



SDS 4HEI

HIGHER EDUCATION MISSION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Module 1

Importance and Relevance of the SDGs for Your Career



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WP 4 - Massive Open Online Course
(MOOC) for Strategic
inter/transdisciplinary

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Glossary of Terms

Term	Explanation
Activities	Specific actions that individuals undertake within various experiences to actively develop the skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to align with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
Active Engagement	The intentional and proactive involvement in tasks, discussions, or activities, where individuals fully participate, contribute ideas, and remain focused on achieving specific outcomes
Career	The journey of professional roles, skills, and experiences an individual undertakes throughout their working life, shaped by personal goals and external factors like societal needs and industry changes
Career Competencies	Essential skills, knowledge, and abilities that individuals need to manage and succeed in their careers effectively
Career Development	The ongoing process of managing and advancing one's professional growth through education, skill-building, gaining experience, and setting career goals
Career Goals	The specific, measurable objectives that individuals set for their professional growth and development
Career Paths	The planned or evolving routes that individuals follow as they progress through various jobs and roles within their professional lives
Career Planning	Setting career objectives and creating a structured path to achieve them.
Continuous Learning	Ongoing process of acquiring new knowledge, skills, and experiences throughout an individual's life or career
Emerging Sectors	Newly developing industries or fields that are experiencing rapid growth and are expected to play a significant role in the future economy
Experiences	Practical engagements that help individuals gain skills, knowledge, and competencies related to sustainable development and align their personal and professional goals with the SDGs
Holistic Approach	Understanding that SDGs must be addressed comprehensively, integrating economic, social, and environmental dimension
Interdisciplinary Approach	Understanding that SDGs must be addressed through collaboration between different disciplines to solve complex problems
Interdisciplinary Collaboration	Process of integrating and combining knowledge, methods, and perspectives from different academic disciplines or fields of

Term	Explanation
	expertise to address a common problem or achieve a shared goal
Intervention	A deliberate action or set of actions designed to change a particular situation
Indicators	Measurable signs or metrics are used to assess progress toward achieving a specific goal or target.
Logic Framework	A tool used to map relationships between inputs, activities, outcomes, and impacts in the context of employment and SDGs
Reskilling	Process of learning new skills to transition into a different job or industry
SMART System	The goal-setting framework is designed to ensure that objectives are well-defined and attainable by making them: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound
Sustainability	The result-oriented, long-term goal aims for a balanced relationship between economic, social, and environmental dimensions
Sustainability Dimensions	Sustainability encompasses interconnected economic, ecological, social, and cultural dimensions that must be equally considered
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	The global objectives set by the United Nations to achieve a better and more sustainable future
Sustainable Career Development	The process of aligning one's career goals and pathway with sustainability principles and practices
SDG Targets	Specific, measurable objectives set within each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide global efforts toward achieving sustainable development by 2030
Transformative Approach	An approach that emphasizes significant, system-wide change toward achieving SDGs
Transdisciplinary Collaboration	Collaboration that goes beyond just integrating disciplines and involves engaging stakeholders from various fields, transcending the boundaries of individual disciplines, and incorporating diverse perspectives to address broader societal challenges
Transferable Skills	Versatile abilities and competencies that individuals develop through various experiences and activities, can be applied across different jobs, industries, and career paths
Upskilling	Enhancing or expanding existing skills to stay competitive and advance within a current job or industry

1 Introduction to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

1.1 Defining SDGs



What to expect?

- Difference between sustainability and sustainable development
- The “three pillars” of sustainable development
- Role of SDGs in addressing global challenges

Sustainability is **result-oriented** and a **long-term goal**, while sustainable development is an ongoing, open, reflexive, and **path-oriented process** towards achieving sustainability as a goal (Everard, 2013; Siegel & Terstriep, 2023). Following an **all-dimensions approach**, the three pillars of sustainable development goals are: **(1)** economic development, **(2)** social development, and **(3)** environmental protection, where sustainable development is understood as the many efforts to establish harmony between these mutually reinforcing dimensions and thus reach sustainability (Siegel & Terstriep, 2023).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present a set of **global objectives**, resulting from the **multilateral effort** among the United Nations (UN) member states to **shift the world** towards more **sustainable** and **resilient pathways**, considering the needs of society and pressing global challenges (Caiado et al., 2018). As global objectives, SDGs address the resolution of various social, economic, and environmental challenges to create a better world and life for all (Sachs, 2012). Finally, the SDGs serve as a **globally shared blueprint**, not only defining the SDGs but also providing a comprehensive framework and means to guide the actions and policies necessary to reach these objectives (UN, 2015).



TAKEAWAYS

- Sustainability is a long-term goal, while sustainable development is an ongoing process toward achieving that goal.
- Sustainability is all-encompassing, consisting of three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental.

Learnings:
What to take with you?

- SDGs provide a global blue-print to guide global actions and policies toward sustainability.

1.2 Historical development of SDGs



WHAT TO EXPECT?

- The transition from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Key milestones in the development of global sustainability efforts.
- Overview of the 17 SDGs and their universal application.

The discussion and ideation around sustainable development goals started in 1992 when UN member states adopted **Agenda 21**, a comprehensive plan for global, national, and local environmental action. Consequently, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was created in response to growing global environmental challenges and increasing awareness of the need for sustainable development driven by concerns such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable resource use, which highlighted the urgent need for coordinated international action (UN, 1992; UNCED, 1992).

