

Environmental Sustainability in General Education at Salisbury University

This document outlines the working definition of environmental sustainability, the directions for submitting materials to assess if a course qualifies as an environmental sustainability course, and the rubric the committee will use to assess course proposals. The appendix consists of a matrix suggesting student learning outcomes associated with the sustainability criteria to assist faculty with these submissions.

Environmental Sustainability General Education SLO

Students will be able to trace the ways in which individual actions are linked to interconnected natural and social systems and the sustainability thereof.

<https://catalog.salisbury.edu/content.php?catoid=8&navoid=219>

Definition of Environmental Sustainability Developed/used by the Tagging Subcommittee

Environmental Sustainability studies the interconnections of natural, human, and social systems with the goal to improve ecological integrity, human well-being, and social equity.

Meeting the SLO Criteria for Environmental Sustainability Tagging: Two Requirements

“Environmental Sustainability” tagged courses examine one or more aspects of environmental sustainability (as defined above) or explore issues using environmental sustainability thinking, methods, or theoretical lenses. Faculty submitting a course for the Environmental Sustainability tag must specify how environmental sustainability is integrated into the course’s student learning goals and outcomes, learning activities, and assessment of student learning.

Environmental Sustainability-tagged courses concentrate on understanding and communicating the concept of environmental sustainability and doing at least one of the following: (1) applying cultural and ethical perspectives, (2) identifying and using scientific evidence, (3) analyzing sustainability issues across multiple scales, (4) developing skills or expertise necessary to implement sustainable solutions, or (5) understanding the interconnections between multiple disciplines.

Submission Guidelines

Faculty should submit the following documents:

1. Course syllabus. The course syllabus will include sequences of readings and course topics, ideally assignment dates, and course grade breakdowns relating to the tagged area.
2. 1- 3 sample assignments relating to the tagged area
3. Answers to the questions below. These responses should point to discrete elements of the syllabus, course objectives, and assignments. The committee will assess this information using the assessment rubric.

Faculty should answer each of the following questions separately on a maximum of two single-spaced pages (approximately 1,000 words or fewer):

1. Explain how the course meets the General Education SLO using the definition of environmental sustainability developed/used by the tagging subcommittee (1st requirement, listed below).
2. Explain how environmental sustainability and your selected second criteria relate to the course objectives and student learning outcomes (2nd requirement, listed below).
3. Explain the practices, concepts, or strategies you use to teach sustainability and your selected second criteria (e.g., lectures, readings, lab activities)
4. Explain how you will integrate sustainability assessments into your course (e.g., writing assignments, exams/quizzes, timeline, deadlines).

1st Requirement: Centering Environmental Sustainability

To determine if a course fits the sustainability criteria, the course must address the following required student learning outcome: Effectively communicate the concept of environmental sustainability.

2nd Requirement: Choose at Least One Supporting Criteria

Each successfully tagged course must also substantively address one or more of the following criteria (see the sustainability course criteria matrix for more detail):

1. Identify and apply cultural and ethical perspectives to the study of environmental sustainability.
2. Identify and apply scientific evidence and critical thinking skills to understand the study of environmental sustainability.
3. Apply environmental sustainability problems and problem-solving approaches across multiple scales (e.g., “individual,” “community,” “nation-state,” or “local,” “regional,” and “global”).
4. Develop the technical skills or expertise necessary to investigate sustainability problems and/or implement responses to sustainability problems.
5. Use the interconnections between multiple disciplines to explain how the economy, society, cultures, energy, and the environment are interrelated.

Rubric for Assessing Possible Courses Tagged for Environmental Sustainability

(To be filled out by the committee)

Faculty Name:

Course:

[Directions provided to faculty] Please answer each of the following questions separately (and for each requirement) on a maximum of two single-spaced pages (approximately 1,000 words or fewer):

1. Explain how the course meets the General Education SLO using the definition of environmental sustainability developed/used by the tagging subcommittee.
2. Explain how environmental sustainability and your selected second criteria relate to the course objectives and student learning outcomes.
3. Explain the practices, concepts, or strategies you use to teach sustainability and your selected second criteria (e.g., lectures, readings, lab activities)
4. Explain how you will integrate sustainability assessments into your course (e.g., writing assignments, exams/quizzes, timeline, deadlines).

1. Explain how the course meets the General Education SLO using the definition of environmental sustainability developed/used by the tagging subcommittee

Criteria	Meets Expectations (Yes/No)	Requires Revision (Yes/No)	Comments
Course Integration Clear and substantial identification of how the course connects individual actions to natural systems as they relate to environmental sustainability			
Course Integration Clear and substantial identification of how the course connects individual actions to social systems as they relate to environmental sustainability			

Course Integration Clear and substantial identification of how the course integrates environmental sustainability, aligning with the goal to improve ecological integrity, human well-being, and social equity			
Additional Comments (if needed): 			

2. Explain how environmental sustainability and your selected second criterion relate to the course objectives and student learning outcomes.

