Sustainability Teaching and Learning at the University of Manchester, UK

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Today’s format

- Social inclusion
- Environmental sustainability
- Social responsibility and civic engagement
- Prosperous communities
- Cultural engagement
- Better health

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"A rose by any other name would smell as sweet"

How would you define sustainability?
25 Nobel Prize winners among our current and former staff and students
One of the UK's largest universities.

The original English civic university.

Academic Ranking of World Universities

QS world university rankings

2 in the world for social and environmental impact

32

41
Purpose: our core goals

1. Research and Discovery
   Cognitio (knowledge)

2. Teaching and Learning
   Sapientia (wisdom)

3. Social Responsibility
   Humanitas (humanity)
Social responsibility is the contribution we make to society and the environment through our four core functions of research, learning, engagement and operations.

Social responsibility is both:
- a set of **values and a unifying theme** that give us purpose
- a set of **practical and measurable activities**
Five overall priorities for social responsibility and civic engagement

These five priorities are underpinned by a focus on
- Partnerships
- People
- Processes
What did you do, when you knew?

‘Climate change places a new lens on every field of study, requiring this and the next generation to ask: What did you do when you knew?’

Rachel Kyte CMG, Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. What did you do when you knew climate change threatened our world? Boston Globe. 24 Feb 2020.
“It is worth noting that [the destruction of the planet] is not the work of ignorant people. Rather it is largely the results of work by people with BAs, BScs, LLBs, MBAs, and PhDs.....Education can equip people to be more effective vandals of the earth. If one listens carefully, it may even be possible to hear the Creation groan every year in late May when another batch of smart degree-holding, but ecologically illiterate, Homo sapiens who are eager to success are launched into the biosphere” (Orr, 1991)

The truth is that without significant precautions, education can equip people merely to be more effective vandals of the earth” (Orr, 2004)
“No one discipline can claim education for sustainable development for its own, but all disciplines can contribute”

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“the extent to which students are motivated, passionate and curious about their programme of study, the HE provider community they live and work within and its immediate environs” (Peart et al., 2023)
“ESD gives learners of all ages the knowledge, skills, values and agency to address interconnected global challenges including climate change, loss of biodiversity, unsustainable use of resources and inequality. It empowers learners of all ages to make informed decision and take individual and collection action to engage society and care for the planet. ESD is a lifelong learning process and an integral part of quality education. It enhances the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural dimensions of learning and encompasses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment itself.”

UNESCO (2023)
ESD intersections across strategic priorities for student success.

- Enterprise and entrepreneurship
- Internationalisation
- Equality, diversity, inclusion (including decolonisation)
- Students as partners
- Civic engagement
- Health and wellbeing
- Employability
- Research and knowledge exchange
Eight UNESCO competencies for sustainability

**Ways of thinking** – systems thinking, future thinking, and critical thinking

**Ways of practising** – strategic, collaborative and integrated problem solving

**Ways of being** – self aware and normative

Gap between concept and practice (Acosta Castellanos and Queiruga-Dios, 2021)

Need to integrate into University curricula (Lozano *et al.*, 2017)
4 key methods to embed ESD:

• Covering “environmental” material in the courses,
• Adding a specific ESD course
• Incorporating ESD within existing courses,
• Specialising in ESD within academic facilities

(Drayson, 2015; Vogel et al., 2023)
Creating a Sustainable World: 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Challenges and the SDGs

University College for Interdisciplinary Learning (UCIL)

UG and PGT.

Credit bearing unit

[Link]
The Stellify Award

Stellify Award for Undergraduates

Read more >

Stellify Award for Masters Students

Read more >
Understand the issues that matter

Read more >

Complete at least two Ethical Grand Challenge activities:

Sustainability Challenge (Year 1)

Social Justice Challenge (Year 2)

Workplace Ethics Challenge (Year 3, final year)

Make a difference

Read more >

Complete 25 hours of volunteering which benefits the wider community:

Find a volunteering opportunity on Volunteer Hub or find your own.

You must record all your own volunteering activity on Volunteer Hub to count towards the award.

Step up and lead

Read more >

Complete two approved leadership roles (or one role for two years):

View our list of approved leadership roles and how to apply on the link above.
Living Lab approach

University focused

A university or college Living Lab is a means to address real-world institutional problems [real-world sustainability challenges] using a dynamic partnerships between all the institution's stakeholder groups. It facilitates collaborations that liberate intellectual potential and address practical challenges. Surprisingly, a Lab does not necessarily demand significant additional resources, it simply helps identify existing ones and redirects them to the right areas. (EAUC – Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges Living Lab Community of Practice)
Organisations need research. Students need to do assessment.

Why not do something useful? (O’Brien et al., 2021)

Our University Living Lab links applied research between organisations and our students to affect change.
43,000 students

= 7.5 million hours of research time
1. Organisation sets the research that they need to affect change for sustainable development. Framed around SDGs.
Database of projects.
• Can be ‘dropped in’ as assessment within a Unit.
• Can be inspiration for dissertations, coursework and so forth – we will close the feedback loop.
1. Organisation sets the research that they need to affect change for sustainable development. Framed around SDGs

2. Students chose the research and adapt from disciplinary perspective for their degree

3. Students undertake the research which is marked by their course leader

4. We return the research report to the organisation

5. The organisation shares impact of the research which we return to the student

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Employability and student experience in light touch way that has impact
Student feedback:

“I am a research intern and I think that without the research skills I gained during the project I wouldn’t have been able to get this position.”

Student feedback:

“The assessment style is the best I have had yet, it challenges 21st century challenges with the learning, and lets you interact with these challenges alongside a business - learning feels useful when it is put into real-world contexts”

Student feedback:

“I valued the value they place on us.....This course felt different, it tackles immediate problems to the world and the coordinators have set up this unit to make our voices feel important and valued.”
“Just wanted to share a very cool little win on the back of your report.

We've commissioned 2 ground Bubble Beehives for our new development.... I've attached some illustrations for our developers”
“helped to shift how we see the University as a partner, enabling us to work far more closely together to benefit from their expertise and capacity. I have seen value and impacts that will encourage me to continue to look for further collaboration opportunities with the University”.

Manchester City Council

Student feedback: “The idea that we can directly influence University policy is amazing.”

Student feedback: “I have never considered myself as a change maker for sustainability before”
Royal Geographical Society with IBG

Values:
Responsible fieldwork RGS 5

Principles
1: Learning in the field
2: Sustainable fieldwork
3: Safe, responsible and ethical fieldwork
4: Accessible and inclusive fieldwork
5: Staff in the field

https://www.rgs.org/research/higher-education-resources/fieldprinciples/
• Systems approach of values and activities
• Partnership/living lab approach brings together our research, teaching and operations for ‘sustainability’
• A number of signature programmes – Living Lab is an open offer of partnership


• Cook-Sather A (2016) Creating brave spaces within and through student-faculty pedagogical partnerships. Teach Learn Together High Educ 1:1


• O’Brien, J., Evans, J., Karvonen, A., Millard, L., Wendler, J., Blakey, J. and Jones, R. (2021). Brokering applied research between students and organisations to affect change for sustainable development. COP26 Universities Network Case Study (online) available at: https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_814636_smxx.pdf

• O’Brien, J., (2019) Empowering students to create a sustainable world University of Manchester Magazine (online) available at: https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/magazine/opinion/empowering-students/ accessed 12/01/2022


• Peart, D., Rumbold, P., Fukar, E., (2023) Student Engagement through Partnership: a literature review. Advance HE