The next step was **the Millennium Declaration** adopted at the Millennium Summit in 2000. UN member states agreed on eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), mainly aimed at reducing extreme poverty by 2015. MDGs were designed to correspond to the needs of developing countries and economies in transition in the globalization process, to make their participation more inclusive and equitable (UN, 2002).

Figure 1. The Millennium Development Goals



Source: This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-


The concept of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emerged in 2012, replacing the Millennium Development Goals at the **Rio+20 Conference**, where member states adopted the document "The Future We Want", agreeing to develop 17 SDGs while building upon 8 MDGs. While MDGs focused on developing countries and economies in transition, the SDGs applied universally, and are considerably more comprehensive and ambitious (Sachs, 2012). SDGs were created on the principle of "no one left behind," implying that SDGs and targets should be met for all nations and people and all segments of society (Long, 2018).

In 2015, the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** was adopted, resulting in a global plan to eradicate poverty, achieve sustainable development, ensure peace, and empower all individuals through the implementation of 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (UN, 2015; UN, 2024).

Figure 2. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Source: United Nations (2024).




TAKEAWAYS

- The SDGs evolved from earlier global efforts, starting with Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- The SDGs are more comprehensive and universal, focusing on inclusivity and "leaving no one behind."
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development outlines 17 goals aimed at addressing global challenges.

Learnings:
What to take with you?

1.3 Overview of SDGs



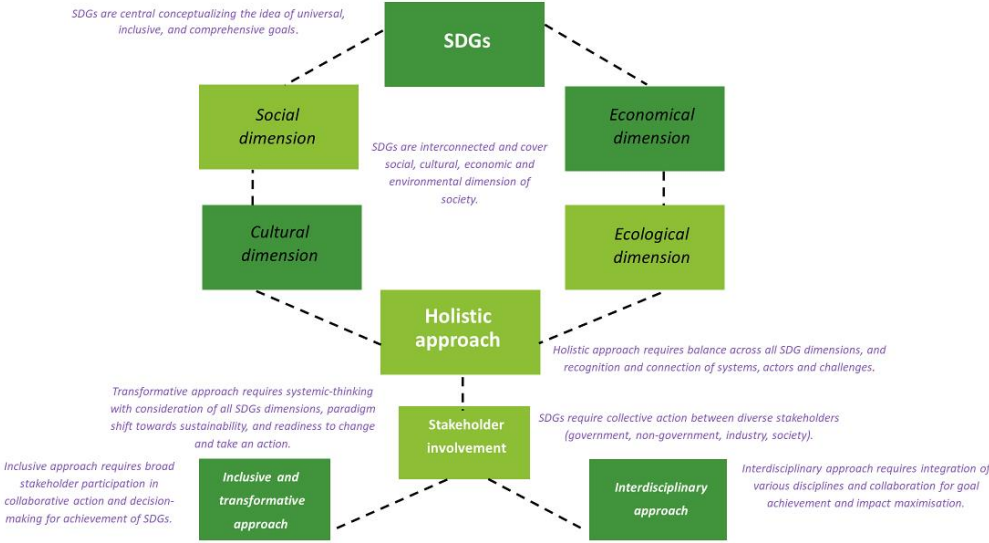
WHAT TO EXPECT?

- Understanding the universal and interconnected nature of SDGs, structured around five key priority areas.
- Insights into the holistic, inclusive, and transformative approaches necessary for achieving SDGs in all dimensions.
- The importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and collective action for the successful implementation of SDGs.

SDGs are **universal, inclusive, and comprehensive** goals with a key theme of “leaving no one behind”. They are **interconnected** as illustrated by **five priority areas**: People (SDGs 1-6), Prosperity (SDGs 7-10), Planet (SDGs 11-15), Peace (SDG 16), and Partnership (SDG 17). They require a **holistic approach** with recognition of social, economic, ecological, and cultural dimensions (Jayasooria & Yi, 2023), with each dimension building upon the other (Sachs, 2012). This holistic segment ensures proper balance between all dimensions of society (Scharlemann et al., 2020).

The implementation of SDGs requires the **expansion of roles and responsibilities** at multiple levels and organisations (Panta, 2021), where **collective action** among different stakeholders, government, non-government, industry, and society, is instrumental in achieving goals (Horan, 2022). In essence, SDGs involve a **broader range of stakeholders** and emphasize a more **inclusive and transformative approach** to implementation (Elalfy et al., 2021). SDGs also require a **shift in conciseness** towards values and roles that promote universal integration for sustainability (Smith, et al., 2018), and **investment** into areas, skills, infrastructure, policies, and ecosystems supporting the change (Sachs et al., 2019). Besides the holistic and transformative approach, the **interdisciplinary approach** is essential for SDGs, where universal and complex global challenges require interdisciplinary efforts to create solutions and maximize impact (de Leon et al., 2018).

Figure 3. Overview of SDGs' dimensions and approaches



Source: Author's own creation



TAKEAWAYS

- The SDGs are universal, inclusive, and interconnected goals, addressing five priority areas: People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace, and Partnership.
- A holistic approach is needed to balance the social, economic, ecological, and cultural dimensions of sustainable development.
- Achieving the SDGs requires inclusive, transformative, and interdisciplinary approaches with consideration of all sustainability dimensions and broader stakeholders' involvement across disciplines and fields of expertise.

Learnings:

What to take with you?



REFLECTION

- How do the social, economic, ecological, and cultural dimensions of sustainability intersect in your own life and community?
- What local or global challenges resonate with you, and how could you apply a holistic approach to address them?

