



The SDG Accord

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

### **Integration of SDGs in**

- Institutional governance/strategic level
- SDGs in research
- SDGs in campus operations
- SDGs in curriculum development
- SDGs in student engagement activities
- SDGs into community activities
- SDGs at a whole-institution level

### **Focus on**

- Goal 1 - No poverty
- Goal 2 - Zero hunger
- Goal 3 - Good health and wellbeing
- Goal 4 - Quality education
- Goal 5 - Gender equality
- Goal 6 - Clean water and sanitation
- Goal 7 - Affordable and clean energy
- Goal 8 - Decent work and economic growth
- Goal 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- Goal 10 - Reduced inequalities
- Goal 11 - Sustainable cities and communities
- Goal 12 - Responsible consumption and production
- Goal 13 - Climate action
- Goal 14 - Life below water
- Goal 15 - Life on land
- Goal 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions
- Goal 17 - Partnerships for the goals

### **Summary**

In March 2022, Cranfield University welcomed its first cohort of 48 students onto its new MSc Sustainability which has been mapped against the Government's Level 7 apprenticeship integrated degree standard, meaning it is eligible to be funded through organisations' apprenticeship levy. The course is designed to provide students with a mixture of technical and management skills. By bringing together the business knowledge and experience of academics in the School of Management and the technical expertise of faculty in our School of Water, Energy and the Environment, we can offer participants a dual lens through which to view some of the most systemic sustainability problems, as well as different perspectives on how we can try to solve them. This course is significantly different from our traditional programmes, in that the cohort gets together formally for a three-day residential at the start of each year but the rest is remote learning, with live teaching every other Friday from our broadcast studios and self-paced learning hosted on our virtual learning environment. We wanted learning to be accessible for people juggling childcare and other caring responsibilities, and for people to fit around their day job. We also wanted to reduce the carbon footprint associated with people travelling to Cranfield. Increasingly, organisations are being required by governments and their various stakeholders to think about the impact they are having on the environment and society and demonstrate their contribution to the SDGs. By equipping our MSc Sustainability participants with the leadership and management angle on sustainability as well as the pure technical skills, we aim to help them become the sustainability-literate board directors of the future and making that difference that we all so badly want to see.

[Closing the skills gap: the Cranfield Sustainability MSc - Cranfield University Blogs](#)

Outline the benefits of integrating this theme:

**1. A whole course dedicated to sustainability and organisations' contribution to the SDGs.** This has allowed for the wider exploration in our teaching and learning of multiple SDGs, their interconnections, and how they can be addressed through the activities of organisations (both commercial and non-profit/civil society organisations).

**2. Direct link between research and implementation in practice.** As this part-time course is attended by executives, many of which are studying as Level 7 (Masters Level) apprentices, they are applying the research-based learning from the course in real time in their own organisations. This is therefore facilitating a more direct and rapid link between research and practice which helps accelerate action towards the SDGs.

**3. Creating a supportive network for individuals leading sustainability efforts in their organisations.** A further benefit, already valued by the first cohort of students, is the network of supportive, knowledgeable and diverse people brought together by participating on the course. Participants are diverse not only in age and gender, but in the industry sectors they work from, their backgrounds (in terms of previous degrees and functional expertise) and where they come from in the UK (the vast majority are from the UK, but very geographically dispersed rather than London-based). This network will grow with future cohorts and alumni.

Outline the barriers or challenges encountered in integrating this theme and how you overcame these:

**1. Co-ownership and collaborative work across schools.** The intention behind the course was to bring together the business knowledge and experience of academics in the School of Management and the technical expertise of faculty in our School of Water, Energy and the Environment, to offer a broad and deep education across sustainability topics relating to organisations. However, the University had never run a course co-owned by 2 schools. Personal relationship built between the course co-directors and other faculty who had increasingly been teaching on sustainability topics in each other's schools helped to overcome this. Our passion and enthusiasm for our field also helped. We also designed a financial structure which equally incentivised both schools to make the source a success. We tried to stay focused on the students' learning experience being seamless regardless of the school. We also spent a lot of time with the faculty involved in delivering the component course modules to keep them involved and contributing to the course development.

**2. Delivering an effective remote learning experience.** We were determined to deliver a primarily remote learning experience to reduce the carbon footprint associated with the delivery of the course and make the course as accessible as possible to all. This has involved innovation in the way modules are presented, both for self-paced learning and for live online teaching. We very early on identified the teams (digital and broadcast studio) we would need support this and made them an integral part of the team, with us all learning together. We employed a PhD student to support module leaders to adapt to this online-by-design delivery mode (as distinct from the Covid-19 emergency online teaching). The approach has involved a degree of risk and 'leaping into the unknown' so taking the wider team together on the journey has been vital.

**3. Designing a learning experience for a diverse cohort.** The diversity of the students we sought to attract also represented a challenge in terms of designing a learning experience which catered for this diversity. This has been addressed in a number of ways: 1) module pre-work completed before live learning which helps to ensure a common level of knowledge and understanding of topics (e.g. introductory videos, glossaries); 2) creating 'action learning sets' composed of diverse participants who work together on group tasks; 3) creating sector based teams for other group activities where a focus on a specific sector (e.g. healthcare, construction) is helpful; 4) playing the Cranfield Sustainable Futures game which helps students put themselves in the shoes of the range of societal actors needed to work together to drive change towards more sustainable futures.

<https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/som/expertise/sustainability/our-sustainable-game>

## *SDG Accord Reporting 2022 CASE STUDY*

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Collaborate – even when the structures and silos get in the way

Innovate – look for different and better ways of doing things and go for it

Seek impact – find ways to put your research and teaching into practice and as urgently as possible, there is no time to lose

