



A Strategic Approach to Education for Sustainable Development



University of
Salford
MANCHESTER

SDG focus

- ☑ Goal 4 - Quality education
- ☑ Goal 17 - Partnerships for the goals

What did you do?

We are developing our strategic and University-wide approach to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which has involved signing up to the SOS-UK programme Responsible Futures and launching an ESD Working Group in October 2024.

Working in partnership with Salford Students' Union (SU), student voice is at the heart of our ESD developments, with a student listening event focussed on 'Sustainability in your Studies' contributing to our approach.

Our ESD Working Group includes two paid student members, SU staff and a Student Officer, alongside colleagues from all our Schools and relevant Professional Services departments, as well as trade union representation. Chaired by our Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education & Student Experience, the group has developed an ESD action plan.

ESD related staff development is an essential element of the plan, delivered through our Post Graduate Certificate in Academic practice (PGCAP) as well as bespoke sessions to groups such as Student Officers and course/School Reps.



Image description: A group of colleagues taking part in an interactive workshop on the SDGs as part of the University of Salford Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice

What were the benefits and outcomes?

1. The University of Salford Strategy 2025-2030, 'Innovating to Enrich Lives', has four delivery themes, including 'Improving Environment and Sustainability'. This theme includes the statement that 'We will support our students to develop the knowledge, skills, values and behaviours necessary to be empowered and equipped to take action to support sustainability, and tackle and cope with the environmental, social and economic challenges we face today and in the future.'. Sustainability is also included in the new Education Delivery Plan and the University Sustainability Strategy includes a measure of success by 2030 that 'Education for Sustainable Development is embedded into all taught programme'.
2. Participants from our ESD training workshop for the PGCAP were asked at the start and end of the session how confident they felt in incorporating ESD into their practice from a scale of 1-10; the average increased from 2.5 at the start to 6.0 at the end, highlighting the effectiveness of the training. They also shared their key takeaways from the session, which included:
 - ESD extends beyond environmental matters e.g. social justice and equality.
 - How important it is to our students.
 - The session has been very thought provoking and I can now see the bigger picture and how I can play a small part in ESD.
 - The interconnectedness and importance of this globally and the need for it in industry. How we all have a responsibility to open conversations around this and implement this.
3. Having a more strategic approach to ESD has helped us to support other academic priorities and challenges such as Work Integrated Learning (WIL), and link subliminal and informal curricula more strongly with formal ESD. For example, increasing the

number and diversity of guest lectures and live briefs delivered by the Sustainability Team, including a number of student assessments focussed on tackling sustainability challenges at the University, strengthening the reach and impact of our Living Lab approach. Related to Living Labs, a group of academics including members of the ESD Working Group, have been successful in applying for the [SHAPE Impact Projects](#) initiative run by the British Academy and SOS-UK.

What barriers or challenges did you encounter in embedding sustainability into your learning and teaching practice and how did you overcome them?

1. From the beginning we wanted to place student voice at the heart of our approach to ESD and engage them with our developments in this area, but we initially struggled with how to achieve this. The Responsible Futures programme helped us to solidify our partnership working with the SU and we also began working closely/strategically with the Student Voice Team and Steering Group, with whom we collaborated to run a series of student sustainability focus groups, where the importance of sustainability being incorporated into their curricula was highlighted by students. We followed these up with a student listening event focussed on 'Sustainability in your Studies', which supported and corroborated these previous findings and provided us with more insights into some of our student's opinions on ESD. The outputs from this are contributing to an institutional ESD framework and with all of these initiatives, students were paid for their time.

We continue to engage students with our work by having paid student members in our ESD Working Group, delivering ESD training to course/School Reps, and a group of students will be paid to carry out our Responsible Futures audit in late 2025.

2. Compared to other areas of sustainability work, monitoring and measuring ESD can be more difficult. However, participating in Responsible Futures has supported this and we also worked with SOS-UK to carry out ESD curriculum mapping for Salford Business School. Four students were trained and paid to review module specifications against the SDGs and wider ESD criteria. The outputs have been valuable in determining an ESD baseline and identifying good practice and gaps, and we plan to carry out a similar exercise for our other Schools in the next academic year. We will then repeat this in 2030 to review our progress and determine if we have achieved the related measure of success

Promoting the Sustainability Skills Survey annually and analysing the results is also helpful, and for the first time we have had the environmental sustainability questions included in the NSS. We are also working with Student Voice to add an ESD related question to module evaluation surveys and we are planning an annual sustainability survey for staff.

3. In a large organisation it can be difficult to discover all the good ESD practice that is happening, but sharing this is a great way to encourage and inspire others. Our ESD Officer has been engaging with as many colleagues as possible across the University and developing case studies, attending University events to utilise existing networking opportunities and presenting at other relevant meetings/events. Having members representing all Schools in the ESD Working Group has also helped with discovering good practice, as has having an active ESD Community of Practice. Promoting the SDG Teach In has also been beneficial, with the details of the pledges shared helping to identify modules and courses for case studies.

What are your conclusions and recommendations for others?

We still have a lot of work to do to ensure that ESD is embedded into all our programmes, but believe we have made a good start in developing our strategic approach to this and progressing several areas.

Taking part in Responsible Futures has been effective in helping us to shape our University-wide approach to ESD and support our partnership working with the SU. The support offered and cohort catch-ups with other institutions are extremely useful, and we would definitely recommend the programme to others.

Having members from all our Schools and relevant Professional Services departments in our ESD Working group has also been beneficial, including in terms of discovering good practice, discussing ideas and making further progress.

We'd also recommend identifying how ESD links with other priorities within your institution and can help to deliver these, using internal and external networks to learn from others, and collaborating with other organisations.

Web link to further information

www.salford.ac.uk/environmental-sustainability/education-for-sustainable-development