



Teaching the world a greener way: sustainability education

UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030) programme prioritises five key areas: policy, learning environments, educators, youth, and local communities. While most countries now include some form of climate change education, many still focus narrowly on environmental aspects, overlooking the social and economic pillars of sustainability. Cross-disciplinary integration remains limited. Though new frameworks and toolkits support sustainability in formal education, tracking progress is difficult.

A major challenge is embedding sustainability as a core element of education across all levels and subjects. Mandating sustainability education is vital to create a clear pathway from school to Higher Education (HE) and employment, ensuring future generations are climate literate. The University of Birmingham's policy recommendations offer a strong framework to support this transformation.

The following recommendations are based on work led by:

- Professor Julia Myatt - Professor in Collaborative Education
- Professor Jeremy Pritchard - Professor of Life Sciences Education
- Dr Samantha Dobbie - Birmingham Institute of Forest Research Learning and Engagement Lead
- Dr Justyna Bandola-Gill - Assistant Professor in Sociology and Social Policy
- Dr Daniel Cottle - Associate Professor of Physics Education
- Rebecca Keogh - Deputy Director Foundation Programmes, Dubai Campus
- Max Williams - Guild of Students



If you would like to find out more about the University's work in this and other research areas, please contact publicaffairs@bham.ac.uk.

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National Policy Recommendations

- Support **alignment of curriculum development** with the three pillars of sustainability and consider beyond UN SDGs and 2030 to encompass all major academic discipline areas in primary, secondary, and HE. Progress should be reported on an annual basis and needs to be monitored through a requirement for an annual report or plan and part of the Ofsted school inspection process for schools.
- Require **consistent and connected approach** from school, through to HE and employers in the sustainability and 'Green Skills' space. A single standardised language, methodology and competencies framework that broadens understanding of sustainability underpinned by a common assessment framework.
- Invest in **mandatory professional development**, training programmes and resources for all educators on cross-disciplinary sustainability education and competencies.
- **Embed sustainability education** directly into the recently reformed standardised initial teacher education curricula developed by the Department for Education in England.
- **Facilitate collaboration and co-creation** between key stakeholders — including special interest groups, national forums, learned societies, students, academics and teachers to deliver the above recommendations and support schools to develop their Climate Action Plans.

International Policy Recommendations

- Working together as an international community to **support a cohesive approach** and learn from one another to bridge the gaps and ensure a common language is used from early years through to HE.
- Support education at a global scale by **developing resources appropriate for a local context** and present country-specific case studies in local languages.
- Provide **frameworks that incorporate cultural and language needs** that are informed and developed by Indigenous Peoples, to ensure a collaborative approach is taken.
- Encourage **global cooperation** between HE institutes to ensure students can operate in an international context, using mechanisms such as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and virtual initiatives across the world.
- Align education activities with **UNESCO's comprehensive agenda** to address the urgent call for investment in women's and girls' education in Africa.

70% of University students across the globe feel that sustainable development should be included in all disciplines

84% of young people (aged 16 - 25) are worried about climate change (survey of 10,000 young people from across the globe)



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