

# A Five-Step Framework for a whole-institution approach to embedding ESD

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Teaching, learning and assessment



## Audience

Student representatives or student groups, senior management, professional services staff, academic staff.

## Background and aims

The aim of the Five Step Framework is to provide a shared pathway and common language for achieving the university aspirations to embed Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into all our courses by 2025 and to give students a voice in sustainability decision-making.

The framework provides a clear, empowering route for anyone in the institution to consider what ESD means to them, begin conversations about ESD in their local contexts, and to embed ESD in their curricula through five key steps:

- 1 **Engage:** engaging staff and students in thinking about what sustainability means to them
- 2 **Learn:** encourage thinking around the kind of curricular activities that can support learning in this area
- 3 **Apply:** the importance of opportunities to apply ESD skills, knowledge and values in order to embed learning
- 4 **Share:** sharing learning with others, reinforcing learning as well as developing collaborations and partnerships across campus and beyond.
- 5 **Influence:** in creating a more sustainable world our graduates have a key role to play and so this step foregrounds leadership qualities and skills.

The Framework is informed by Mitchie et al's (2014) COM-B model of behaviour change. Their model suggests behaviour change requires an individual to have the appropriate knowledge, skills and disposition as well as appropriate motivation and opportunity to develop and sustain new ways of being. As a result the ESD framework looks not only at the knowledge and skills needed to appreciate and respond to sustainability challenges but also includes aspects with a focus on values and motivation (Step 1) and opportunities to apply learning in practice (Step 3).

## Intended Outcomes

- + for academic staff to develop their own awareness about ESD
- + for academic staff to devise their own route to embedding ESD in their curriculum
- + for senior management to apply a clear framework within an institution to help with the journey to embedding ESD.

## Process for achieving outcomes

We collaborated with our Students' Union to understand how sustainability issues are understood and matter within the student body. We established an ESD working group co-chaired by our Deputy Vice-President for Education and the SU Development Officer, finding staff-student partnerships vitally important in building a case and strategy for implementing ESD across campus. ESD is part of our comprehensive Sustainability Strategy, supported by our University Executive Board creating an overarching policy context for work at departmental/programme level.

Our Marketing and Communications Team developed a virtual university-wide launch attracting Departmental Learning and Teaching Leads, supported by i) our 5-Step Guide to implementing ESD campus-wide and ii) Five-Step ESD video. Our SU delivered a parallel student facing virtual launch event (recordings available on request). We are implementing our ESD strategy over five years with each year focusing on the next step in our framework giving departments a common pathway with SMART goals. We have a growing bank of resources to support each step and offer tailored CPD via Elevate, our teaching and learning support team.

## Top tips to embedding ESD

- + build a high-level collaborative staff-student lead group to explore and develop consensus on sustainability concepts and priorities
- + develop a plan for implementation over a realistic timeframe
- + gain top-level institutional and SU support
- + identify departmental 'pathfinders' who can develop and share good practice
- + identify and build on existing assets and achievements
- + establish a webspace to share learning, resources, training and support
- + review practice: establish SMART goals, success measures and ways of celebrating and sharing achievement.

Further information can be found in our Five-Step Guide for Education for Sustainable Development (see supporting resources). The guide describes an institution-wide process for developing and implementing teaching and learning activities to support student learning about sustainable development. Each step of the framework has a set of reflective questions to support thinking and action. Department/programme leads can use the steps and associated questions to scaffold their work to develop and embed ESD within courses. The guide includes links to a range of resources (p 24) including, for example, the [Nations United: Urgent Solutions for Urgent Times video](#) produced by the UN to highlight the Sustainable Development Goals and the fragility of our planetary existence. This video is an example of the type of stimulus resource for Step 1 of the Five-Step Framework which invites staff and students to reflect on how sustainable development issues relate to their disciplines and courses. Either virtually, or in person, the video could be presented to students/staff as a starting point for identifying knowledge, skills and values, subject priorities and aspirations for developing and integrating ESD within course curricula, via work/community-based placements, dissertation projects and extra-curricular activity. We are inviting departments to submit annual reflections on their progress at each progressive step of the Five-step framework over the next five years.

## Evaluating impact

Our Sustainability Strategy was launched in November 2020 and our ESD strategy and Five-Step Framework were launched in March 2021, so our evaluation process is in process. We are basing our evaluation on achievement of locally determined SMART goals for each of the five steps in our framework with our focus for 2021 on Step 1, Engage. We have invited departments to consider our associated reflective questions (Five-Step ESD Guide, p 10), and to offer written reflections on progress made and evidence (eg summary of events/activities held to enable staff and students to exchange perspectives and interests on sustainable development; summary of common interests identified). In the coming academic year we will encourage departments to move onto Step 2, Learn, when they will use the next set of reflective questions (p 12) to look, for example, at the knowledge, skills and attributes (KSA) needed to address sustainability challenges, identify connections with the subjects they teach and think about small incremental goals to embedding the KSA in their courses. We have proposed a student intern initiative to support pathfinder departments to identify good practice from a student perspective to strengthen our evaluation process.

## Supporting resources

Education for Sustainable Development at the University of Sheffield (The Five-Step Framework for ESD) which has links within it to further resources (p.24 and throughout):

[drive.google.com/file/d/1ANOC5Em\\_HxzdoGLBstQCE2uRBndRmqpo/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ANOC5Em_HxzdoGLBstQCE2uRBndRmqpo/view?usp=sharing)

Short video (7.5mins) explaining the Sheffield Five-Step Framework (applicable to other institutions):

<https://digitalmedia.sheffield.ac.uk/media/>

[The+FiveStep+Framework+for+Education+For+Sustainable+Development/1\\_3nrk2bua](https://digitalmedia.sheffield.ac.uk/media/The+FiveStep+Framework+for+Education+For+Sustainable+Development/1_3nrk2bua)

Michie, S, van Stralen, M M and West, R. The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implementation Science*, 6 (42) (2011). Available at: [doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-6-42](https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-6-42)