Reflection:

What to think about

Further Resources:

United Nations (2018). *Do you know all 17 SDGs?*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XTBYMfZyrM>

PROJECT Everyone (2024). THE GLOBAL GOALS, Take Action Today. [Website page]. <https://www.globalgoals.org/take-action/>

2 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Career Relevance

2.1 Relevance of SDGs for career development



WHAT TO EXPECT?

- Exploration of how careers are shaped by both economic and social factors.
- Understanding the growing role of SDGs in guiding professional practices and career development.
- Insights into how higher education institutions (HEIs) are aligning their programs with SDGs, preparing students for sustainability-focused careers.

A career is not purely an economic construct, but it is also motivated by **social factors** from the outset, where a career brings labour, educational, social, health, well-being, environmental, peace, and justice benefits. Nowadays, societal challenges are being entailed in career aims to align towards global relevance, credibility, and currency (Robertson, 2021).


The SDGs are guiding **work-related practices** as well as environments. They and **shaping narratives** around future careers (Picado-Valverde et al., 2022), while emphasizing responsibility, ethical identity, and sustainability in professional development, and fostering commitment to ethical values and alignment with global goals (Robinson & Arrigoni, 2023).

Professionals, institutions, organisations, and nations worldwide are trying to **attain SDGs**, while increasingly engaging in sustainable development issues, focusing on the development of sustainability-related skills and practices to align with current and future trends and challenges (Kurz, 2022). Employers are also placing a growing emphasis on sustainability, requiring graduates to possess a **sustainability-oriented** mindset and familiarity with the SDGs (Alm et al., 2022). There is future demand for careers contributing to the realization of SDGs (Gamlath, 2022).

In the context of higher educational institutions, SDGs play a crucial part in meeting institutional goals and assisting the performance of social roles and social impact (Fauzi et al., 2023; De la Poze et al., 2021), but also provide a **better-quality education**

and **job opportunities**, offering an education for careers relevant to sustainable development (Browne, 2023).

While fostering SDGs at university, students cultivate essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes to address sustainable development (Price et al., 2021), and are better prepared for career and purpose-driven trajectories (Fang & O'Toole, 2023). Consequently, universities enhance the value of students' degrees, making them more competitive and appealing to employers (Winfield & Ndlovu, 2019). For example, universities implement **experiential learning approaches**, such as **collaborations** and **project-based learning**, allowing students to tackle real-world issues, often in partnership with industry, NGOs, and other external partners (Fang & O'Toole, 2023). Similarly, **competitive** and **transdisciplinary learning** approaches can help students achieve multiple SDGs while gaining practical skills for gainful employment (Selvi et al., 2019). These approaches not only enhance the value of students' degrees, making them more competitive and appealing to employers but also contribute to societal transformation and the realization of sustainable development on a global scale (Khare & Stewart, 2024).




TAKEAWAYS

- Careers are not only economically driven but also shaped by social and environmental factors, aligning with global challenges.
- SDGs are increasingly influencing professional practices, requiring a sustainability-oriented mindset and skills.
- Universities play a crucial role in preparing students with SDG-related skills that enhance employability and societal impact.

Learnings:
What to take with you?

2.2 Developing career competencies through SDGs



WHAT TO EXPECT?

- How integrating SDG-related knowledge and skills impacts students' career paths.
- Insights into the key career competencies developed through SDG education.
- How SDG education enhances students' employability, leadership potential, and ability to create real-world solutions for sustainability challenges.

Knowledge and skills related to the SDGs profoundly impact **students' career paths**, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development, adapt to future career orientation, tasks, and challenges, but also develop a sense of responsibility and awareness of their role in work and life context (Fusco et al., 2021; Sgaramella & Ferrari, 2024).

By integrating the SDGs into **education** and **professional practices**, students can effectively address global challenges, drive positive change, work towards a more sustainable future (Leicht et al., 2018), enhance career relevance (Leite, 2022), embrace change in **career development** (Skene & Malcolm, 2019), develop curiosity and sustainability-related competence for future careers (Collier et al., 2022), and use competencies in daily life and work relations (Alm et al., 2022).

Among instrumental **career competencies**, students develop through the integration of SDGs into education, are an enhanced understanding of sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility (Fang & O'Toole, 2023), interpersonal competencies (Alm et al., 2022), problem-solving competencies, social innovation skills (Skene & Malcolm, 2019), collaborative conflict resolution and management, community activism and transformation (Picado-Valverde et al., 2022), collaborative advancement, community revitalisation, mindset for sustainable work practices (Ohta et al., 2022), and other. Besides competencies, students develop positive emotions like empathy, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and control for the future (Picado-Valverde et al., 2022), and positive self-perception of employability, that result in easier job finding and better earnings (Alimehmeti et al., 2024).

Except for career importance, embedding SDGs in education can inspire students to develop **real-world solutions** to sustainability challenges, and grow into **future leaders** pioneering sustainable development (El-Jardali et al., 2018).



TAKEAWAYS

- Integrating SDGs into education equips students with essential skills and knowledge to contribute to sustainable development and adapt to future career challenges.
- Through the integration of SDGs in education, students gain critical competencies such as sustainability, ethics, problem-solving, and social innovation, making them more competitive in the job market.
- SDG education fosters leadership, empathy, and a positive self-perception of employability, leading to greater career opportunities and personal growth.

Learnings:
What to take with you?



