Celebrate International Women's Day and organise activities to raise awareness of gender inequality and how to improve it
- Have stringent HR policies about gender discrimination
- Report your gender pay gap and actively ensure this decreases year-on-year

EXAMPLES

- [University of Lancaster is a member of the Advance HE Athena SWAN Charter](#)
- [University of Nottingham – Flexible Working Arrangements Policy](#)
- [Glasgow Caledonian University – Gender Action Plan](#)
- [Daffodil International University – Fee reduction for women to encourage more to enrol](#)
- [University of Worcester – Lowest gender pay gap in the HE sector in the UK](#)



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



GOAL

To ensure access to safe water sources and sanitation for all

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Provide free water refill points across the campus. Encourage research into innovation to improve water sanitation internationally
- Look to conserve water where possible by reviewing your water waste
- Organise fundraising campaigns e.g. The Big Squat organised through Toilet Twinning which raises funds to help families in the developing world build their own toilets
- Raise awareness about what can and cannot be disposed of in the toilet to prevent build up of problematic items like wet wipes

EXAMPLES

- [EU guidance on 'How to Conserve Water in Further Education Colleges'](#)
- [Northumbria University – public lectures on water topics](#)
- [Durham University – Founded a community partnership to address key water and environmental challenges](#)
- [Bridgend College - Installed water efficiency devices in every washroom/toilet facility](#)
- [Georgetown University - Think Global, Drink Local](#)



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



GOAL

To ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Undertake initiatives to lower energy use by encouraging people to turn off lights and not overfill kettles etc
- Lobby your institution to divest from fossil fuels
- Use alternative energy sources i.e. solar power
- Encourage research into alternative energy sources
- Encourage student energy competitions in student halls (for example Student Switch Off)
- Encourage academic staff to give free lectures to the community on clean energy

EXAMPLES

- [Borders College - UK's first heating plant using sewage/waste water as a sustainable heat source](#)
- African Network for Sustainable Development Education – Switched to LED lamps
- [Glasgow University – Became the first University in Europe to commit to divestment in 2014](#)
- [University of St Andrews – working in partnership to launch world's first sea-going car and passenger ferry fuelled by hydrogen](#)



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



GOAL

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Embed sustainability into strategic objectives to create financial gains from operating more sustainably
- Teach students about the circular economy by embedding the topic in relevant courses
- Encourage entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation through competitions with a funding prize
- Support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises by getting the procurement team to look for suppliers from these categories first
- Ensure 'creating safe and secure working environments' is a key policy
- Make a formal commitment to Fairtrade

EXAMPLES

- [Leeds University Business School – Run a 'research and innovation' blog that brings research from academics on this topic into a public forum](#)
- [University of Bradford – Offer a Masters degree in 'Innovation, Enterprise and Circular Economy'](#)
- [De Montfort University – Is a Fairtrade university that takes part in 'Fairtrade Fortnight'](#)
- [Daffodil International University – established the 'Department of Innovation and Entrepreneurship'](#)



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



GOAL

To build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive & sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Ensure sustainability is a consideration in all major developments and investments
- Operate to the highest sustainability standards
- Promote the construction of resilient and energy efficient buildings and infrastructure
- Encourage innovations that improve the sustainability performance of assets
- Encourage sustainability within business incubator hubs
- Work with business students on sustainability initiatives, particularly Living Labs projects.

EXAMPLES

- [Aalto University – Corporate collaboration](#)
- [South Lanarkshire College – Had the first building in the UK to be awarded a BREEAM 'Outstanding' rating under the 2014 standards](#)
- [Lancaster University – retrofitted its old building to bring them up to standard](#)
- [Cardiff University – Fosters innovations and creates linkages with businesses](#)
- [University of Worcester Arena - Britain's first major indoor sports arena specifically designed for wheelchair athletes](#)



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



GOAL

To reduce inequalities within and among countries

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Have an equal opportunity recruitment policy for staff and students
- Encourage initiatives that have a positive social impact and inclusivity
- Sign the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education
- Create scholarships and bursary opportunities for those from deprived backgrounds
- Create a LGBTQ+ / BAME staff network
- Run volunteering opportunities for students and the community to promote awareness of social justice