Criteria	Meets Expectations (Yes/No)	Requires Revision (Yes/No)	Comments
Course Integration Clear and substantial connection between environmental sustainability and the purpose/course objectives/student outcomes			
Theoretically Grounded Environmental sustainability is based in relevant disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary approaches.			
Additional Comments (if needed): 			

3. Explain the practices, concepts, or strategies you use to teach sustainability and your selected second criterion (e.g., lectures, readings, lab activities)

Criteria	Meets Expectations (Yes/No)	Requires Revision (Yes/No)	Comments
<p>Description Clear and concise statement of how sustainability will be taught.</p>			
<p>Methodological Approach(es) Content and approaches reflect understanding of sustainability topics and methods grounded in best practices within sustainability studies.</p>			
<p>Student Engagement Clear and substantive student engagement with sustainability topics, methods, or thinking (SLOs) via student learning activities (e.g., lectures, readings, assignments)</p>			
<p>Additional Comments (if needed):</p>			

4. Explain how you will integrate sustainability assessments into your course (e.g., writing assignments, exams/quizzes, timeline, deadlines).

Criteria	Meets Expectations (Yes/No)	Requires Revision (Yes/No)	Comments
Assessment Expectations Clear description of how faculty will assess student learning in environmental sustainability			
Substantial Component The environmental sustainability content accounts for a substantive amount of course time or grade			
Additional Comments (if needed): 			

Appendix 1

Environmental Sustainability Course Criteria Matrix

This document outlines the environmental sustainability requirements and provides examples of how these requirements can be applied in lower and upper and lower-level courses. Additional documents including the requirements rubric and a matrix of suggested student learning outcomes associated with the sustainability required criteria are provided to assist faculty with these submissions.

1st Requirement	Lower Level	Upper Level
<p>REQUIRED OF ALL: Understand and be able to effectively communicate the concept of environmental sustainability.</p>	<p>Demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of environmental sustainability and how individual actions are linked to it.</p>	<p>Explain how environmental sustainability connects to, and is applied within, a given course of study.</p>
2nd Requirement: Select at Least One Option	Lower Level	Upper Level
<p>OPTION 1: Identify and apply cultural and ethical perspectives to the study of environmental sustainability.</p>	<p>Recognize differences in normative values between individuals, groups and cultures, and understand how these differences guide their behavior and impact sustainability visions.</p> <p>Identify societal impediments to solving sustainability problems and how individual and collective action can overcome these impediments.</p>	<p>Evaluate how stakeholder interests, values, needs and influences become key drivers in problems and systems.</p> <p>Work collaboratively and in multidisciplinary teams to develop or discuss cultural and ethical perspectives to the study of environmental sustainability.</p> <p>Describe and key historical and cross-cultural ideas of the future of sustainability and how different groups have different ideas about the future.</p>

<p>OPTION 2: Identify and apply scientific evidence and critical thinking skills to understand the study of environmental sustainability.</p>	<p>Evaluate the role and effectiveness of a broad range of methods of inquiry and analysis.</p> <p>Describe current scientific evidence of significant threats to environmental sustainability, including their likely causes and potential responses to these threats.</p>	<p>Evaluate scientific evidence and use critical thinking skills to assess the validity of contrasting sustainability claims.</p> <p>Work collaboratively to develop or discuss scientific evidence related to environmental sustainability.</p>
<p>OPTION 3: Analyze sustainability issues across multiple scales (e.g., “individual,” “community,” “nation-state,” or “local,” “regional,” and “global”).</p>	<p>Demonstrate a understanding of how individual activities and impacts on natural systems are imbedded within larger communities, as well as natural and social systems.</p> <p>Explain the ways in which sustainable thinking and decision-making contributes to the process of creating solutions for current and emerging social, environmental, and economic crises.</p>	<p>Evaluate sustainability-related concepts of the future, such as short-term versus long-term trends, uncertainty, path dependency, likelihood, plausibility, consistency and desirability.</p> <p>Define physical, social and symbolic/analytical system boundaries and explain different ways of bounding problems and systems for sustainability problem-solving (problem framing) across multiple scales.</p>
<p>OPTION 4: Develop technical skills or expertise necessary to implement sustainable approaches or solutions</p>	<p>Identify societal impediments to solving sustainability problems and how individual and collective action can overcome these impediments.</p> <p>Apply technical or professional skills or standards to sustainability issues.</p>	<p>Invent or Practice new technical skills or applications to promote sustainability</p> <p>Work collaboratively to develop sustainability solutions.</p>
<p>OPTION 5: Understand the interconnections between multiple disciplines to</p>	<p>Understand the concepts and methods of different academic disciplines and the</p>	<p>Explain the structure, behavior and functionality of systems (e.g., water, energy,</p>

<p>explain how economies, societies, cultures, energy, and the environment are interrelated.</p>	<p>way in which these can address sustainability challenges.</p> <p>Explain sustainability principles, including socio–ecological system integrity, livelihood sufficiency and opportunity, and social and intergenerational equity.</p>	<p>cities and ecosystems), including the interconnections among environmental, social and economic sub-systems.</p> <p>Discuss complex features of systems relating to sustainability, including diversity, redundancy, tipping points/thresholds, non-linearity, externalities, resilience, vulnerability, social justice, emergence, and agency.</p>
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