SDG Accord Case Study

The SDG Accord

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

University of Glasgow

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

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☐ 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:

The SDGs play a central role in the design of courses on the Environmental Science & Sustainability programme at the University of Glasgow. Three new core courses starting in 2023 introduce, explore and address SDGs through a range of themes.

"*The interlinked nature of environmental problems is complex and often difficult to address, but solutions are possible if we have a good understanding of these complexities and make positive changes. Our new courses contribute to a portfolio of SDG-focused courses aiming to expose students to the challenge but also the solutions to a more sustainable pathway*"
Dr Steven Gillespie, Head of Subject, Environmental Science & Sustainability

'Water, Natural Hazards and Resilience' is a new level 1 course exploring the distribution, causes and effects of various water-related natural hazards, and methods of monitoring, prediction, and mitigation. The course assesses hazard level, vulnerability, and risk, and examines different approaches to reducing vulnerability for improving resilience.

'Energy, Waste and Pollution: Options for Sustainability' is offered to all students on the Dumfries Campus regardless of degree programme and explores three key inter-related SDG themes. High energy demands, consumerism, and waste generation are pushing our planet towards a critical point and unsustainable future. This course examines renewable energy options and waste management approaches, and pollution control measures to move our planet towards a more sustainable future.

Policy and governance remain central to the way we manage the environment and ensuring equalities across populations are addressed. A new course offered at Level 4 addresses 'Water Resources Policy and Governance' exposing students to the causes and consequences of water scarcity, pollution and inequality of water resources in the global North and the global South. Economic, social and environmental impacts and the interdependences between the water, energy, agriculture and environment sectors are considered, as are the public, private and civil partnerships needed to address them. Water security from a non-traditional viewpoint is explored and how the discourse on water has changed with time due to economic development, population growth, urbanisation, resource scarcity and pollution, as well as climate change.

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Outline the 3 key benefits of integrating this theme:

1. The new courses highlight the interlinked nature of environmental problems and the SDGs.

2. The solutions-based approach provides routes towards a more sustainable future for the next generation of environmental scientists and sustainability experts.

3. The new courses are offered to all students on the Dumfries Campus therefore students taking non-environmental degree programmes can engage in the key SDG themes and carry this knowledge into their own professions.

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

1. Most of the SDGs can not be addressed in isolation meaning that knowledge of the relationships between the themes is necessary. This can be challenging in designing courses given subject specialisms. However, an interdisciplinary approach drawing on the experience and knowledge base of a wide range of staff from different disciplines during the course design and delivery phases can address this barrier.

2. *Environmental science & sustainability courses are offered to all students at the Dumfries Campus regardless of degree pathway. While this is a strength of the School and exposes students to key SDG themes, it can be challenging for course design and assessments. To overcome this barrier, case studies and examples are used throughout courses from a wide range of disciplines to illustrate the applicability of sustainability themes and solutions.*

Please outline your conclusions and recommendations to others (Max 200 words):

The SDGs are central to the Environmental Science & Sustainability programme at the University of Glasgow. They are woven in every core course on the programme including the three new courses for 2023. Addressing the SDGs in isolation is seldom possible due to the interrelated nature of environmental and sustainability challenges. While this may seem daunting when seeking solutions, it highlights the need for a broad understanding of many environmental science, social and sustainability issues. All educational subjects, regardless of their specific focus, have a role to play in addressing the SDGs and spending some time exploring and integrating the Goals in the context of your discipline will cumulatively help address the greatest sustainability challenges of our time. We all have a role to play!