

Embedding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Your Teaching

Why ESD?

UNESCO recognises ESD as essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ESD empowers learners to make informed, responsible choices for a sustainable future. Trinity's ESD Curriculum Design Framework adapts this vision to support staff in embedding ESD into modules and programmes.

The Trinity ESD Curriculum Design Framework

This framework has **four key elements**:

1. **ESD Themes** – based on the SDG “wedding cake” (biosphere, society, economy), with partnerships cutting across all layers.
 2. **ESD Competencies** – the skills, values, and attitudes students need to contribute to sustainability.
 3. **Pedagogical Approaches** – learner-centred, action-oriented, and transformative.
 4. **Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (TLA) Strategies** – practical methods to put the approaches into action.
-

Three Steps to Embed ESD

Step 1 – Identify Relevant SDGs & Themes

- Review your module/programme and note where SDGs or ESD themes naturally appear.
- If none are obvious, consider how topics could connect to sustainability issues.

👉 Resource: [Quick Start Guide](#)

Step 2 – Develop ESD Competencies

- Check which competencies your current learning outcomes already address.
- If needed, reframe outcomes so students develop sustainability skills such as critical thinking, systems analysis, or collaboration.

Step 3 – Align Teaching, Learning & Assessment (TLA)

- Use strategies that match UNESCO's pedagogical approaches:
 - **Learner-centred**: group discussions, peer learning
 - **Action-oriented**: real-world projects, problem-solving
 - **Transformative**: reflective activities, visioning exercises
 - Align assessments so they reinforce these approaches.
-

Practical Tools & Resources

- **ABC Learning Design** – plan learning activities using six types of learning ([link](#))
 - **Transition Makers Toolbox** – activities to foster collaboration and resilience ([link](#))
-

Key Takeaway - You don't need to redesign everything at once

- **Start with just one thing**—map your SDGs, add a sustainability-focused outcome, or swap one activity for a more action-oriented one. Small changes add up.

👉 Resources: [Quick Start Guide](#) and [Trinity ESD Curriculum Design Framework](#)

📌 **Remember**: ESD isn't extra—it's a way to make your teaching more engaging, relevant, and future-focused.