REFLECTION

- What sustainability-related skills or competencies do you think are most important for your future career?
- In what ways can your university help you develop career skills relevant to sustainability?
- How does the idea of integrating SDGs into your career change your perspective on your role in addressing global challenges?

Reflection:

What to think about

Further resources:

Coursera (2023). Sustainable Development: Goals, Importance, and Career Guide. [Article]. Coursera. <https://www.coursera.org/articles/sustainable-development?isNewUser=true>

Evans S. (2024). Going Green: Why Building Sustainability Skills Can Help Advance Your Career. [Blog]. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/business/learning/blog/top-skills-and-courses/why-building-sustainability-skills-can-help-advance-career>

3 Integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Into Professional Career Goals

3.1 Setting career goals aligned with SDGs



WHAT TO EXPECT?

- Experiences and activities where students can gain sustainability knowledge and skills, with support through university courses, extracurricular activities, and activities outside of curricula experience.
- Tool to help students align their careers with SDGs.

Achievement of SDGs is only possible through the **active engagement** of professionals with diverse stakeholders, where professionals and workers act as agents of change, developing solutions to resolve sustainability challenges and move barriers towards understanding jobs in the 21st century (ILO, 2013).

Students, as **future professionals**, should actively engage in sustainability and align their future career goals with SDGs. In particular, students should: **(1)** develop a consciousness of sustainability in careers, **(2)** embrace roles that promote sustainability, but also foster innovative and sustainable changes within organizations, **(3)** actively envision and shape future careers while critically engaging with the professional field to create useful knowledge for the future, **(4)** understand and integrate cultural sustainability into careers through appreciating the holistic nature of sustainability, that is the social, economic and environmental dimension of sustainability, and **(5)** adopt an interdisciplinary approach to sustainability, which allows addressing complex challenges of sustainability through careers, but also make them more effective and adaptable in future professions (Janhonen-Abuquah et al., 2018).

“Students should align their future career goals with the SDGs by developing sustainability awareness, embracing roles that drive sustainable and innovative change, shaping their careers with a critical, forward-thinking mindset, integrating the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability, and adopting an interdisciplinary approach to effectively address complex global challenges.”

Even though students might have an interest in setting career goals aligned with SDGs, they may lack awareness, knowledge, and support. Therefore, they should acquire education on sustainability either through course offerings or some other form of

educational programmes and **activities** that involve engagement and support (Pallant et al., 2020). This can be done through university infrastructures, external organisations and mediums, and the community, where students can act as agents of change and either use available **experiences** or create new ones (Delaney & Horan, 2020). Take a look at **Table 1**. presenting a structural approach towards aligning career choices with SDGs. It emphasizes the vital role SDGs play in shaping career paths and highlights the various avenues through which students and other individuals can engage with SDGs.

Table 1. Experiences and activities at university, external organizations, and society to align SDGs with career choices:

Experience to align SDGs with careers	Activities to align SDGs with careers
University	
Curricula Experience	Elective or mandatory courses covering sustainable development and SDGs.
Co-curricular Experience	Workshops, training, internships, independent studies, projects, and other curricular activities that enhance SDG-related knowledge and skills.
Extra-curricular Experience	Joining clubs, volunteering, attending events, and engaging in activities outside the curriculum to enrich SDG-related knowledge and skills.
Advisory and Mentorship Experience	Consultation hours and guidance from academic staff, professionals, or mentors to select courses and activities that align with future career goals.
Peer-to-peer Experience	Joining clubs, alumni networks, and groups that promote sustainability and align careers with SDGs.
External organizations (e.g., governmental, non-governmental, industry, and other stakeholders)	
Professional Development Experience	Opportunities provided by external organizations (e.g., fellowships, mentorships, internships, professional training) that enhance career choices and opportunities.
Collaboration Experience	Engaging with external stakeholders to apply knowledge, exchange experiences, and participate in sustainability solutions (e.g., research, project organization).
Networking Experience	Joining networks focused on sustainability to stay informed about trends and collaborate on initiatives involving SDGs.
Capacity and Policy Building Experience	Engaging with stakeholders to contribute to the development of sustainability policies at governmental and institutional levels.
Impact and Outreach Experience	Participating in or creating your own interventions and initiatives that raise awareness about sustainable development and SDGs, leading to career opportunities and recognition (e.g., campaigns, events, media outreach, community outreach).

Society (herein, local, regional, and global community)	
Community of Practice (CoP) Experience	Creating or joining communities focused on sustainability to share knowledge and resources across sectors.
Advocacy and Policy Development Experience	Engaging in advocacy to shape public discourse and contribute to policy actions for sustainability (e.g., advisory councils, campaigns, public demonstrations).

Source: Author's own creation

Engaging in **experiences outside of curricula** can enhance graduates' chances in the selection process in terms of future sustainable employment and help them gain **transferable skills** (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017), as key career skills. **Continuous learning** and **collaborations** with various stakeholders are also essential for navigating a career in the 21st century (Donald et al., 2018).

The tool below is designed to guide you in aligning your education and career development with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Use the tool to take practical steps and actions, build relevant skills, engage with your university, external organizations, and society, and make a meaningful impact in your chosen field.



