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

Core Mandatory Unit 1

Syllabus

Title: *An introduction to Sustainability Studies: concepts and principles*

Mandatory interdisciplinary (Transversal) unit in sustainable development

ECTS 6 (total workload-150 hrs – theory/lectures, seminars/interactive sessions, group work, independent study)
Delivery mode: Online (Synchronous + Asynchronous)
Language of instruction: English
Semester / Year: Semester 1 (First Year of participation – flexible pathway)

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Course rationale (short description)

This unit introduces students from different disciplines to the core concepts, debates, and principles of sustainability, with particular attention to how sustainability is defined, contested, operationalized, and translated into policies and practices. Through a cross-institutional EU GREEN learning environment, students will connect local and global sustainability challenges and develop systems and critical thinking,

Intended Learning Outcomes
At the end of the course, students will be able to:

a. Understand the key concepts and principles of sustainability from the different dimensions (Environmental, Economic, Social/ Cultural/Political);
b. Critically analyse and review the concept of sustainability from different disciplinary perspectives;
c. Connect local and global dimensions of different sustainability challenges;
d. Relate knowledge of the key concepts and principles in relation to transformational policies and practices at regional, national and international levels.

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COURSE CONTENTS

- **Introduction to the course** (objectives, methodologies, contents, and assessment tasks within the International Program in Sustainability);
- **Sustainable Development: An Introduction (history and evolution of concepts and principles)** ;
- **Ethical principles and policies of Sustainable Development (local and global);**
- **The concept of sustainability from different contexts (local, global) and disciplinary perspectives;**
- **Sustainability: Challenges and Constraints;**
- **Sustainability in action: case studies and practices;**
- **Transformational practices and policies in sustainability**.

This module's syllabus is organised in a progressive and coherent manner to ensure alignment with the defined learning objectives.
The introductory content and approach to sustainable development provide a solid conceptual foundation of the key concepts and principles of sustainability, fostering an appreciation of its various dimensions (Objective a).
The introduction of ethical principles, institutional frameworks, and sustainability policies at local and global levels encourages critical analysis of sustainability from different disciplinary perspectives (Objective b).
Analysing sustainability in different contexts, as well as its challenges and limitations, establishes links between local and global scales, fostering an understanding of the complexity of analysed issues (Objective c).
Finally, content dedicated to sustainability in action, through case studies and analysis of transformative practices and policies, enables integrated application of acquired knowledge to concrete situations. This supports reflection on intervention strategies at different levels (Objective d).

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

The teaching and learning methodologies for this course module are aligned with a student-centred pedagogical model that is active, collaborative and reflective in nature, guided by the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiated learning, within an international and interdisciplinary context.
Teaching is delivered through synchronous online sessions, which combine theoretical and practical classes with seminars. These sessions employ active methodologies, namely case study analysis, problem-based learning and critical debate, combining the structured presentation of content with systematic opportunities for interaction, guided discussion and critical questioning. This promotes an understanding of the concepts and principles of sustainability in its various dimensions, as well as a critical analysis of the concept from different disciplinary perspectives and the establishment of links between local and global contexts.

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Collaborative learning is encouraged through work in small groups, often comprising students from different institutional and cultural backgrounds, thereby promoting peer learning, intercultural communication and the collective construction of knowledge.
Independent study, commensurate with the number of ECTS credits for the course unit, includes guided research, critical reading of scientific texts and public policy documents, preparation of contributions for seminars, and the progressive development of an integrative roadmap (see evaluation session), which tracks learning achieved throughout all classes.
These methodologies create opportunities for the development of transversal skills, such as communication, collaboration and reasoned argumentation.
The progressive development of the integrative Roadmap, as a central teaching strategy, enables students to relate the knowledge acquired to the analysis of concrete problems with practices and policies, directly addressing the objective of supporting transformative policies and practices at different territorial scales. This approach fosters the integration of theory and practice and encourages informed critical reflection.
Taken together, the teaching methodologies adopted are in line with the European Sustainability Competence Framework (GreenComp, 2022), promoting competences associated with sustainability values, critical and systemic thinking, the ability to envisage sustainable futures, and informed action. In this way, the pedagogical strategies
create effective conditions for students to achieve, in an integrated and progressive manner, all the learning objectives of the course unit.
The course systematically uses digital resources and the Moodle platform for the organisation and provision of learning materials, communication between lecturers and students, and the monitoring of the learning process.

ASSESSMENT

The assessment of the course module follows a continuous and formative approach and is closely linked to the teaching methodologies and the syllabus.
In both continuous and final assessment, students produce an integrative Roadmap, 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 Roadmap 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.
The Roadmap is assessed through:

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

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.

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Continuous assessment requires compulsory attendance; students with more than 20% absences are not eligible for assessment. All lecturers on the course act as assessors/examiners and manage assessment by analysing the Roadmaps in relation to all learning outcomes.

PREREQUISITES
Good English language proficiency

LEARNING RESOURCES/ BIBLIOGRAPHY

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