

UWE Bristol and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): *Programme mapping portfolio*

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Knowledge Exchange for Sustainability Education (KESE)**

Acknowledgements

This document represents the work of over 100 staff across UWE, and many students. However, particular thanks must go to KESE departmental representatives who have encouraged and coordinated action within their disciplines, particularly:

- Georgina Gough (Geography and Environmental Management)
- Geraldine Lucas (Nursing and Midwifery)
- Grant Howie (Arts and Creative Industries)
- Ian Brooks (Computer Science and Creative Technologies)
- Janet Carruthers (Business and Management)
- Jo Buckley (Art and Design)
- Jon Mullholland (Social Sciences)
- Jona Razzaque (Law)
- Laura Fogg-Rogers (Engineering Design and Mathematics)
- Nicola Horner (Accounting and Finance)
- Peter Bradley (Economics)
- Sam Bonnett (Applied Sciences)
- Sonja Oliviera (Architecture)
- Steve Evans (Allied Health Professions)
- Verity Jones (Education and Childhood)

Thanks also to other individuals who have contributed to this initiative at points over these first five years, specifically:

- Anthony Wilkins and the BA (Hons) Fashion Communication team
- Christine Hill and the BA (Hons) Illustration team
- Deborah Southerland and the BA (Hons) Fashion Textiles team
- Emma Bird (Social Sciences)
- Fiona Spotswood (Business and Management)
- Grazyna Wiejak-Roy (Real Estate)
- Nadia Algosaibi (Engineering Design and Mathematics)
- Nick Simpson (Civil and Environmental Engineering)
- Paul Pilkington (Public Health)
- Svetlana Cicmil (Business and Management)
- Venkat Bakthavatchalam (Engineering Design and Mathematics)

Special mention to Jamie Roxburgh for his graphic design on the project and to Jim Longhurst (Assistant Vice Chancellor – Environment and Sustainability) for his support for and leadership of sustainability at UWE.

Final thanks to The Students' Union at UWE (particularly, Rachel Colley, Green Team Leaders and Student Sustainability Coordinators, Student Rep Coordinators, Will Hoskins, Sustainability Officers and Student Department Sustainability Reps) for their ongoing enthusiasm and engagement of students in sustainability initiatives.

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Introduction

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in June 2012, a process was initiated to formulate a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) for pursuing focused and coherent action on sustainable development. The SDGs emphasize the need to achieve balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This approach is premised on the recognition that sustainability requires full acknowledgement of the inter-linkages between these dimensions, and also between issues and sectors. Education has become increasingly visible in the international development agenda, and the SDGs provide a window of opportunity to reflect on and to advance an integrated approach to education. Such integrated approach to education planning will be necessary to achieve high quality education and wider development outcomes.

This document provides examples of ways by which programmes of study at UWE Bristol are engaging with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and using them to reflect on the content, delivery and outcomes of UWE's educational provision. Each of the 'maps' contained here was produced by leaders and academics from the programmes or discipline in question.

This work was the subject of an Advance HE Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence for the Knowledge Exchange for Sustainability Education (KESE). The five year project which has led to the creation of this document will inform UWE's ongoing commitment to the SDGs. Further curriculum mapping will take place, as will consideration of ways by which UWE's research activities contribute and align to the ambitions of the SDGs.

Students have played an important role in our work with the SDGs: Undertaking mapping, creating new reading lists for their peers, co-organising events, bringing back examples of action from industry and collaborating with their academic tutors to enhance our engagement with the SDGs. They will continue to be crucial partners in our SDG work over the next five years.

Mapping process: Overview

The project which is represented in this document has evolved over its first five years. The original activity involved considering what it might look like to 'map' a programme against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (hereafter, the SDGs). A set of ten maps were produced for a SDG Roadshow event which UWE hosted in 2017. The response from UWE staff engaged in what might, in retrospect, be referred to as a pilot, and from those who were presented with our initial exhibition, was so overwhelming positive, that plans were made to roll out the mapping across the institution. Since then, those involved have continued to explore various interpretations of the task and continued to be met with almost unanimous positive response. There are a few key elements of the process which has been undertaken which may be of value to others.

Defining the task

At the most basic level, the task has always been to undertake conscious and meaningful assessment of the alignment between the activities and actions of the institution (UWE Bristol) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. At programme level, this has most commonly been interpreted in one of three ways:

1. How well does the programme cover the SDG in its curriculum content?
2. How is knowledge from this discipline relevant to understanding the challenges within and helping to achieve each SDG?
3. How is professional practise in jobs linked to this discipline connected to each of the SDGs?

Less commonly, programme teams have given consideration to the ways by which a programme of study is delivered and alignment of that delivery with the ambitions of the SDGs. In some instances, those who are undertaking the mapping have identified their own interpretation but over time, the project team have provided more and more examples of 'how others have done it'. This has been helpful to accelerate responses but arguably has stifled the creativity displayed in the early stages of the project.

