



Integrating the SDGs into a Course or Lesson Plan



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In response to the SDGs, universities and schools around the world are stepping up their activities, embedding the SDGs into their strategies and, most importantly, their curriculum. The challenging question is- How can you integrate the SDGs into one of your core courses?

Reflective Questions

1. Is the course or lesson plan related to the outside world? If Yes. What are the issues?
2. Are these issues related to one or more SDGs? If Yes, Which and How?
3. Are there any further suggestions on how to better integrate these SDGs into the course?
4. If the course or lesson plan is Not dealing with the outside world, why is it so?
5. How could the course or lesson plan be related to the outside world in relation to SDGs?
6. Why introduce the SDGs in the course or lesson plan?
7. What are some of the ways that the SDGs could be incorporated into the course or lesson plan?

AN EXAMPLE

<https://primetime.unprme.org/2016/08/22/integrating-the-sdgs-into-the-business-and-global-society-course-hult-international-business-school/>

What is the Business and Global Society Course?

The Business and Global Society course is a required course in the MBA and EMBA programmes at Hult International Business School. Students are first introduced to the “big picture” of macro-economics (e.g., movement of labor, capital and the role of government) and the global issues (risks, impact) such as those addressed at the World Economic Forum. Against this backdrop, the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact

are introduced as a potential universal ‘code of conduct’ for business, along with the SDGs as potential opportunities. To address these global issues, the tools and skills that are interwoven into the course include analytical and systems thinking, stakeholder engagement, and collaboration.

Why introduce the SDGs in the course?

One of the basic questions in economics has been, why do the rich countries seem to get richer, and despite trillions in aid, the poor remain poor? And, as we move through the 21st century, the growing gap between rich and poor has been identified as one of the greatest threat to world security and prosperity.

If companies are going to continue to thrive, they are going to need skilled employees and educated consumers. The pursuit of the SDGs is not just morally right but economically essential.

The SDGs are about bringing the majority of the world—the ‘other’ 6 billion people – into the economy. Addressing the SDGs and business growth and economic stability are integrated.

To be good business leaders is going to require thinking more in systems – understanding how to think about unintended consequences of their actions, how to work more closely with governments, NGOs, and other non-business players.

Everything is interconnected. That is why macro-economics and the UN Global Compact’s Ten Principles intersect. To attract investment, governments need to crack down on bribery. To increase their labor force, companies need to help their employees develop skills. The roles between players are converging. Governments need business resources, business needs government’s access, both need the trust that NGOs bring.

What are some of the ways that the SDGs are incorporated into the course?

Students are asked to select one of the 17 Goals, then to slice it into a manageable chunk, and then ideally within a specific [geographic] place. They consider which industry/company might be appropriate to take the lead as the nodal organization. i.e., which firm makes sense? So, for example, if we look at access to education as a goal, and we think about the need that tech companies have for highly skilled workers in future, is there a way that tech companies can partner with governments to create programmes that build the skills they will need? And at the same time improve the incomes of these new workers, who then become consumers?

The idea is that fulfilling these goals is not about charity. It is about creating a healthier, more prosperous society through enabling people to improve themselves. The proposals need to make business sense. They need to engage the right players – business, government, NGOs and — create an eco-system that benefits each.

I am impressed every year with the creativity students exhibit, and how they get the ‘systems’ piece. We’ve had students addressing how to re-integrate FARC members into society through training; how to provide access to water through introduction of new systems; how to scale a local enterprise in Ghana building bikes of bamboo by partnering with a multi-national corporation; how to improve well-meaning projects of

corporations like Coca-Cola to be more effective in rural communities... the list goes on!

Any challenges?

The biggest challenge – and the one I seek to be sure the students are getting – is that this is not charity. Charity doesn't work. This is about business partnering with governments, NGOs, etc. to create economic inclusion, which in the end benefits both. A prosperous, stable society is good for business, and business is good for creating that stability. In the end, whether you believe in the moral argument or not, it does make economic sense.

Successes?

Over the years, I have watched as doubting MBAs walk in wondering why they are being required to take a course called 'Business and Global Society' as a core course in a one-year MBA programme. It means Hult is saying this course is as important as Finance, Marketing, etc.

