

# **Good Practice Guidelines**

## **Promoting Sustainable Development in Teaching**

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The following pages contain suggestions, tips, and experiences from past project reports. By sharing them here, we aim to support the conception of project applications to promote Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in university teaching. The text includes boxes with tips for further reading from the book, [Transdisciplinary Learning for Sustainable Development – Sharing Experience in Course and Curriculum Design](#), by Karl Herweg et al. (2021)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Herweg K, Tribelhorn T, Lewis AL, Providoli I, Trechsel LJ, Steinböck C. 2021. *Transdisciplinary Learning for Sustainable Development – Sharing Experience in Course and Curriculum Design*. Bern, Switzerland: Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), University of Bern, with Bern Open Publishing (BOP). A PDF of this publication is available at: <http://www.cde.unibe.ch/research/publications> and <http://www.esd.unibe.ch>

## 1. Tips for developing skills for SD<sup>2</sup>

- Select a case-based approach, e.g. provide real-world research material or practice-based data sets for students to work on
- Hold actual discussions using different – also hypothetical – perspectives
- Select real-world topics and texts
- Include partners from practice to promote students' communication skills
- Invite external experts to speak
- Aim for a results-oriented seminar design, e.g. generate a concrete end product, embed examples from current research in your seminar
- Select and structure the contents of your seminar so as to help students understand and reflect on different SD research approaches and theories
- Establish intercultural exchange with peers

For a general introduction to promoting ESD in university teaching, see [p. 21](#) (Chapter 1)

For an in-depth look at competences for SD, see [p. 47](#) (Chapter 3)

## 2. Addressing the value orientation of your discipline

- Use everyday examples to illustrate people's personal experiences of SD
- Critically question your own values, role models, and norms
- Stimulate critical engagement with your own discipline
  - Use the SDGs to demonstrate the importance and contribution of your own discipline to SD
  - Address all sustainability dimensions, regardless of the focus of your discipline<sup>3</sup>
  - Address critical perspectives on your own discipline in relation to SD
  - Reflect on the understanding of science in your own discipline
- Include international/transnational and interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary perspectives on your discipline and on SD

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<sup>2</sup> Sustainable Development

<sup>3</sup> Different models and definitions of the sustainability dimensions may be used. It is important not to focus only on the environmental dimension, but also to consider and link other dimensions (social, economic, cultural, etc.).

- Reflect on power relations, hierarchies, and different views through multiple perspectives, e.g. in different understandings of SD
- Use marginalized perspectives as an approach to SD, e.g. critical, decolonial, and intercultural engagement with the Eurocentric, Western-dominated concept of sustainability.

Read more on SD as a normative concept, see [p. 21](#) (Chapter 1)

### 3. Designing a didactic-methodological approach

- Support students to enable them to take more responsibility in individual, project, or group work, e.g. provide active input on project processes, supported by scientific literature
- Try out new types of student projects
- Blend teaching and research
- Actively seek the interdisciplinary cooperation of lecturers
- Design dramaturgy according to content and level of difficulty

Read more on didactic-methodological approaches, see [p.65](#) (Chapter 4)

### 4. Meeting the challenges of interdisciplinarity, trans-disciplinarity, and variations in student knowledge

#### Processing content

- Try to refer as much as possible to real-world and/or interdisciplinary issues relating to your subject area
- Link the different topics discussed
- Offer sub-groups or special sessions to even out variations in student knowledge
- Create deliberative (group) tasks for different knowledge levels.
- Create support groups among the students (according to levels of knowledge and expertise to meet the needs in mixed-ability groups)
- Carry out preliminary work before the seminar to even out variations in knowledge
- Make basic texts available for (voluntary) use
- Use different perspectives and knowledge levels to reflect on complexity

- Use the [Learning Module on Sustainable Development](#) to help even out variations in knowledge on SD
- Harness emotions – these are essential for transformative learning!

Read more on transdisciplinary learning, see [p.54-56](#) (Chapter 3)

### Working with partners from practice

- Draw on existing networks
- Choose practice partners who understand the need for ESD and have time to invest
- Ensure that students understand the work they will do with practice partners (i.e. be precise about objectives and research questions)

### Learning objectives and performance record

- Be clear about expectation management, e.g. formulate clear learning outcomes (possibly according to knowledge level).
- When structuring your modules, bear in mind that students may have different levels
- Try out new forms of demonstrating competence, e.g. blog entries, online exchange with partner universities, focus groups.

Read more on performance monitoring, see [p.59](#) (Chapter 3)