TOOL

- Participate in elective or mandatory courses covering sustainable development and SDGs to build foundational knowledge.
- Participate in elective or mandatory courses covering sustainable development and SDGs to build foundational knowledge.
- Engage in workshops, internships, projects, or similar activities that focus on practical applications of foundational knowledge on sustainability.
- Join student clubs or organizations on your campus that promote sustainability to develop skills outside the classroom and foster peer-to-peer collaboration.
- Schedule consultation hours with your mentors to align your career path with sustainability-focused opportunities, courses, and the knowledge and skills you have already developed.
- Build relationships and network with peers outside of your campus, such as local and industry networks or alumni groups, that support SDG-related career development opportunities for students.
- Seek professional development opportunities such as fellowships, internships, or training programs offered by the networks you build, as well as by external organizations that emphasize sustainability.

- ❑ Collaborate with external stakeholders (NGOs, governments, industry) on projects addressing real-world sustainability challenges to scale up your skills and ideas.
- ❑ Join sustainability-focused networks, both onsite and virtually, to stay informed about the latest trends and initiatives aligned with SDGs.
- ❑ Participate in policy-building initiatives that contribute to the creation or enhancement of sustainability practices at the institutional or governmental level.
- ❑ Lead or support community outreach campaigns that raise awareness of local SDG issues to inspire action.
- ❑ Form or join communities of practice with like-minded peers focused on sustainability to foster knowledge-sharing across sectors.
- ❑ Advocate for sustainability-focused policies through public speaking, advisory councils, or local campaigns to influence change.
- ❑ Track your progress and contributions to SDGs by identifying key indicators of success within your career journey.
- ❑ Celebrate your successes by sharing your stories through community engagement, social media, blogs, or events, inspiring others to contribute to SDGs.

Depending on the type of experience and activity you select in **Table 1**, this tool can help you align your career goals with the SDGs. It is recommended to go beyond the experiences and activities listed in Table 1 and place them in the broader context of your professional career development, university environment, society, and external stakeholders for maximum impact.



TAKEAWAYS

- Achieving SDGs requires professionals to act as agents of change, actively collaborating with diverse stakeholders to address sustainability challenges.
- Universities, external organizations and society play a crucial role in supporting students by providing SDG-related experiences and activities that help students develop sustainability-oriented skills.
- Students should engage in experiences and activities outside the curricula to build career-relevant skills and create or participate in SDG-driven initiatives.
- Gaining transferable skills and engaging in continuous learning and collaboration through various SDG-related experiences enhances employability and adaptability in an evolving job market.

Learnings:
What to take with you?

3.2 Key sustainability and SDG-related skills for career



WHAT TO EXPECT?

- Importance of acquiring relevant sustainability-related skills for employment.
- Key frameworks for guiding students in skill development aligned with sustainable development.
- Core skills essential for work and life in the 21st century.
- Tool to assist the development of essential skills for work and life in the 21st century.

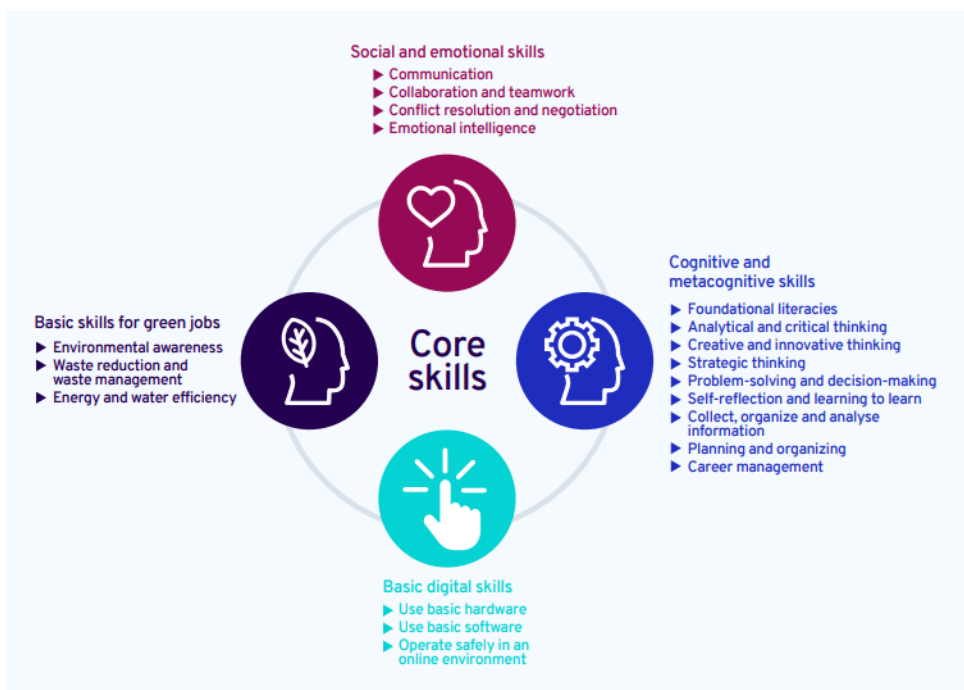
While embracing experiences towards aligning **career goals** with SDGs, key **sustainability and SDG-related skills** are developed. Those skills help students prepare for productive and fulfilling careers as well as their meaningful participation and positive impact on society. Skills and careers in alignment with SDGs are explicitly mentioned in the UN 2030 Agenda, in particular, SDG4 and its target:

"By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship." (target 4.4)

"By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development." (target 4.7)

During the last decade, different **frameworks of key competencies** for sustainable development in alignment with SDGs have been developed. Some of the most relevant are the UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) framework, OECD's key competencies, and GreenComp: the European sustainability competence framework. In terms of careers, the International Labour Organization (ILO) **Global Framework on Core Skills for Life and Work in the 21st Century** emphasizes 19 core skills essential both for work and life, grouped into four categories: **(1)** social and emotional skills, **(2)** cognitive and metacognitive skills, **(3)** basic digital skills, and **(4)** basic skills for green jobs. The use of any framework should be considered while accounting for individual, country, and organization contexts.

