

SDG Accord case study
SDGs in research, Goal 17 Partnerships for the 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

The University of Warwick launched a new research strategy in April 2019 that committed to focusing on the UN Sustainable Development Goals by developing an Institute for Global Sustainable Development (IGSD).

Warwick made an institutional investment in the development of the Institute, with both academic and professional services staff support and an operating budget for cross-institutional activity. To lead the Institute, Warwick appointed its first Chair of Global Sustainable Development, Professor João Porto de Albuquerque, who is IGSD's Director. He presented a vision for the Institute that is [underpinned by four strategic goals](#) to be delivered over an initial period of five years (2019 – 2024). Progress towards this plan is annually reported to the University's Research Committee.

When it launched in September 2019, IGSD set out its vision to be at the forefront of knowledge creation that enables transformations towards a more sustainable, prosperous, healthier and just world for all. Its mission is to provide a focal point for Warwick's sustainable development research, contributing towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but still challenging of them. It undertakes world-leading transdisciplinary research and capacity development to tackle global challenges and enable transformative change of human-environment interactions. It also provides support to the Warwick research community to meaningfully and responsibly engage with global sustainable development challenges through a dedicated programme of activity including a research fellowship programme, events, online resources and one-to-one support.

The Institute has championed and supported the development of Warwick's Environmental and Social Sustainability Action Group, which now has a dedicated pathway related to the SDGs in its sustainability strategy. IGSD has also

played an active role in establishing a dedicated SDG Advisory Group. Both of these groups form an important part of Warwick's sustainability strategy.

“To tackle today's complex global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, we need transdisciplinary research that crosses boundaries between disciplines in science, health, social sciences and humanities. But we also need to reach beyond academia to co-produce research with societal stakeholders in the pursuit of pathways for transformative change. The Institute for Global Sustainable Development acts as a hub that leverages Warwick's research excellence to make a difference in devising new ways to sustainable futures that advance towards the Sustainable Development Goals.” PROFESSOR JOÃO PORTO DE ALBUQUERQUE, DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

BENEFITS

- The University is better able assess and advance the contribution of research to the SDGs.
- IGSD promotes opportunities and tools for researchers to engage with the SDGs.
- By exploring the targets and indicators of the SDGs, we can identify opportunities for enhanced contributions and alignment of research outcomes to the global goals.
- The Institute's focus on transdisciplinary research methods has enabled new research partnerships to form around the SDGs between researchers from different disciplines and external partners.

BARRIERS

- Bridging the gaps between academic discourse and policy frameworks can feel challenging, and this has been the case in some discussion around connections to SDGs.
- Building awareness of and engagement with the SDGs cannot be achieved overnight, but we anticipate that with time and sustained effort both institutionally and in international discourse, progress will accelerate.
- A key challenge we have encountered in trying to make the connection between research, where projects typically may be 2-4 years in duration, and the longer term goals of the SDGs, is helping investigators to identify the contribution that their project could make to a specific goal or goals. To date, we have approached this by exploring use of Theory of Change to reflect on the impact pathways that research might take.
- Warwick's SDG Advisory Group is in the process of developing a methodology for reporting on our institutional contribution to the SDGs through research. Once this has been developed, it will be easier to assess progress.

CONCLUSIONS

IGSD was established at an important moment for Warwick. In 2019, Warwick declared a climate emergency and committed to annually reporting progress towards the SDGs. Warwick's research already makes a significant contribution towards the SDGs; however, we would like to improve the way we assess our contribution in a systematic way, as well as stimulate further research with transformative impact.

The SDGs offer a global framework to which Warwick's research already contributes in several ways, but by exploring the targets of the SDGs, we have the opportunity to make the expected contribution towards those interconnected goals clearer and more effective. To date, the Institute has made good progress in building up interdisciplinary collaboration around SDGs. Having started out focusing discussion on one SDG at a time, our recommendation to others beginning in this process might be to try and use existing research clusters to which you can connect multiple SDGs as we have generally found this to increase the level of engagement. Additionally, we have found discussions around SDGs and research to be richest when they are explored in groups that include multiple disciplines. IGSD's most successful research engagement with SDGs has arisen from its Fellowship programme, where fellows from several academic departments (e.g. Engineering, Law, Business, Life Sciences and Politics) meet monthly for discussions focused on SDGs. We believe that the frequency of discussion over a long period of time (18 months) was

significant in this progress. There is risk of a more tokenistic approach to aligning with SDGs, and so we would recommend in-depth dialogue on the assumptions of pathways to change which could influence the targets and indicators of SDGs in any programme activity to build understanding of their purpose and connection to social, economic and environmental sustainability.