



Achieving Sustainability: Potentials and Barriers



GD306

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Module Co-ordinator

Option - Second and final year

Term 2

15 CATS

9 x 2 hour workshop

Available to students from all faculties, except for students from the School for Cross-faculty Studies.

Please note: The information on this page relates to the 2020-21 academic year.

This module is not currently open to students from the School for Cross-faculty Studies.

Principal Aims

Sustainability is the most significant societal challenge of our age and it is therefore imperative that all subjects should be engaging with this critical topic that will be so central to their future life and career. Thus the module aims to present the issue of sustainability from a variety of cross-disciplinary perspectives, including academics with expertise in the natural, applied and social sciences and humanities but also people with direct engagement with sustainability issues in estates, in careers and from outside the university. In doing so, it will provide a variety of sources of knowledge that will allow students to connect to their own experience, but also to provide a multifaceted understanding of the topic.

Other aims:

- To make students aware of the urgent issues around sustainability, sustainable development and how they are relevant to their own study area;

- To facilitate conversations between students and teachers in different subject areas, on the key topics of sustainable development.

Principal Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this module, students will demonstrate:

- An advanced understanding and critical perspective of the relevance of sustainability discourses for different disciplines;
- Articulate and interpret the main theoretical and empirical issues relating to what is sustainable and what is not;
- An ability to engage with different outlooks on sustainability and use evidence to evaluate a variety of policies relating to the topic;
- An ability to articulate a detailed and evidenced-based account of unsustainable economic, environmental and social activities on societies, individuals and habitats;
- Critically evaluate the scope and limitations of market influences, law and politics on individual and collective decisions affecting sustainability;
- Formulate advanced mechanisms and policies for adaptation and mitigation, including how these may be funded, that outline a path to achieving sustainability.

Syllabus

The range and order of topics will be decided in collaboration with guest contributors from different university departments, but it is intended to provide an overview of the traditional pillars of sustainability: economic, social, environmental and governance, as well as an understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals. The module will address both the problem of defining what is actually meant by 'sustainability' and the challenges to achieving it, from a range of perspectives

To do this will require answering questions that are scientific, philosophical, legal, psychological, social, economic, political and technological. This is why interdisciplinary approach is ideal here.

The module will be taught so as to be accessible to undergraduates from all faculties. Students will not require detailed scientific, mathematical or social science skills or background. It will present the topics below, perhaps with others not currently known, and in an order that will depend on discussions with contributors.

Overview of Weekly Topics:

Week 1 - Introduction to sustainability, climate change and planetary boundaries;

Week 2 - The Sustainable Development Goals - a legal and governance perspective;

Week 3 - Unsustainability: some causes and possible cures - a psychology perspective;

Week 4 - Fuel is free! An energy and engineering perspective on sustainability;

Week 5 - The Economics of sustainability - a market perspective;

Week 6 - Corporate sustainability and sustainable business models;

Week 7 - Managing the environment for future generations - a life sciences and ecosystems services perspective;

Week 8 - Education for sustainable Development;

Week 9 - Sustainability and climate change adaption/mitigation - a political perspective on loss and damage ;

Week 10 - The final session will include a facilitated discussion/debate and revision.

Assessment: 15 CATS

Exam: 2 hour seen exam (60%)

Coursework: 2500 word essay (40%)

Contact Us

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