Figure 4. ILO global framework for core skills



Source: ILO (2021). Global framework on core skills for life and work in the 21st century.

The tool below is designed to assist you develop key ILO skills by taking practical steps within university and external environments, building relevant competencies, and aligning your career development with the demands of the modern job market and SDGs.

TOOL

- ❑ **Identify Core Skills:** Review each category of skills (Social and Emotional, Cognitive and Metacognitive, Basic Digital, and Green Skills) and assess which areas you excel in and which need improvements.
- ❑ **Set Goals:** Based on your self-assessment, set specific, measurable goals to develop your core skills.
- ❑ **Take Action:** Engage in relevant activities and experiences at university, external organisations, and society that directly target skill development within each core area.
- ❑ **Track Progress:** Regularly reflect on how your engagement with these skills impacts your academic and career development, and adjust your activities accordingly.



TAKEAWAYS

- Critical skills for SDG-aligned careers include social and emotional skills, cognitive and metacognitive skills, basic digital skills, and basic skills for green jobs, as outlined by frameworks such as UNESCO's ESD, OECD's key competencies, and ILO's Global Framework on Core Skills.
- Continuous learning and collaboration with stakeholders are essential for navigating careers in the 21st century, especially in sustainability-focused roles.

Learnings:

What to take with you?



REFLECTION

- What skills do you need to focus on developing to prepare for the evolving demands of a 21st-century, sustainability-focused job market?
- How do you plan to align your future career goals with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?
- How can you leverage university, external organizations, and society engagement to build the skills necessary for a career aligned with SDGs?

Reflection:

What to think about

Further reading:

Wilson M. (2017). Using the SDGs to guide your sustainability career. [Article]. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/using-sdgs-guide-your-sustainability-career-mel-wilson/>

Hwang, S. & Kim, J. (2017). UN and SDGs: A Handbook for Youth. UNESCAP Publishing. <https://www.unescap.org/resources/un-and-sdgs-handbook-youth>

Orduña N. (2022). How to Build a Career in Sustainability. [Article]. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2022/02/how-to-build-a-career-in-sustainability>

International Labour Organisation (2021). How to choose my future profession? A step-by-step guide for job seekers. ILO Publishing. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/how-choose-my-future-profession-step-step-guide-job-seekers>

4 Future Career Trends and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

4.1 Preparing for future career paths



WHAT TO EXPECT?

By the end of this section, you will understand different approaches to measuring impact, gain insight into the concept of a logic model, and explore the two essential schools of thought behind these frameworks.

In today's rapidly changing job market, where individuals will have to change their jobs multiple times during their careers (ILO, 2023a), **aligning future careers** with the SDGs is essential (Gamlath, 2022). As society gravitates towards sustainable living, employers and businesses increasingly prioritize social responsibility and sustainability, understanding and integrating SDGs into **career planning** can enhance employability and relevance in the workforce.

A growing number of businesses are embedding SDGs into their corporate strategies, reflecting a **shift toward sustainable practices** (Whittingham et al., 2021; PwC, 2022). This alignment not only prepares students for future job opportunities but also enables them to contribute positively to societal challenges, making them valuable assets in organisations that prioritize ethical and sustainable development.

4.2 Future career challenges

The evolving world of work presents significant **future career challenges** as the economy adapts to various environmental, technological, demographic, political, and social changes (Akanbi et al., 2021). Climate change and environmental degradation not only threaten productivity but also disproportionately impact vulnerable populations. While transitioning to sustainable forms of the economy could create millions of jobs, it necessitates substantial investment in **reskilling and upskilling** to mitigate rising unemployment and inequality (ILO, 2019a).

The International Labour Organization estimates that by 2030, nearly 25 million jobs could be created, but about 7 million may be lost, requiring effective **labor reallocation** and **training for new roles**. Additionally, gender disparities in **access to education and employment** persist, particularly in technology and sustainable sectors, limiting women's career choices (ILO, 2019b; ILO, 2023b). The **global jobs gap**, which stood at approximately 473 million in 2022, highlights the pervasive lack of employment opportunities beyond traditional unemployment statistics (ILO, 2023b). As economic conditions fluctuate, young people, especially young women, face heightened

challenges in securing stable employment, underscoring the need for strategic career planning aligned with emerging job markets.

4.3 Future career opportunities and emerging sectors

Future career opportunities will be driven by **emerging sectors** such as the **green economy** (renewable energy specialists, bio-economy professionals, ecosystem restoration experts), **blue economy** (marine biologists, coastal management professionals), and other sectors like the **knowledge economy** (data scientists, AI specialists), **care economy** (healthcare workers, elderly care providers), and **orange economy** (creative industry professionals, artists). These sectors not only offer job opportunities but also contribute to environmental conservation and social equity while covering SDGs. These sectors require future targeted policies, investment in infrastructure, and skill development to ensure that job creation aligns with sustainability and the broader goals of the SDGs.

