

# Students Learning with Communities +

A pilot to explore the integration of Sustainability Education outcomes and open innovation into the next iteration of the Student Learning with Communities (SLWC) model.

## Take Part in SLWC+



SLWC+ will enable you to:

- Get support from Societal Engagement, Sustainability Education and Strategic Partnerships to create an impactful learning experience for your students.
- Contribute to SLWC+ evaluation and influence the future of the Students Learning with Communities model at TU Dublin.
- Develop an easy way to align with UEM and Graduate Attributes.
- Get exposure for your module and recognition for you and your students through our celebration event in May 2025.

## Students Learning with Communities

The Students Learning with Communities<sup>1</sup> (SLWC) programme began in 2008 and has evolved to become an innovative model that cultivates active citizenship among the university’s staff and students. The Programme supports lecturers to effectively integrate community engaged learning - also known as service-learning - into modules and programmes to deliver a highly engaged student experience. It engages students in the application of learning in real-world contexts and develops students’ team working skills and work preparedness through the collaborations it supports. By enabling an embedded learning experience, students become more informed and understanding of our complex world through the multiple perspectives and points of view introduced through collaboration. The SLWC Programme has developed well-tested resources to support faculty to embed community engaged learning into their modules and has created institutional knowledge - a body of practitioners distributed across TU Dublin’s faculties and schools who have experience in integrating the model into their teaching approach.

## Sustainability Education

The Sustainability Education<sup>2</sup> Team work to integrate sustainability into the curriculum at TU Dublin to ensure that sustainability is at the heart of student experience across all academic programmes. Aligned to Fundamental 7 of the University Education Model (UEM) and the ‘Planet: Sustainability focused, global citizens’ graduate attribute, they offer strategic guidance and assistance, empowering faculty through workshops, capacity-building opportunities and other forms of support.

## Inflection Point

The SLWC Programme is at an inflection point. University-wide strategic initiatives like the new Graduate Attributes<sup>3</sup>, the work of the Sustainability Education Team, and implementation of the new University Education Model (UEM) can each inform how the

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<sup>1</sup> [The University Education Model Collection 2024: “A University Way of Being” \(tudublin.ie\)](#) See pp. 94-95

<sup>2</sup> [The University Education Model Collection 2024: “A University Way of Being” \(tudublin.ie\)](#) See pp. 118-119

<sup>3</sup> [The University Education Model Collection 2024: “A University Way of Being” \(tudublin.ie\)](#) See pp. 14-17

Programme can evolve. Furthermore, open innovation - included as a focus area in TU Dublin's Strategic Plan<sup>4</sup> to 'tackle global challenges' - can help shape its next iteration. Within the context of the transition to a sustainable society, economy and environment, this suggests the category of stakeholder that can take part in SLWC+ extend beyond underserved communities, to include the full spectrum of societal partners - from academia, business, civil society and government – where there is a clear sustainability focus.

## SLWC Potential

Collaborations to date have exemplified how the SLWC model can support faculty in the development of the 'People: Collaborative, real-world problem solvers'<sup>5</sup> graduate attribute in TU Dublin's students. These collaborations have also aligned well with the SDGs indicating the potential for the next iteration of the SLWC model to contribute to the development of the 'Planet: Sustainability focused, global citizens'<sup>6</sup> graduate attribute. Furthermore, depending on the subject and nature of the collaboration, the possibility exists for the model to address the 'People: Digitally capable, lifelong learners'<sup>7</sup> graduate attribute too.

Considering Green Comp<sup>8</sup> - the European Sustainability Competence Framework - the SLWC model can contribute to developing the competencies needed to address the SDGs in areas such as 'embodying sustainability values', 'embracing complexity in sustainability', 'envisioning sustainable futures' and 'acting for sustainability'. It has the potential to develop these competencies in TU Dublin's students, and in our collaborating partners too, creating positive societal impact.

UEM implementation can enable delivery both through increased integration into existing modules, and as a stand-alone module supporting multi-disciplinary collaboration.

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<sup>4</sup> [TU Dublin Strategic Plan](#)

<sup>5</sup> 'People: Collaborative, real-world problem solvers - equipped with the skills and abilities to respond proactively and effectively to future challenges'

<sup>6</sup> 'Planet: Sustainability focused, global citizens. Socially engaged and responsible graduates leading the sustainability and equity agendas with passion, purpose and resilience.'

<sup>7</sup> 'People: Digitally capable, lifelong learners empowered to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing digitally connected world.'

