



EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY:
RESPONSIBLE GROWTH, INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT



Core Mandatory Unit 2

Syllabus

Title: *Shaping Sustainability: project work*

Project work consists of collaborative work where students work in interdisciplinary teams to solve sustainability challenges.

ECTS: 6

Total workload: 150 hours

The workload distribution is flexible to accommodate different project formats (BIP, project, case study, etc.), while remaining consistent with 6 ECTS.

Delivery mode: Blended / Online (Synchronous + Asynchronous), depending on project format

Language of instruction: English/Italian

Delivery period: From Semester 2 of the First Year (flexible within the 1–3 year pathway)

Course rationale (short description)

This unit is the applied, integrative core of the International Program in Sustainability/Minor in Sustainability. Students work in international and interdisciplinary teams to design, analyse, or evaluate sustainability-oriented projects, translating conceptual knowledge from Unit 1 into concrete actions, strategies, or analytical outputs. Emphasis is placed on systems thinking, stakeholder engagement, reflexivity, and the capacity to envision and shape more sustainable futures through collaborative project work.

Project formats

The nature of the course module is based on a programme covering topics within the various pillars of sustainability, aiming to develop and apply knowledge to carry out project work or an internship. The content will be adapted to the work topics to be developed by each student, which may take the following forms:

- **Blended Intensive Programme (BIP)** (as a project for the International Programme in Sustainability);
- **Action oriented mini-project;**
- **Case study** from a sustainability perspective;
- **Other options/formats** of work within the field of sustainability approved by the teaching team (local IPS/Minor commission).



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Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

After completing this unit, learners will be able to:

- Use interdisciplinary knowledge and modes of inquiry to analyse and address sustainability problems (social, economic, environmental);
- Identify relevant system components, drivers, constraints, and stakeholders at different governance levels (local, regional, global) to envision more sustainable world;
- Reflect critically on personal awareness, and attitudes leading to sustainable actions.

The syllabus contents of the curricular unit are clearly aligned with the defined learning objectives. The development of project work, mini-projects towards action research, and case studies enables students to apply interdisciplinary knowledge and research methods to the analysis of complex sustainability challenges (objective a). The analysis of real-world problems at different scales and in diverse contexts promotes the identification of key aspects and relevant stakeholders, integrating social, economic and environmental dimensions in the design of sustainable responses (objective b). Finally, the reflective and applied nature of the proposed activities fosters critical reflection on personal awareness and attitudes towards sustainability, encouraging the adoption of sustainable actions (objective c).

In this way, the syllabus ensures a coherent progression from knowledge acquisition to analysis and action, guaranteeing the full achievement of the curricular unit's learning objectives.

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

The course module uses active, student-centred teaching and learning methods aligned with the institution's pedagogical model to promote autonomy, meaningful learning and inclusion. Students carry out their work mainly through projects and mini-projects or case studies. This enables them to apply interdisciplinary knowledge and methods to real-world sustainability issues in an integrated way. Projects are typically developed in interdisciplinary and international teams, unless a specific format or others considerations justify individual work.

Group sessions are scheduled to provide a framework for this work and support problem definition, objective clarification, methodological approach selection and activity planning. These sessions provide opportunities for pedagogical guidance and the regulation of the learning process. This allows for different paces, interests and learning paths to be accommodated, in line with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Providing different work formats and support strategies promotes the active participation of all students and responds to diverse learning profiles and styles.

Throughout the project work, group sessions are held to present and discuss interim and results. These sessions are designed as spaces for collaborative and peer-to-peer learning. These sessions enable students to practise scientific communication and critical reasoning skills, as well as the ability to disseminate knowledge and integrate constructive



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feedback. Peer discussion encourages sharing perspectives, critical thinking and social learning, which contributes to consolidating knowledge and encouraging deeper reflection on sustainability challenges in different contexts and at different scales.

The teachers (members of the local commission of the International Program in Sustainability) acts as a facilitator and mediator of learning, providing continuous support, and methodological guidance focuses on project design, methodological choices, and alignment with learning outcomes.

ASSESSMENT

The assessment of the course module follows a continuous and formative approach focuses on both **process and outcomes**. It is closely linked to the teaching methodologies and the syllabus nevertheless the assessment tools will be defined by the teaching team in each University (local IPS commission).

At Parma University, in both continuous and final assessment, students produce an integrative Portfolio, based on the learning achieved throughout all classes and/or the course content. This work allows for an integrated assessment of conceptual understanding, critical analysis skills, the articulation between different disciplinary perspectives, and the application of knowledge to real-world contexts related to sustainability challenges.

The Portfolio is assessed through:

- a written presentation (50%);
- an oral presentation (50%).

The Portfolio allows students to showcase their learning in a variety of ways, celebrating the diversity of profiles, skills, and methods of communicating knowledge. This approach aligns with the principles of Universal Design for Learning and differentiated learning.

Throughout the course, there are opportunities to monitor progress and provide feedback, encouraging critical reflection on the learning journey and the progressive improvement of work.

Assessment criteria (summary)

- Quality of problem framing and systems analysis;
- Integration of sustainability dimensions and ethical considerations;
- Methodological rigor and use of evidence;
- Feasibility, coherence and relevance of proposed solutions or analysis;
- Effectiveness of collaboration and communication;
- Reflexivity and critical self-assessment.

Prerequisites

- Successful completion of **Unit 1** (*An introduction to Sustainability Studies: concepts and principles*), or equivalent knowledge.

Learning resources/Bibliography

It depends on student project work.