Digitalization and **technology advancements**, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics, will transform the job landscape, creating new roles while displacing others (ILO, 2022). While digitalization and technology may impact jobs, other factors such as **globalization**, **population aging**, and **urbanization**, will also influence employment trends. Growth is expected in education, healthcare, and public sector occupations, while some low-skilled jobs in construction and agriculture may be more resilient than previously thought (Bakhshi et al., 2017). **Interdisciplinary** and **trans-disciplinary collaboration** is crucial for addressing complex sustainability challenges in the future job market, and there is a need for integrating knowledge from applied sciences, social sciences, and humanities to tackle global issues (Bililign, 2013). This approach requires breaking down traditional disciplinary barriers and fostering collaboration between diverse actors, occupations, and fields (Hackett, 2020).



TAKEAWAYS

- Aligning career paths with sustainability goals enhances employability and relevance in a changing job market.
- Employers prioritize social responsibility and sustainability, making students who understand SDGs valuable contributors to solving societal challenges.
- Factors like globalization, population aging, and urbanization will influence future employment trends, with growth expected in some sectors.
- Growth sectors like the green economy, blue economy, knowledge economy, care economy, and orange economy offer significant career opportunities aligned with SDGs, contributing to environmental conservation and social equity.
- Technological advancements, particularly in AI and robotics, will reshape the job market, creating new roles while displacing others.
- Addressing complex sustainability challenges requires interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary collaboration,

Learnings:

What to take with you?

combining knowledge from applied sciences, social sciences, and humanities.



REFLECTION

- How can you stay adaptable and proactive in addressing the challenges of a rapidly changing job market?
- What steps can you take to ensure you are equipped with the necessary skills for reskilling and upskilling in response to the evolving labor market?
- How can you contribute to sustainability and social responsibility in your future profession, and what roles could you play as an agent of change in solving societal challenges?
- How will advancements in AI, digitalization, and technology impact the career path you are interested in, and what can you do to stay ahead of these changes?

Reflection:
What to think about

Further reading:

PE Global (2024). The Rise of Sustainability: Green Jobs and Green Skills. [Article]. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/rise-sustainability-green-jobs-skills-peglobalinternational-szgxe/>

Hunter J. (2021). Graduate careers: four tips for students who want to work in sustainability. [Blog]. Times Higher Education (THE) Student. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/advice/graduate-careers-four-tips-students-who-want-work-sustainability>

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5 Monitoring and measuring career impact on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

5.1 Evaluating organisational impact on SDGs

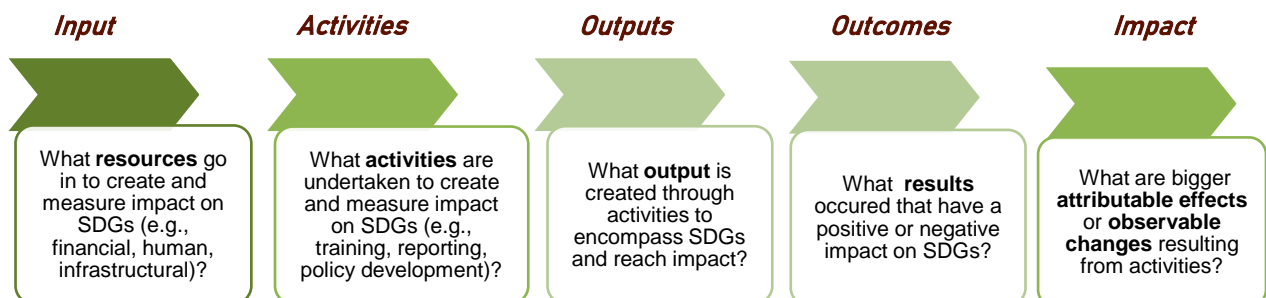
 **WHAT TO EXPECT?**

- Understanding how individual careers and organizations can evaluate their impact on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Learning how the Logic Framework helps organizations assess their contributions to SDGs by mapping relationships between activities, outputs, and long-term impacts.
- Gaining insights into how SMART indicators can be used to evaluate and track personal career impact on SDGs.
- Recognizing the importance of monitoring individual and organizational contributions to SDGs.

The individual careers, societal structures, and global SDGs are interconnected (Gunz et al., 2011), where sustainable individual career trajectories depend on and influence societal structures (Lawrence et al., 2015), and therefore measuring career impact on SDGs is highly relevant.

The **Logic Framework** is a valuable tool for evaluating and visualizing the impact of employment and the SDGs. It helps organizations map the relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and long-term impacts (Haggard & Burnett, 2006). This approach can be applied to assess the effects of employment on sustainability, in particular the SDG 4 targets (Gupta et al., 2023). When combined with self-assessment tools like the *SDG Impact Assessment Tool*, organisations can evaluate their contributions to the SDGs and develop strategies to mitigate negative employment impacts and enhance positive ones (Eriksson, 2019). Take a look at the Logic Framework in **Figure 5**. for measuring the impact on SDGs.

