

Saotharlann do Ghníomh Inbhuanaitheacht Sustainability Action Lab

TU Dublin's collaborative learning programme translating sustainability education into real world action



Roundtable event held in April 2025 as part of the SLWC+ pilot

[Sustainability Action Lab](#) supports academics at TU Dublin to create environments where their students can apply knowledge of their discipline and of the SDGs in the real-world through collaboration.

Taking part in Sustainability Action Lab will enable you to:

- Get support to create an impactful learning experience for your students.
- Develop an easy way to align with the SDGs, GreenComp framework and Graduate Attributes.
- Help your students to gain formal recognition for the transversal skills they develop through links to the TU Dublin STLR initiative[<https://www.tudublin.ie/for-students/student-services-and-support/stlr/>]
- Get exposure for your module and recognition for you and your students through the Sustainability Action Lab Celebration event in May 2026.

Sustainability Action Lab

TU Dublin has a long history of engaging society in education across the University's three legacy institutions. Since 2008, The Students Learning with Communities programme has supported students, academics and a range of external organisations to learn together with a particular focus on working with underserved groups.

In [2024/2025 the SLWC+ pilot](#) programme explored how SLWC might evolve – to more fully align with sustainability learning outcomes and TU Dublin graduate attributes. SLWC+ also trialled a new implementation model where participating academics could access support from TU Dublin's Sustainability and Partnership teams.

Building on the legacy of SLWC and responding to TU Dublin's institutional commitment to sustainability, the programme is now known as 'Sustainability Action Lab'. It is supported through the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) strand of the HEA's Strategic Alignment in Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) initiative until at least 2030.

The characteristics of Sustainability Action Lab include:

- It is a whole-of-University programme – all campuses, faculties, schools and disciplines are invited to take part.
- Collaboration partners can be from all sectors of society including:
 - Civil Society, e.g., Community Groups, Schools, NGOs, Social Enterprises;
 - Industry – where there is a clear sustainability focus and strong SDG alignment;
 - Government, e.g., Local Authority or State Agency
 - Internal TU Dublin, e.g., Access & Outreach or other functional area
- A co-creation approach to identify themes and challenges addressed through the collaboration is encouraged.
- A Collaboration Agreement creates a shared understanding of the scope of the collaboration for Academic Leads and Collaboration Partners.
- A Sustainability Action Lab Celebration & Roundtable event celebrates each project at the end of the academic year.
- Impact Stories or Sustainability Action Lab Profiles document and amplify the collaborations.

Sustainability Education

The Sustainability Education 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. University-wide strategic initiatives like the TU Dublin Graduate

Attributes¹ have informed the development of Sustainability Action Lab. Collaborations to date have exemplified how Sustainability Action Lab can support the development of the ‘Planet: Sustainability focused, global citizens’² and ‘Partnership: Collaborative, real-world problem solvers’³ graduate attributes in TU Dublin’s students. Depending on the theme of the collaboration, there is potential to develop the People: Digitally capable, lifelong learners⁴ graduate attribute too.

Considering Green Comp⁵ - the European Sustainability Competence Framework - Sustainability Action Lab can contribute to developing the competencies needed to address the UN SDGs in areas such as ‘embodying sustainability values’, ‘embracing complexity in sustainability’, ‘envisioning sustainable futures’ and ‘acting for sustainability’. Sustainability Action Lab has the potential to develop these sustainability competencies in TU Dublin’s students, and in our collaborating partners too. In addition, these collaborations can create local and context specific understanding of the UN SDGs amongst the collaboration group.

Timeline

Sustainability Action Lab is arranged in four stages - Preparation; Mobilisation; Implementation; and Dissemination & Evaluation - as indicated in the outline programme below.

Sustainability Action Lab Timeline	2025								2026					
	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Preparation														
Sustainability Action Lab EOI Launch	12-May													
EOI closing date		14-Jun												
Notify successful applicants		18-Jun												
Mobilisation: Collaboration agreements finalised														
Implementation:														
Semester 1 collaboration activity														
Semester 2 collaboration activity														
Dissemination and Evaluation:														
Share impact stories														
Sustainability Action Lab Celebration and Roundtable													TBC	
Evaluation														

Outline Programme – Semester 1 & 2

¹ [Graduate Attributes | TU Dublin](#)

² ‘Planet: Sustainability focused, global citizens. Socially engaged and responsible graduates leading the sustainability and equity agendas with passion, purpose and resilience.’

³ ‘People: Collaborative, real-world problem solvers - equipped with the skills and abilities to respond proactively and effectively to future challenges’

⁴ ‘People: Digitally capable, lifelong learners empowered to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing digitally connected world.’

⁵ [GreenComp conceptual reference model - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

Implementation

Cross-function working is required to support Sustainability Action Lab with the following inputs:

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

Selection Criteria

Selection criteria for Sustainability Action Lab proposals submitted will include:

TU Dublin strategic alignment including GreenComp and SDG alignment.	50%
Previous SLWC, SLWC+, 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 EOI are 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 30 collaborations will be supported across Semester 1 and Semester 2 in the 2025/2026 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.