

# 7 ideas for embedding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into your teaching

## Introduction

For detailed information on the educational theory and practice (sustainability competencies) underpinning Education for Sustainable Development including links to subject specific ESD case studies go to the [Learn more about Education for Sustainable Development](#) guide.

## 1. Broadening student's sustainability knowledge

Critical thinking sustainability competency development:



### Example learning activities

Relevant to your subject area, where in your teaching could you provide opportunities for your students to broaden their knowledge outside of your subject discipline on sustainable development issues, concepts and practices including the UN's Sustainable Development Goals?

- Connect specific SDGs (target and indicators) at a global or local level to your teaching resources and your research relevant to your subject area.
- Explore the scope and interrelationships between the SDGs.
- Use the SDGs as a context for introducing sustainability issues and concepts – for example poverty, inequality, climate change.
- Critically evaluate the effectiveness of the SDGs – continuing challenges and lack of progress on specific goals.
- Explore the positive impact of specific SDGs – modelling effective processes for sustainability change.
- Introduce relevant to your subject area key sustainability concepts and practice for example, circular economy, modern slavery, planetary boundaries.

## Teaching approaches

Case studies, guest lectures, research-connected teaching, enquiry-based projects etc.

[UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\): teaching resources](#)

[UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\): template slides](#)

[Climate Change Education: teaching resources](#)

## 2. Reflecting on the diversity of sustainability values and perspectives

Critical thinking, self-awareness, & normative sustainability competency development:



### Example learning activities

Relevant to your subject area, where in your teaching do you or could you provide opportunities for your students to discuss and reflect on their sustainability values and perceptions related to complex real-world sustainability issues:

- Their own perceptions and values.
- The diversity of other's (other students, external stakeholders etc) perceptions and values.

Students can be introduced to techniques such as active listening, and the [Iceberg model](#) to explore the diversity of different students and other stakeholder's perspectives on complex sustainability issues.

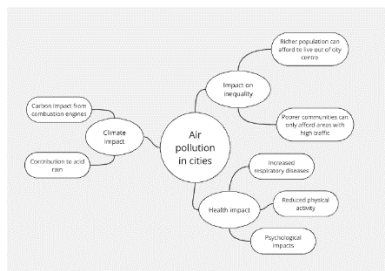
## Teaching approaches

Case studies, watching a video, multimedia, or looking at a photograph, poem or newspaper article or reference to a physical object, simulations and serious games can be used to initiate discussion and reflection.

[Student Sustainability Values & Perceptions: teaching resources](#)

### 3. Exploring systems

Systems thinking, critical thinking sustainability competency development:



#### Example learning activities

Where in your teaching do you or could you provide opportunities for your students to explore the inter-relationships between social, economic and environmental factors (systems thinking) focused on a 'real-world' complex sustainability issue relevant to your subject area.

This could be for a commodity, product, an ecosystem, or social system.

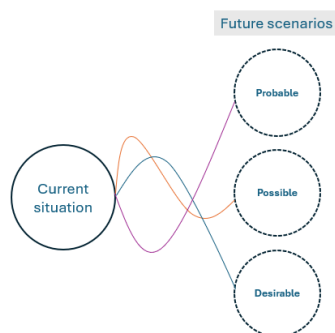
#### Teaching approaches

Analytical tools such as spray diagrams, systems maps, life cycle assessments, supply chain analysis etc, or creative discursive approaches such as storytelling or 'rich picture' visualisations to can be adapted to focus on sustainability issues.

[Systems Thinking: teaching resources](#)

### 4. Envisioning positive futures

Futures thinking sustainability competency development:



#### Example learning activities

Where in your teaching do you or could you provide opportunities for your students to envision positive sustainable futures and explore their preconceptions (and possibly fears

and misconceptions) about the future on sustainability topics relevant to your subject discipline.

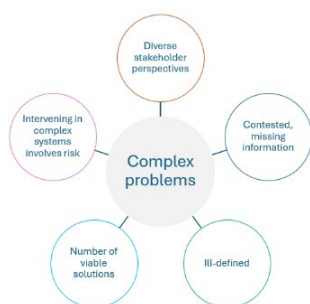
## Teaching approaches

Creative visualisations, multi-media, 'post-cards from the future' etc, or more systematic approaches that used by outside organisations for example, scenario forecasting and 'backcasting' methods can be introduced to enable students to explore probable, possible and desirable futures as techniques for dealing with uncertain and complex sustainability issues.

[Futures thinking for ESD: teaching resources](#)

## 5. Engaging with complex real-world problems

Collaboration, integrated-problem solving, strategic sustainability competency development:



## Example learning activities

Where in your teaching do you or could you provide opportunities for your students to be Introduced to problem solving methods that are suited to complex 'ill-defined' real-world 'wicked' sustainability issues that are not amenable to simple problem-solving approaches?

Include authentic and group learning activities, progressively developed through the programme, that enable students to engage with diverse stakeholder's perspectives, problem framing, risk analysis, learning through failure, creative thinking, and intervening in complex systems to create practical change. Include examples of approaches used in outside organisations to manage complexity and uncertainty around sustainability issues.

## Teaching approaches

Problem-centred student group work projects involving case study analysis and creation, simulations and serious games, design thinking, and participatory design approaches.

[Problem-centred learning for ESD: teaching resources](#)

## 6. Collaborating with others on sustainability problems

Collaboration, integrated-problem solving sustainability competency development:



### Example learning activities

Where in your teaching do you or could you provide opportunities for your students to engage in interdisciplinary (between subject areas) and/ or transdisciplinary (with external stakeholders) collaborative problem-solving activities focused on real-world sustainability issues simulating contexts they will face in the outside world?

### Teaching approaches

Group work, living lab or student consultancy type projects, that require students to reflect on their abilities to collaborate effectively with others enhancing their abilities to communicate with different disciplines and stakeholders, and to negotiate and overcome challenges.

[Interdisciplinary learning for ESD: teaching resources](#)

## 7. Supporting student's sustainability career aspirations



Where in your teaching do you or could you provide students with the support and information that will enable them to develop their sustainability career aspirations? This could include:

- Connecting course sustainability related content to specific industry career paths.
- Guest speakers and case studies,
- Module choices, projects, dissertation topics,
- Work or overseas placements,

- Information on sustainability business initiatives such as [B Corp](#), [ESG](#) or [corporate social responsibility](#) to enable student to critically evaluate future employers.

## Additional support and resources

[Staff support for Education for Sustainable Development \(ESD\) at Liverpool](#)

For additional support on ESD contact [cie@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:cie@liverpool.ac.uk)



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