

# Guide to ESD in practice

Addressing the employability-sustainability curriculum gap: a masterclass

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# 1. Intended outcomes

1. To enable students to align formal curriculum learning on sustainability and employability
2. To increase students' self-awareness, engagement with career-related developmental opportunities, career insights and aspirations and building on self-growth (SOAR framework).
3. To enhance careers service and faculty inter-connections

# 2. Participants

This workshop teaching session is designed to inspire students' awareness of, and aspirations for, making positive contributions to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) over the course of their personal and professional lives. It helps to bridge a potential gap in learning where students might study sustainability and employability modules within a programme, but may not 'join the dots' between the modules. The case example presented here, for example, is for Business and Management students.

The session can be embedded into any faculty programme, potentially as part of an employability/professional development or sustainability-related module, or a co-curricular employability event. The design can be adapted to suit undergraduate or postgraduate students.

An interactive approach is required, with opportunity for reflection and discussion. If delivered as part of a lecture series, it is recommended that this also adopts an interactive approach, perhaps using multiple facilitators to engage with students in break-out discussion groups. It can be delivered online/hybrid and, while it requires a minimum of one hour, it can be extended to multiple longer sessions for a more paced delivery.

It is most effectively facilitated by those with some up-to-date insights into the employment market relevant to social and environmental impact, according to the student's discipline area. There is great potential synergy in collaboration in delivery between careers services and faculty teams. The degree to which discipline-specific employability insights are included can be flexed if delivered to participants from mixed disciplines.

## 3. Activity/project

### 3.1.1 Planning

- + Identify a module and/or event in which the session can be delivered (considering discipline or multi-discipline context).
- + Discuss opportunities for collaboration between faculty and university careers services in delivery.
- + Read Kumar (2022) SOAR framework, which is recommended to structure the session, and associated work that connects the framework to the SDGs (Kumar, 2021).

While university timetabling arrangements differ, it is recommended that planning takes place the semester ahead of delivery.

### 3.1.2 Preparation

Develop teaching resources as desired, drawing on the structure detailed below according to the length of session time available, and level/discipline area of students. This template of activities (see table 1) is based on undergraduate students in Business and Management. Text in *italics* indicates suggested preparation for each activity in order to build on the provided template.

## Addressing the employability-sustainability curriculum gap: a masterclass

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Table 1. Learning activities and preparation (available as a [Google doc](#))

| SOAR Framework                                                                                                                                                        | Masterclass learning activity and preparation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Self-awareness</b><br><br>What is my current position?<br><br>What is important to me?                                                                             | Identify up-to-date employment market insights ( <i>some discipline-specific information might be included here to give a sense of job opportunities</i> )<br><br>Map current skills, interests and experiences against the SDGs.                                                                                            |
| <b>Opportunity</b><br><br>What can I do that I enjoy?<br><br>What can help me get where I want to be?                                                                 | Identification of campus opportunities such as volunteering and societies ( <i>familiarisation with the opportunities available at university level, and how to access these</i> )<br><br>Draw on alumni experiences ( <i>feature student alumni stories, perhaps a recorded video interview or gather text statements</i> ) |
| <b>Aspirations</b><br><br>Where do I want to be/what do I want to do in the short/medium/long term?<br><br>What are my developmental goals and what stands in my way? | Explore job roles (internship/graduate/beyond) to identify alignment with current skills and attributes, developmental needs, and SDG interests ( <i>prepare recent/current job specifications of likely interest to student group</i> )<br><br>Discuss any perceived obstacles and challenges to aspirational job roles     |
| <b>Results</b><br><br>How can I intentionally evaluate and review my progress and career transitions?                                                                 | Set intentional actions and goals and review mechanisms, aligned to the SDGs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## 4. Assessment or evaluation

Develop a feedback mechanism – at the end of the session it is helpful to gain some quick feedback from students using either paper-based or an online tool (see below). If this is to be used for research purposes, ethics committee approval will be required.

The session can be evaluated through building in a few minutes at the end for student feedback. This can include quantitative questions for ranking such as: How useful and/or interesting did you find the session?

Qualitative questions are also helpful to explore insights more deeply, such as:

- + which part of the masterclass did you find most interesting and/or useful and why?
- + will you be using/applying anything you have learned in your current life and/or future work? If so, what and how?
- + what part of the session would you like to see developed and how?

If the session includes working alongside colleagues from other programme areas or the careers service team, it is also worth holding a post-session review of reflections gained on student responses to each activity, and how these might be further developed.

Content from the session (such as comments added to online survey tools) can also be used for evaluative purposes. If any feedback is to be used for research purposes, ethics approval may be required. It might also be desirable to gain ethical approval to use student comments from summative assignments for formal research analysis.

## 5. Useful resources

[Lesson plan](#)

[PowerPoint](#)

[Resource list](#)

## 6. Example of practice

The session was delivered at Oxford Brookes Business School in a 'Developing Professional Practice' core module on a core Business and Management undergraduate degree programme (2022-23). A 50-minute session ran 10 times as part of a suite of specialist masterclass employability development options to which students were required to provide a reflection on learning as part of summative assessment.

One hundred and eight responses were received to the feedback survey (67% response rate). Just under 80% considered it to be useful/interesting or extremely useful/interesting. Students commented positively on the opportunity to personalise the SDGs to their own passions and careers. Comments were especially revealing of the challenges that students perceive, which included insights such as "a crippling fear of failure", "self-doubt", "self-sabotage", and "not feeling good enough". These emotive comments indicate the 'whole person' pedagogy that underpins design.

Timetabling constraints were challenging in terms of covering desired content in 50 minutes. It is certainly recommended to extend this wherever possible to a three-hour workshop session. However, this can risk losing appeal to those students who just want a 'taster' so it might best be structured as a one-hour introductory session, with an optional two-hour follow-up.

It meets SDS employability (3.8) and sustainability standards (3.7), and especially links to "responding to and shaping the dynamic and changing nature of work" (3.2), including the message that 'every job is a sustainability job' and that many of the jobs available over the course of their career trajectory do not yet even exist!

This was delivered as a pilot project. The author has since gained funding with colleagues, through the UK and Ireland Chapter of the United Nations backed 'Principles of Responsible Management Education'. The funding forms part of the 'Developing Innovative Pedagogic Approaches and teaching practices in PRME' for a project called 'Career development for the SDGs: A co-created masterclass'. This will involve rolling out a developed version of the masterclass across institutions, over 2023-24.

## 7. References

Kumar, A (2021) 'Developing 'sustainable employability' in congruence with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals', *Lifewide Magazine*, 25: 54-56. Available at: [www.lifewideeducation.uk/uploads/1/3/5/4/13542890/lwm25.pdf](http://www.lifewideeducation.uk/uploads/1/3/5/4/13542890/lwm25.pdf)

Kumar, A (2022) *Personal, social, academic and career development in higher education*. Abingdon: Routledge.



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