Finding 'local' meaning

Although there has always been a centrally identified purpose to the SDG mapping, it has been useful to enable programme teams to identify their own local meaning for this task. This often relates to other activities that are taking place at the time of mapping or soon afterwards such as programme revalidation with an external professional body, internally-driven curriculum review or specific programme enhancement agendas relating, for example, to student recruitment or employability. With a variety of ways to approach the SDG mapping, it has been possible for programme teams to tailor the task to meet those alternative objectives which has been useful for colleague buy in.

Once a programme team has identified key desirable outcomes of the mapping, they can then tailor the mapping process and outputs to those intended outcomes. For example, a programme that was keen to produce a map to attract future students might choose to

highlight the variety of activities across the programme that enable students to learn about and potentially take action for sustainable development. A programme team that was seeking to improve the employability outcomes of their graduates, might seek to create a map highlighting the variety of professional opportunities linked to knowledge that students will gain on a particular programme. If the desired outcomes include staff development, then it will be more critical that the entire programme team are engaged with the task.

Using staff 'champions'

As noted in the acknowledgements at the beginning of this report, there is a group who have been key to the activity documented here. This is the Knowledge Exchange for Sustainability Education (KESE) group. In the last few years, KESE has consisted of one representative from each academic department at UWE and has thus been able to champion the SDG mapping across the institution. The champion role has evolved over the course of the project. In the initial stages of the project, much time was spent interpreting the task and preparing examples relevant to disciplines which other colleagues could relate to. The original set of maps represented several disciplines from across the university. Over time, the champions have taken on more of a facilitation and coordination role within discipline areas. Within programme teams, on occasion, it has also been useful to identify a relevant champion, most commonly the programme leader. Sometimes this champion has been a student of the programme.

Building capacity

In relation to the process of mapping against the SDGs, the staff champions identified above have supported colleagues in understanding the task and producing content for their own programme or discipline map. This enabled the pace of mapping to increase as the years of the project have gone on. However, this project has had another notable role to play in capacity building across the university. The process of engaging in SDG mapping has enabled staff and students to develop not only a good understanding of the SDGs, but a deep awareness of the ways by which disciplines that they study or teach, and their own individual actions can contribute towards the achievement of both the Goals and institutional commitments for sustainable development.

Working together

The success of this project to date has without doubt been due largely to the collaborative and inclusive approach which has been taken from the very start. The project coordinator worked with one staff champion initially and this quickly grew into a shared process. The KESE group have shared their individual approaches, successes and challenges with each other at regular meetings each academic year and have learned from each other. The process of sharing example maps across the institution has broadened awareness of the diverse offering which the university has in terms of programmes and disciplines and has also facilitated the development of greater respect amongst disciplines. For the individual KESE members, professional partnerships have developed such that these colleagues now teach across disciplines on each other's modules and programmes and are collaborating on interdisciplinary research initiatives.

Working with students

Students have been important partners in our SDG mapping work and in the changes to teaching and learning and assessment practise which have followed mapping. The Students' Union at UWE have been important facilitators of student engagement; running events at which students have been made aware of and engaged in mapping activity. The Students' Union also created roles for students to act as sustainability reps within academic departments and these reps have often chosen to engage in SDG mapping or other related activity as part that Rep role. There is a particularly important role for students to play in relation to our SDG maps and the view which they give of our programmes of study. Academics will know what the intended outcomes of their programmes are but seeking the student perspective is critical to ensuring that our intended outcomes are achieved.

Sharing externally

As noted above, this project has grown out of an exhibition created for an externally-run but UWE-hosted event. From that point onwards, this has been a project that we have regularly shared externally, particularly at academic conferences focused on sustainability in higher education, but also broader teaching and learning contexts and in SDG forums. The response and discussion which have followed from presentation of this work at various stages of its development have been hugely supportive and positive, helping to encourage further activity and the continue evolution of the project.

Project outputs

The remainder of this document is broken down by academic discipline area. A short overview of bespoke activity undertaken within each discipline is provided, followed by examples of 'maps' created by the discipline. These are simply snapshots in time, representing a particular interpretation of the task and a particular perspective on the entity being mapped (module, programme, discipline). This is a live project and maps, programmes and the project itself continue to evolve.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS ONLY AN EXTRACT OF THIS REPORT, PRODUCED TO BE COMPATIBLE WITH UWE WEB REQUIREMENTS.

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<https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/9912189/uwe-bristol-and-the-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-programme-mapping-portfolio>

Concluding statement

This portfolio is intended to share examples of our thinking, process, outcomes and outputs as we have worked through our SDG mapping work. This remains a live project and we would be very happy to speak to anyone who would like to know more or to work with us to continue the evolution of the project.

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KESE reps 2021-22

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