


# Realigning Curricula For the Future



**Philosophy and Theology  
and Sustainability**

**Summary**

# In a nutshell

The event took place on 25th November 2022 to bring together people from the fields of Philosophy and Theology and discuss how they can and already do integrate sustainability into their subjects.

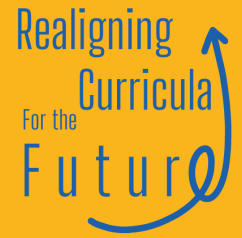
**Philip Tonner presented about his teaching experiences in the philosophy module "Heritage, Citizenship, and Sustainability"**, where he integrates sustainability with important philosophical concepts. His approach shows how Philosophy lends itself very well to foster sustainability competencies through stimulating anticipatory thinking and understanding the relation between present, past and future, as well as stimulating critical thinking and the critical engagement with norms, values, and responsibility.

**Kathrin Mobius presented some research and modules around sustainability in theology** from an outsider perspective. From the presentation and discussion, it can be concluded that Theology supports the development of important competencies such as self-awareness and questioning of norms and values, which are highly important to foster sustainable thinking and actions. There is still potential to further include sustainability content in existing or new modules.

Overall, the event showed the importance of **fostering specific competencies and ways of thinking, as well as providing content around sustainability** that can help students to understand its importance for their own and others' lives and take action.

# Philosophy

## Dr Philip Tonner



Philip skilfully integrates sustainability with important philosophical concepts such as heritage and citizenship. He explains:

**Heritage** is connected to values, the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves and others, which overlaps with **citizenship**: We are in the world alongside other people, and we are responsible to others in this world. **Sustainability** then relates to this in the sense of many things from the past that constitute heritage being under threat because of issues such as climate change, as well as being connected to our responsibility to others.

His course lets students explore these connections and thereby fosters important ESD competencies such as:

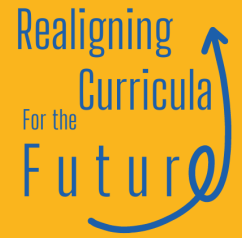
- **Anticipatory thinking competency**: Consider impacts and interconnections between the activities of different generations, demographic groups and cultures.
- **Critical thinking competency**: Critically engage with the human impact on people and planet
- **Normative competency**: Understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie one's actions as well as appreciate, critique and value different cultural contexts

These and other ESD competencies are listed in UNESCO (2017) and QAA (2021) guidance and can provide an excellent frame to develop important sustainability knowledge, skills, and values in students.

Philosophy lends itself very well to foster these and other competencies – and if Philosophy courses then make a reference to content around sustainability, the interconnection between people and planet, and/or climate change, Philosophy has great potential to bring forth graduates that have a strong sustainability mind- and skillset.

# Philosophy

## Dr Philip Tonner



Other highlights of Philip's presentation include:

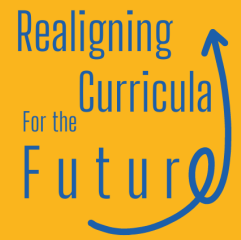
- The **understanding of context and the past** as important to create meaningful accounts of ourselves. We often create our present, and our future, out of our past – and our present and future then turns into the past.
- The importance of **interdependence**: What does it mean to be a part of the world?
- The intention of social studies in the Scottish curriculum is stated to have be **enabling young people to understand the world**. They are involved with intimately in this world, and responsible for this world to a certain extent.
- The past is not something that is over – we create the past through the present. This involves a form of critical thinking: **How can you live in a way that values the past but without being focused on it too much so that there is still space for the present and future**: Embracing the past, understanding the present, building a future. And this future is underpinned by sustainability, as it vastly influences our future.

For more details, you can watch the recording and get in touch with Philip: [philip.tonner@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:philip.tonner@glasgow.ac.uk).

**How can you integrate sustainability competencies and content into *your* teaching practice?**

# Theology

## Discussions and Reflections



In discussions around Theology, the potential of the subject to foster ESD competencies became very clear, specifically:

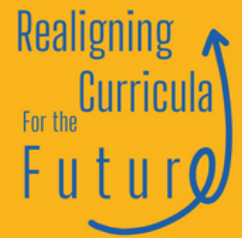
- **Self-awareness competency:** The importance of reflecting on one's own mindset and a world view, and developing a mindset that includes and supports sustainability and sustainable actions
- **Normative competency:** Understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie one's actions as well as appreciate, critique and value different cultural contexts

As participants discussed during our session, Theology encourages and probes **reflection on our own and others' worldviews and mindsets**, including for example consumerism and political world views, and addresses the complexity of perspectives and beliefs. Such self-awareness is an important competency – however, there also needs to be content around the environmental, social, economic and political sustainability challenges that we are facing so that this competency can unfold its sustainability-supporting potential.

While there are some theology programmes that specifically address aspects of sustainability (see Theology presentation), Robert Shillaker tells us about his experience of seeing practitioners who integrate sustainability in their existing modules, without having sustainability in the title or even specified in the module outline. This is a very important point and undertaking – **sustainability can be integrated into most modules in a variety of ways**, and it doesn't have to be a whole new module.

**How can you integrate sustainability competencies and content into *your* teaching practice?**

# In practice: What can you do now?



Unsure what we are talking about when it comes to competencies of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)? Maybe you've never really heard of ESD?

Education for Sustainable Development is a framework and guidance that has been developed, used, and spread across the globe for decades. It provides guidance, advice, and networks that can help you to integrate sustainability into your teaching practice. You can start by:

- **Understanding and integrating ESD:** [UNESCO's guidance on ESD learning objectives \(2017\)](#) as well as the [QAA/Advance HE \(2021\)](#) guidance on developing your ESD practice provides excellent guidance, examples, and details on the ESD competencies and pedagogies. If you have trouble accessing the guidance, please get in touch with [kmobius@eauc.org.uk](mailto:kmobius@eauc.org.uk)
- **Mapping sustainability content:** The [Sustainable Development Goals](#) framework can be useful to map your content on a variety of sustainability topics, and to critically engage with. Find a template for a quick mapping exercise to [download here](#).
- **Become part of our [ESD community](#)** at universities and colleges across Scotland and the UK through the EAUC

Remember, to integrate sustainability, you don't have to start a new module or revamp all your teaching content entirely. There are lots of small things you can do in learning content, teaching methods, and assessment. Don't be afraid to just get started!

If you have any questions or need any support, you can get in touch with [kmobius@eauc.org.uk](mailto:kmobius@eauc.org.uk) or [scotland@eauc.org.uk](mailto:scotland@eauc.org.uk).