Figure 5. Logic Framework and SDG Impact Measurement

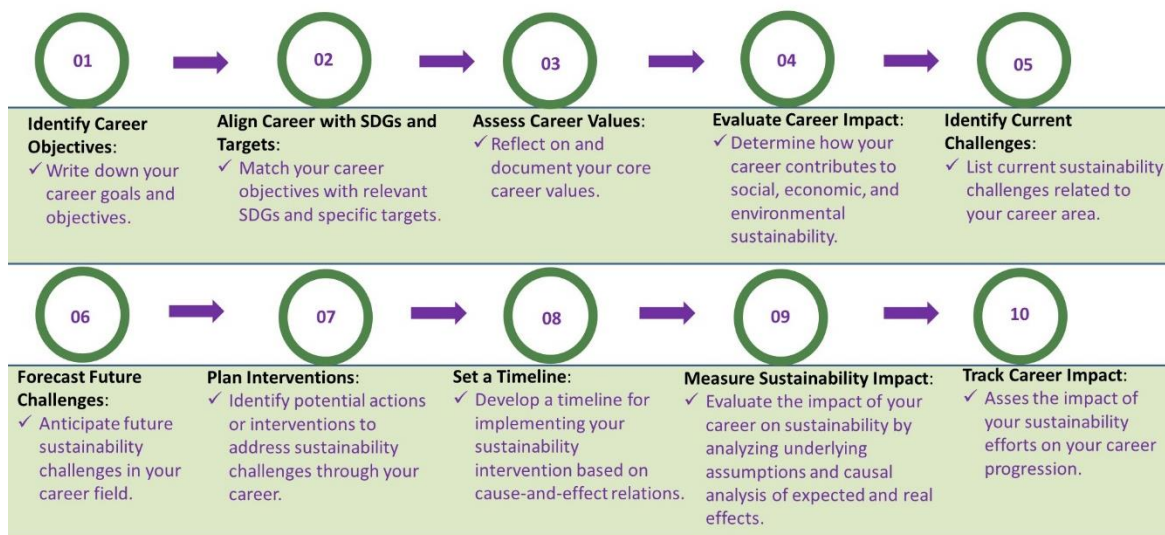


Source: Author's own creation


5.2 Evaluating individual impact on SDGs

The **SDGs and targets** are valuable frameworks for evaluating and visualizing the impact of individual careers on SDGs. Each SDG is broken down into a range of targets, with a total of 169 targets. According to these targets, indicators are being established for monitoring and evaluating progress on each SDG to ensure high transparency and accountability within the 2030 Agenda. Indicators for targets should be created based on quality criteria, for example, described by the **'SMART' system**: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (Siegel & Terstriep, 2023; Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska et al., 2021). Take a look at **Figure 6.**, outlining 10 **indicators** for measuring career impact on SDGs.

Figure 6. Individual career and SDG impact measurement



Source: Author's own creation



TAKEAWAYS

- Individual careers, societal structures, and global SDGs are closely linked, with career trajectories influencing societal structures and vice versa.
- The Logic Framework is a useful tool for evaluating the impact of employment on SDGs, and mapping relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact.
- Organizations can use tools like the Logic Framework and SDG Impact Assessment Tool to assess their contributions to the SDGs, mitigate negative impacts, and enhance positive ones.

Learnings:
What to take with you?

- The SDGs and their 169 targets serve as valuable frameworks for evaluating individual careers that contribute to SDG progress.
- Indicators for measuring career impact on SDGs should be based on the 'SMART' criteria: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, to ensure transparent and accountable progress monitoring.



REFLECTION

- How can you evaluate the impact of your career choices on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?
- What tools, can you use to measure the sustainability of your career and its contributions to the SDGs?
- How can you apply the 'SMART' system (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) to set clear indicators for tracking the progress of your career's impact on the SDGs?
- In what ways can you ensure that your career path contributes positively to societal structures and global sustainability efforts?

Reflection:
What to think about

Further resources:

UNDP, UNODC, & OHCHR (2024). Global Progress Report on Sustainable Development Goal 16 Indicators. At the Crossroads: Breakdown or Breakthrough for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. <https://www.undp.org/publications/2nd-global-progress-report-sdg-16-indicators>

6 Practical Assignment

6.1 Exercise: Integrating SDGs in Career Pathways

This exercise challenges you to analyze a real-life career scenario where a new sustainability consultant, Jordan, seeks to integrate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their firm's operations and client services. The case study involves navigating complex environmental, social, and economic challenges that intersect multiple SDGs. Your task is to identify relevant SDGs, develop a holistic strategy for their integration, and reflect on how this process can shape your career development.



Instructions

1. **Analyze the case study:** Carefully read the scenario and identify the key challenges Jordan faces.
2. **Answer the assignment questions:** Use critical, holistic, and interdisciplinary thinking to address the provided questions, while focusing on SDG relevance, integration strategies, and the connection to career growth.
3. **Create a personalised action plan:** Use the provided canvas template to develop your action plan. Tailor your responses based on your field of study or professional interests.
4. **Reflect on your work:** Consider how the insights gained from this exercise can be applied to your career, and how aligning with SDGs can enhance your professional trajectory.

6.2 Exercise: Career Journaling

This career journal exercise encourages you to engage in reflective learning by regularly documenting your thoughts, challenges, and progress related to your career development. By linking your career journey with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this journal helps you make intentional choices that align with both your personal aspirations and broader societal impacts.



Instructions

1. **Use the journal template consistently,** whether daily, weekly, or monthly to reflect on your career path.
2. **Focus on your achievements, challenges, and opportunities,** and consider how your actions align with the SDGs.

3. **Be honest in your reflections**, regularly review your entries to track progress, and adjust your goals as needed.

7 Conclusion

Integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into professional careers is increasingly crucial as global challenges intensify. Aligning career goals with SDGs not only boosts employability but also fosters meaningful contributions to societal transformation. The skills and values associated with sustainability are becoming essential across industries, and emerging sectors like the green and blue economies offer new opportunities for careers that directly support global goals. As the job market evolves, continuous engagement with sustainability initiatives, skill development, and interdisciplinary collaboration will be key. By aligning careers with SDGs, professionals can ensure their work contributes to both personal success and a more sustainable, equitable world for all.

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