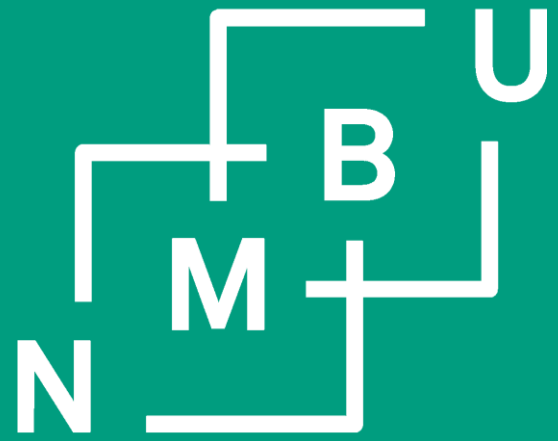
The universities and the sustainable development goals



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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

How do the SDGs help universities?

- Demonstrating university impact
- Capturing demand for SDG-related education
- Building new external and internal partnerships
- Accessing new funding streams
- Adopting a comprehensive and globally accepted definition of a responsible and globally aware university

Knowledge

Learning

Demonstration

Impact

Collaboration

How do universities help the SDGs?

- Provide knowledge, innovations and solutions to the SDGs
- Creating current and future SDG implementers
- Demonstrate how to support, adopt and implement SDGs in governance, operations and culture
- Develop cross-sectoral leadership to guide the SDG response

University contributions to the SDGs

- Research on the SDGs
- Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research
- Innovations and solutions
- National & local implementation
- Capacity building for research

- Education for sustainable development
- Jobs for implementing the SDGs
- Capacity building
- Mobilizing young people

- Governance and operations aligned with SDGs
- Incorporate into university reporting

- Public engagement
- Cross-sectoral dialogue and action
- Policy development and advocacy
- Advocacy for sector role
- Demonstrate sector commitment

Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning

- Ensure equal access to affordable and quality, technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills
- Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development
- Substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries
- Substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers

Universities have a very important role to play in all SDG implementation

Research

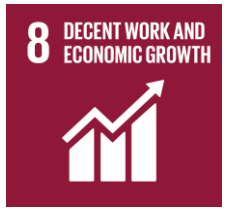
Sustainability science

Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches

Co-design and co-production approaches

Inclusive approaches

Policy-relevant advice



Map university research onto the SDGs and identify opportunities for interdisciplinary linkages

Identify existing SDG-related interdisciplinary research efforts and capabilities within the university

Build capacity of all researchers (including Early Career Researchers and graduate students) in interdisciplinary research

Provide structures and forums to encourage interaction, idea generation, and integration across disciplines

Reflect the value and validity of collaborative research and integrative, systems design, and solutions oriented approaches in research incentive structures, and promotional opportunities

Innovation and entrepreneurship

- Collaborate with businesses to develop new technologies and solutions to address the SDGs
- Incubate start-up high-tech companies associated with university research programs inspired by the SDGs and evaluated by their contribution to the SDGs
- Establish innovation hubs focussed on SDG-related challenges, partnering businesses and university based research
- Develop ‘proof-of-concept’ SDG solutions for take-up by business
- Develop SDG-related exchange programs between universities and business
- Arrange innovation challenges to address the SDGs for researchers across the university and external stakeholders
- Encourage processes to assess the impacts of proposed solutions on all other SDGs and seek to maximise co-benefits and minimise negative impacts

Steps to start and deepen the engagement

1. Mapping what we are already doing
2. Building internal capacity and ownership of the SDGs
3. Identifying priorities, opportunities and gaps
4. Integrating, implementing and embedding the SDGs within university strategies, policies and plans
5. Monitoring, evaluating and communicating their actions on the SDGs

SDSN Australia/Pacific (2017): Getting started with the SDGs in universities: A guide for universities, higher education institutions, and the academic sector. Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Edition. Sustainable Development Solutions Network – Australia/Pacific, Melbourne.