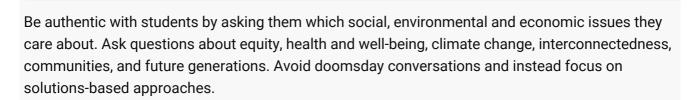# Sustainability in Curriculum

Version 5

Integrating sustainability into curriculum creates exciting opportunities to enhance student growth and development. It may already be a part of your practice, but is it obvious to your students?

How might we integrate sustainability explicitly into curriculum? We can do this in several ways:

1. Real-World Learning: Being authentic in our practice.

2. Learning Outcomes and Objectives: Revising or adding learning outcomes.

3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Enhancing course content with sustainability topics.

4. Student Reflection: Engaging students through discussion topics that are relevant and meaningful.

5. Seneca as a Living Lab: Designing assignments and activities around real-world challenges.

1. Real-World Learning

Be authentic with students by asking them which social, environmental and economic issues they care about. Ask questions about equity, health and well-being, climate change, interconnectedness, communities, and future generations. Avoid doomsday conversations and instead focus on solutions-based approaches.

- Connect course learning outcomes, materials, activities and assessments to the real world.
- Use sustainability examples in class conversations.
- Create assignments that invite students to engage with the Seneca community and other communities to which students belong.

2. Learning Outcomes and Objectives

Below are some sustainability focused learning objectives. How might you adapt these for your subject area?

Example 1: Accounting Course

- Topic: Carbon Accounting
- Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy
- Learning Objective: Analyze social, environmental and economic impact of auto manufacturers' lithium battery expenditures.

Example 2: Human Resources Course

- Topic: Conflict Resolution
- Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- Learning Objective: Collaborate within cross-functional groups on conflict resolution techniques.

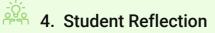**Example 2: Asset Management Course**

- Topic: Corporate Social Responsibility
- Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 15 – Life on Land
- Learning Objective: Reflect on the harmful effects of unsustainable resource extraction on Indigenous communities around the world.
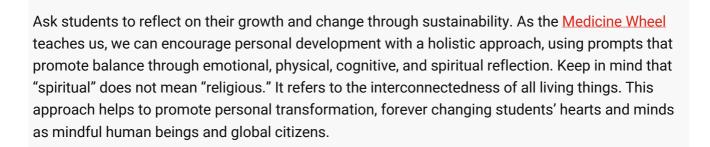
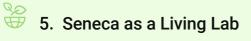## 🐍 3. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Back to top

Invite students to make connections, reflect on their lived experiences, share opinions and beliefs, and take meaningful action in support of the SDG targets.

- Focus on awareness building over mastery. Just talking about the SDGs with enthusiasm is enough to get started.

- Draw connections. Prompt students to "map" topics to SDGs.

- Keep it simple. Pick two or three SDGs that interest you and your students. Share interesting facts and stories that relate to that SDG. Ask students to do the same.

- Incorporate the SDG tiles as visual cues. Stock photos provided by Adobe and Mentimeter include SDG gifs and images for free use. You can also download the SDG communications package for free use (Knudsen, 2023).

- Introduce the SDGs through videos, conversations, and assignments.

- Map your course learning outcomes, activities and assessments to the SDGs.

4. Student Reflection

Ask students to reflect on their growth and change through sustainability. As the [Medicine Wheel](#) teaches us, we can encourage personal development with a holistic approach, using prompts that promote balance through emotional, physical, cognitive, and spiritual reflection. Keep in mind that "spiritual" does not mean "religious." It refers to the interconnectedness of all living things. This approach helps to promote personal transformation, forever changing students' hearts and minds as mindful human beings and global citizens.

🌱 5. Seneca as a Living Lab

The campus is like a city. With its infrastructure and operations supporting our diverse community, Seneca's campuses present real-world problems and environmental, social, and economic challenges for students to explore. Through living lab projects, students investigate problems, test ideas, and create solutions through hands-on work.

This approach does not just benefit students, but also helps build a sustainable campus. Living lab projects can be carried out by students from different programs in the form of capstone projects, class projects, and internships. Explore Seneca's Campus as a Living Lab site and contact Sustainable Seneca team to discuss Campus as a Living Lab opportunities in your course: sustainability@senecapolytechnic.ca.

🌍 Explore more teaching strategies and examples at this self-directed learning module: Teaching Sustainability.

Looking for support? Feel free to reach out to the Curriculum Integration team by emailing teaching@senecapolytechnic.ca

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