EXAMPLES

- [University of Manchester - All second year students can take part in the Social Justice Challenge, a programme that explores the topics Migration, Homelessness, Higher Education, Mental Health, Trade and Energy and develops students as responsible leaders of the future](#)
- [South Lanarkshire College – LGBT+ Charter of Rights and Working Group](#)
- [University of Glasgow – Research Beacon that focuses on addressing inequalities](#)
- [Erasmus Charter for Higher Education](#)
- [University of Gloucestershire - Set up annual Sanctuary Scholarship bursary for students who are refugees or asylum seekers](#)



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



GOAL

To make cities inclusive,
safe, resilient and
sustainable

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Have an outreach programme to create learning opportunities for the community and better connect students with them
- Work with local authorities to improve the sustainability of the local area, offering the institutions expertise and experience to determine direction
- Measure and report on social and environmental impacts of an institution
- Create a safe environment on campuses for all and regularly update health and safety policies
- Organise an end of year collection from student residences for reuse/recycling.

EXAMPLES

- [University of St Andrews – Transition – Bike Pool](#)
- [African Network for Sustainable Development Education – Seminar on 'Sustainable cities and communities, basis of social and economical development'](#)
- [University of Bath - Safety, Health and Employee Wellbeing](#)
- [EAUC and AUDE's free tool - The Sustainability Leadership Scorecard](#)
- [Daffodil International University – Held a workshop on 'Smart City, Good City, Our City'](#)
- [University of the West of Scotland and SU - E3: Community Gardens, Sustainability Hub and free shop](#)
- [University of Bradford – just one of 50 universities that have signed up to the Civic University Agreement](#)



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



GOAL

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Ensure procurement policy involves checking the supply chain for sustainable practices
- Create sustainable procurement guidance
- Aim to reduce waste and keep track of it
- Report publicly on your waste production and its emissions impact
- Create initiatives that encourage a reduce, reuse, recycle policy
- Move towards digital coursework/dissertation submissions to reduce paper use

EXAMPLES

- [University of Gloucestershire Sustainable Procurement Guidance](#)
- [University of Edinburgh – Selection of tools on sustainable procurement](#)
- [University of Plymouth – Article on developing students' energy literacy in higher education](#)
- [Grenoble Ecole de Management - Zero waste ambition](#)
- [UCSI University - Sustainable Consumption, Our Responsibility](#)



13 CLIMATE ACTION



GOAL

Take urgent action to tackle climate change and its impacts.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

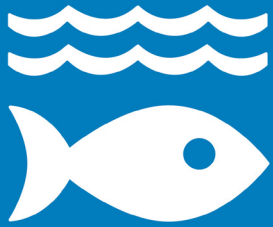
- Embed education that highlights the urgency of Climate Change action into the curriculum
- Train staff and students to be carbon literate
- Use the Sulitest to raise awareness in staff and students
- Have a net zero emissions target and an action plan to reach this target with benchmarking and reporting
- Look to work with the community on emissions reduction measures
- Get your institutions executive team to sign the [Global Climate Letter](#).

EXAMPLES

- [University of London – Zero Carbon Estates Handbook](#)
- [University of Manchester – Carbon literacy training](#)
- [Climate Commission for UK University and College Students and Leaders established in the UK](#)
- [The UN, EAUC, and Second Nature organised a Global Climate Letter and a collated pledge page for emergency declaration](#)
- [Dundee and Angus College cut its carbon footprint by almost 60% in the last seven years](#)
- [University of Sydney and Tata Institute of Social Sciences – MOU research agreement on the impact of human action on the planet](#)
- [University of British Columbia – No.1 on the Times Higher Education SDG impact ranking for SDG 13](#)



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



GOAL

To conserve and sustainably use the world's oceans, seas and marine resources

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Raise awareness of the issues around water quality, marine litter, climate change, toxic chemicals, shipping and coastal wave protection
- Encourage the use of sustainable sanitary and beauty products and provide these for free sustainable sanitary products to overcome Period Poverty.
- Organise litter picking initiatives, particularly on the coast
- Encourage research into plastic alternatives for items that are prevalent in waterways and oceans
- Sign up to a Plastics Pact and and sign up to the Refill programme

EXAMPLES

- [Dublin City University – First Irish university to go plastic free](#)
- [University of Bath – Scientists created biodegradable microbeads from cellulose](#)
- [The University of Exeter - The Beach Clean Project](#)
- [Aalto University – Water and development research group](#)
- [Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University – online learning modules on the SDGs, including SDG14](#)



