

Bringing Sustainability into our Classrooms

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by **Lara McInnis, Professor in the Teaching & Learning Centre**

Our collective ability to mitigate the climate crisis depends on how strongly we value the health and well-being of humans, animals, and plants. To ensure a sustainable world for future generations, we must prioritize universal access to clean air, fresh water, post-secondary education, health care, and nutritious food.

We know that many people are not able to enjoy these basic human rights. Over the past three years, COVID-19, war, unrest, poverty, and natural disasters have [reversed any meaningful progress in these areas](#) (UN SDGs Report, 2022). In Canada, human rights violations continue, with [ongoing systemic racism and violence towards Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit peoples](#), and many First Nations communities dealing with [unsafe drinking water advisories and improper sanitation](#).

There is an urgent need to acknowledge and address these issues through meaningful conversations with students, whose well-being is directly and indirectly impacted by these challenges.

What does it mean to bring sustainability into the classroom?

Integrating sustainability into your teaching means designing meaningful and authentic learning activities and assessments. It means committing to [an ongoing personal relationship with the land](#). It means encouraging and managing uncomfortable conversations. It means showing humility and vulnerability to learn alongside – and from – students.

How do I get started?

The Teaching & Learning Centre offers ongoing support to faculty embarking on their sustainability journey. For instance, we recently developed a [Framework to Integrate Sustainability into Curriculum](#) in consultation with subject-matter experts in the Seneca

community who generously shared their knowledge and time. This self-directed tool links to [Seneca's Sustainability Plan \(2021-2026\)](#) and related resources such as First Peoples@Seneca's [Skoden](#) resource and Seneca Libraries' [Sustainability Guide](#).

The framework asks: What is sustainability? Why sustainability? How can I integrate it into my courses? Where do I go next for resources and further support?



We invite you to interact with the framework in a way that works for you. As you explore, consider which sustainability resources might help students develop the knowledge and skills to prioritize their health and well-being and make meaningful change in their communities and workplaces.

If you are interested in developing strategies to bring sustainability into your classroom, you can reach out to teaching@senecacollege.ca. Also, be sure to keep an eye out for upcoming announcements on sustainability workshops and webinars.

As educators, we have a shared responsibility to connect our courses to environmental, social, and economic sustainability and to address these challenges openly and honestly in the classroom, regardless of our subject matter, industry, and credential. By addressing sustainability in the classroom, we are showing students that we value their identities and lived experiences while helping them develop the skills to navigate challenges and rapid changes in a complex world.

Sustainability Resources

- The Teaching & Learning Centre's [Framework to Integrate Sustainability into Curriculum](#)
- Seneca's [Office of Sustainability](#)
- [Skoden](#): First Peoples@Seneca's open-access resource for faculty and staff
- Seneca Libraries' [Sustainability Guide](#)
- United Nations' 17 [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)

- [The Sustainable Development Goals Report \(2022\)](#)
- Sustainability in the Classroom: [Reference List](#)

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