

# The SDG challenge: Encouraging business school educators to embed sustainability into their teaching

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## Institutional Context

Part of the University of Glasgow, Adam Smith Business School has over 300 staff and 6,000 students.

## Audience

Academic staff

## Intended outcomes of the project

- + to provide a 'nudge' approach to encourage embedding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across the Business School curriculum
- + to create a supportive and collegial structure to introduce staff to the SDGs
- + to identify good practice examples of sustainability within courses, that can be shared across subject areas.

## Outline of the activity

In 2020 we launched the SDG Challenge. The SDG Challenge started during Covid 19, and due to the pivot to online teaching we knew teaching staff would be revisiting their course delivery. This seemed an opportune time to challenge teaching staff to integrate one or more of the SDGs into their teaching and course content. We provided a number of short sessions introducing the SDGs to staff, established an online space with resources and presentations staff could utilise for course delivery, and provided ideas of different approaches to embedding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), from relatively 'lite' in terms of using particular examples, towards more sophisticated ways of integrating them into assessments and intended learning outcomes.

The SDGs offered a starting point to talk about sustainable development issues and their relevance to business education. We didn't assume that staff would have any knowledge of the SDGs, so staff didn't feel exposed. Neither did we conduct a curriculum mapping exercise, but instead wanted to encourage a focus on the impact of aligning curriculum content to the SDGs and making this connection explicit to students. We gave staff ownership of how they chose to integrate the issues covered by the SDGs, while offering guidance and resources. Any course that takes up the SDG Challenge can now use a custom designed SDG Challenge Badge which draws staff and student attention to both sustainability issues and that the module/course is taking this seriously.

## Guidance

- + integrating it into existing curricula is vital
- + make sure that ownership of such a project sits within a current committee or function (such as learning and teaching, or a departmental executive)
- + give educators plenty of opportunity to ask 'silly questions' and don't assume a baseline knowledge
- + be aware that the SDGs themselves are open to critical reflection
- + be inclusive in ensuring examples are provided across all levels and subject areas

- + provide ways to be open and honest about the institutions complicity in NOT achieving these goals and what can be done around this
- + embed information about projects and links to project leaders within staff induction
- + don't create separate communication channels for such projects, but instead embed them into existing communication with staff and students
- + offer opportunities for examples of practice and practical tips to be shared – these are always well attended at the University of Glasgow
- + influencing up is crucial; identify resistance and the reasons behind the resistance from teaching staff, then identify how you can respond to that resistance and the issues raised in a practical way
- + identify how such projects explicitly link to achieving strategic targets such as connecting with professional and accrediting bodies' objectives, improving student experience and satisfaction and demonstrating innovative practice. This will all help gain support for the continuation and further development of this type of initiative.

## Useful resources

We will be developing videos of staff talking about their experiences of the SDG Challenge, which we are happy to share. They will be publicly available through our [Responsible and Sustainable Management microsite](#).