At the start of the course, I ask "What is the purpose of business?" Inevitably, they will say 'to make money'. When I challenge them: but how? They are at a loss- they talk about lowering costs, etc.

At the end of the course, I ask again. Now I am getting different responses, more in line with what I hope they come to realize, i.e., in the end, the companies who make the most money and endure are the ones who serve society best.

It is very rewarding to see the shift, and it also speaks to this generation's higher sense of purpose: they realize they can succeed by actually having a social impact. They do not have to choose. It is not either/ or, but *and*.

Are there other classes where students have the chance to explore the SDGs? For example your Social Innovation elective that worked with UNDP staff)?

I also teach Social Innovation as an elective, which takes the Business and Global Society course one step further. In the past two years, as part of this course, I have also worked with UNDP in several countries to identify a challenge, and ask the students to come up with some resolutions. Last year, students were challenged to come up with projects to help with the crisis in Yemen, such as how to engage women in creating social enterprises to generate income despite all the conflict surrounding them. The engagement with UNDP Yemen led to some students being asked to continue working with them to expand their ideas as well as me doing a seminar with young aspiring social entrepreneurs in Yemen via Skype.

Other projects include creating a business opportunity for women across the Arab States that would respect their cultural traditions of remaining in the home even as they allowed them to earn an income, or starting a business in Haiti that would generate jobs beyond tourism that would lead to more sustainable livelihoods. The student solutions were creative, respectful and linked players in ways that did create wealth-generating eco-systems.

Next steps?

Hult's students are truly global—more than 120 countries represented. These students come from many of the countries where the SDGs are so critical. Our students are literally on the ground — they know what needs to happen.

For me, I'd like to provide them with the ability to implement their life changing ideas, perhaps by working with corporations specifically on the SDGs. Wouldn't that be a great integration of Global Compact and PRME?

Advice for other schools thinking of doing something similar?

Do it! Business in the 21st century is not separate from the SDGs.

Business needs to address the risks the SDGs pose if not fulfilled. But there is also a huge opportunity for success by addressing them. We need to have the next generation of leaders focused on solving real problems for real people — not just product extensions for the privileged few, but products that work for the masses.

I believe that is the proper role of the business school: to develop global leaders of integrity, courage and purpose, who are capable of building organizations that solve problems plaguing society, improve livelihoods and lives.

In the end, that has always been the role of business: to solve problems that benefit society and move us forward.

SOME LINKS FOR RESOURCES

<https://app.participate.com/pages/teaching-the-sustainable-development-goals>

Why Teach the Sustainable Development Goals?



<https://app.participate.com/pages/sustainable-development-goals-teacher-guide>

Sustainable Development Goals: Teacher Guide

How can my students learn about the world by working to make it a better place?

The United Nations has collaborated with countries around the world to adopt the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). The goals revolve around ending inequality, finding solutions to food scarcity and creating sustainable communities around the world. In teaching these goals, we can inspire students to use their creativity to make a difference in the world they will inherit.

By [integrating the SDGs into your curriculum](#), you can build relevance and give your students participatory agency-- bringing academic learning to life and sparking their passions.

The SDGs can take on a variety of forms in your classroom:

One-day investigation into a single issue (especially around an event like Earth Day or World Water Day).

Supplemental resources to build relevance around academic topics.

Sustained project-based unit.

Service learning project done outside of the classroom.

Weekly current events discussion.

What are the goals?

Click on the individual goals below to learn more about each one. We provide online courses, videos, lesson plans, project ideas, and other materials for bringing these goals to life in your classroom.

[SDG 1: No Poverty](#)

[SDG 2: Zero Hunger](#)

[SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being](#)

[SDG 4: Quality Education](#)

[SDG 5: Gender Equality](#)

[SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation](#)

[SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy](#)

[SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth](#)

[SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure](#)

[SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities](#)

[SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities](#)

[SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production](#)

[SDG 13: Climate Action](#)

[SDG 14: Life Below Water](#)

[SDG 15: Life on Land](#)

[SDG 16: Peace and Justice](#)

[SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals](#)

Join our community

In Participate's Teach the Global Goals community of practice, educators from all over the world gather to share ideas and best practices for integrating the SDGs into their classrooms.

[Click here](#) to join this vibrant community.