15 LIFE ON LAND



GOAL

To sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Commit to improving biodiversity on campus
- Create a biodiversity standard and strategy
- Commit to protecting, restoring and promoting the conservation and sustainable use of land in the wider area
- Run extracurricular activities that promote awareness and learning on biodiversity,
- Look to plant more trees onsite as a form of carbon capture
- Commit to using only sustainable palm oil in your catering products

EXAMPLES

- [University of Leeds – Biodiversity Standard](#)
- [Community Growing Projects – EAUC sharing series](#)
- [Glasgow Kelvin College – The Orchard Project](#)
- [University of Bergen – Course module on SDG 15](#)
- [UCSI University – talks on how deforestation impacts Malaysia](#)
- [University of Chester – Sustainable palm oil champion](#)



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



GOAL

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Ensure sustainable development is prioritised at a strategic level and that it has buy-in across all levels of the institution
- Have a zero tolerance policy in place that addresses bullying, harassment, prejudice and have a Modern Slavery policy
- Ensure transparency and accountability by regularly submitting Sustainability reports
- Ensure there is an anti-bribery and corruption policy
- Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels by showing governance structures and ensuring fair representation in governing groups
- Work to internationalise your institution with an internationalisation strategy

EXAMPLES

- [University of Kent - The University Procurement Strategy clearly outlines compliance to the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the University's commitment to ensuring access to tendering opportunities to local and SME businesses as well as Equality, Diversity, and Accessibility](#)
- [Queen Mary, University of London – Zero tolerance policy](#)
- [University of Birmingham – Anti-bribery and corruption policy](#)
- [Cardiff University – Cardiff Innocence project](#)
- [University of Manchester – Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute](#)
- [National Changhua University of Education – Clear outline of its approach to SDG 16](#)



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



GOAL

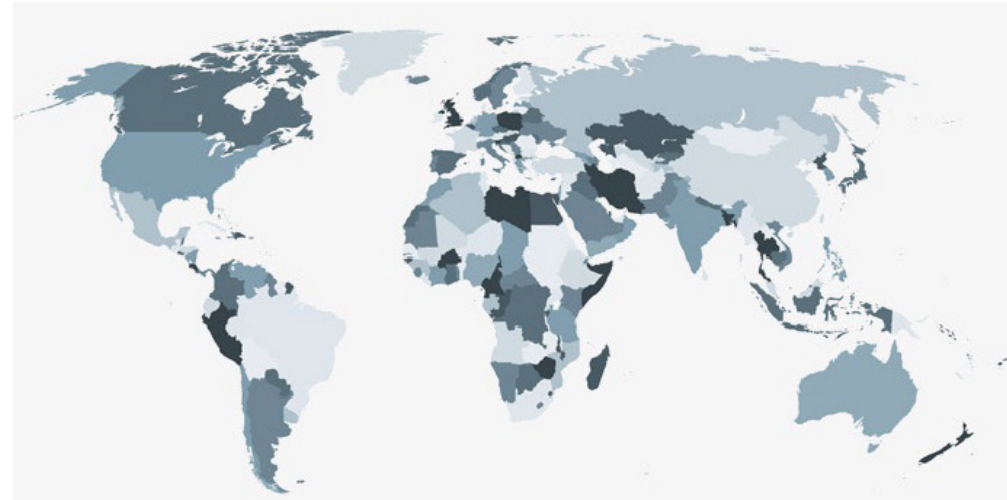
To revitalise the global
partnership for sustainable
development

POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Collaborate with other institutions and commit to sharing best practice on the SDGS
- Sign the SDG Accord and make a formal commitment to playing your part in meeting the SDGs
- Work to improve global partnerships through an internationalisation strategy
- Create SDG initiatives that benefit third world countries
- Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships through community outreach initiatives
- Work with the local community on regional sustainability action plans

EXAMPLES

- [University of Edinburgh – Internationalisation Strategy](#)
- [University of Bristol and University of the West of England – key partners in Bristol Green Capital Partnership](#)
- [Sign the SDG Accord](#)
- [SGH Warsaw School of Economics has over 300 cooperation agreements with other universities and business schools in over 50 countries worldwide](#)



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Higher and Further Education

The SDG Accord

The University and College Sector's Collective Response to the Global Goals