<sup>8</sup> [GreenComp conceptual reference model - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

The alignment of the SLWC model with these university-wide strategic initiatives and the adoption of an open innovation<sup>9</sup> approach, suggests that the next iteration of the SLWC model can allow TU Dublin to reach a point where co-learning with societal partners on UN SDG aligned themes and challenges becomes integral to how TU Dublin engages society in education.

## SLWC +

To explore the potential evolution of the SLWC model as described above, a pilot referred to as SLWC + (working title) is proposed to run in Semester 1 and Semester 2 of the 2024/2025 academic year.

The objectives of the pilot include to:

- Explore how sustainability learning outcomes can be integrated into co-learning collaborations through structured input from the Sustainability Education Team.
- Nurture and engage the knowledge that already exists at TU Dublin in the learning approach.
- Explore the adoption of an open innovation approach through:
  - The co-articulation of the subject of the collaboration by faculty and the societal partner.
  - The extension of the category of stakeholders that can take part beyond underserved communities, to include societal partners from academia, business, civil society and government, and developing a framework for this that can protect the integrity of the model.
- Monitor and evaluate the process and learning experience towards refinement and scaling up of the model.
- Explore the potential to initiate a Community of Practice (COP) to support the pedagogical evolution of SLWC+ through innovative learning approaches e.g. learning in a living lab.
- Explore and quantify the resources needed to support the faculty-societal partner collaborations.

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<sup>9</sup> Open innovation describes a process of innovation and knowledge creation that enables knowledge flows across sectors, and across organisational boundaries to create shared value for the participants involved. It is linked to practices such as co-creation and multi-actor collaboration and is widely adopted to explore the complex nature of societal challenges.

- Generate data and insights to inform how the programme can be refined and scaled-up.
- Initiate cross-function working across Sustainability and Partnerships and across Societal Engagement and Sustainability Education to support programme delivery with a view to meeting future need.

## The Pilot

The pilot is arranged in four stages as indicated in the outline programme below including: Preparation; Mobilisation; Implementation; and Evaluation & Dissemination.

Cross-function working is required to deliver the Programme with the following inputs:

- The Sustainability Education Team will support faculty to integrate sustainability learning outcomes into the collaborations, and work with Societal Engagement to support the collaborations, and contribute to the development and implementation of the evaluation approach.
- The Strategic Partnerships Team will support collaborations including working with Societal Engagement to identify suitable partners where needed, finalise collaboration agreements between faculty and societal partners, check-in on collaborations at agreed intervals and act as a contact point for societal partners during the collaboration.
- Societal Engagement, in addition to the above, will manage the pilot, coordinate the inputs of Strategic Partnerships and Sustainability Education, and enable dissemination, celebration and storytelling of the collaborations.

## Outline Programme – 2024/2025 Semester 1 & 2

	2024								2025					
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Preparation	■	■	■	■										
Mobilisation & Agreement					■				■					
Implementation					■	■	■	■		■	■	■		
Evaluation & Dissemination								■	■				■	■

## Key Dates

	2024								2025					
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Launch EOI	16-May													
EOI closing date		10-Jun												
Notify successful applicants		14-Jun												
Meet proposal leads		19-Jun												
Detailed planning (Soc. Eng. etc)														
Collaboration agreements finalised					20-Sep				31-Jan					
SLWC+ collaborations					23-Sep			16-Dec		03-Feb				
Mid-point check-in														
Share impact stories														
Celebrate collaborations (S2 W12)													01-May	
Evaluation														20-Jun

## Evaluation of Pilot Collaborations

Successful applicants will be asked to contribute to evaluation of the SLWC + pilot process and outcomes, to help shape how the model can evolve.

## Selection Criteria

Selection criteria for the SLWC+ proposals submitted will include:

TU Dublin strategic alignment including graduate attributes, UEM and sustainability.	50%
Previous SLWC or service-learning experience, or experience of co-learning with societal partners in real world settings.	25%
Feasibility and reciprocity potential of the collaboration.	25%

The final selection will consider distribution across Faculties and Schools and across TU Dublin campus locations. Respondents to the open call will be asked to indicate if an external partner is identified or in place to allow the resource needed to run a successful collaboration to be assessed. Depending on the levels of support needed, it is anticipated that up to 20 collaborations will be supported across Semester 1 and Semester 2 in the 2024/2025 academic year.

## Queries

This proposal has been prepared by Societal Engagement, with input from the Sustainability Education and the Strategic Partnerships Teams. If you have any queries, please get in touch with the Head of Societal Engagement, Helena Fitzgerald - [helena.fitzgerald@tudublin.ie](mailto:helena.fitzgerald@tudublin.ie).