



## SDG Integration Mapping Project



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Since starting to work on the SDG integration mapping project we started holding monthly Sustainability meet ups. We aim to have a really good mix of people, including students, professors, researchers, administrators and visitors to the University. It is a very informal 30 minute lunchtime meet up where people are invited to give a 5 minute news item, or pose a question to the group, everyone is welcome. The image shows the April meet up.

### **SDG Integration in**

- Governance and strategy
- Curriculum
- Whole institution approach

### **SDG focus**

- Goal 4 - Quality education
- Goal 10 - Reduced inequalities
- Goal 17 - Partnerships for the goals

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### **What did we do?**

The SDG integration mapping project uses existing and new processes to explore how faculty in the School integrate the SDGs in their teaching, engagement activities and research. Data gathered is displayed in an SDG wheel enabling users to drill down to lists of faculty working in each Goal and Target area, and by keyword. The educational and reflective nature of the project enables faculty to explore how their work aligns with the SDG Targets.

The output displays the direct or indirect impact of individual's work and can feed into future planning of teaching, research and grant writing. At the programme level it contributes an overview of topics covered and helps identify unique impact. Analysis of keyword data helps to identify crosscutting themes in the work of faculty for example Ethics in Whistleblowing, AI and responsible use of technology, in Decent Work, in Governance, the Environment, the Marine and in Healthcare.

### **What were the benefits and outcomes?**

1. The project pursued an holistic assessment of the work of faculty to create SDG oriented profiles for each member of faculty using desk research, an interview and an SDG oriented assessment. Data from the profiles are categorised and searchable to SDG target level on this website with the SDG wheel.

The approach helped to highlight the range of ways that faculty integrate the SDGs into their work, not just in research but highlighting the value of teaching and other engagement activities too. Every discipline and program has integrated the SDG into their work and this can be seen in the individual faculty profiles on the website. The project has helped to start new conversations about the SDGs. This was especially important for members of faculty who were unsure to what extent their work reflected or could be integrated with the SDGs. Before starting the project most were somewhat familiar with the Goals, but few had detailed knowledge of SDG Targets and drilling down to this level helped to clarify the extent of the alignment of their work with the SDGs. Some faculty taking part in the project had recognised that their work was integrated with one SDG but were unaware of the extent to which it also aligned with other SDGs.

2. The depth and breadth of the work being undertaken that does integrate the SDGs became apparent as the project unfolded. As expected SDG 9 and SDG 8 Decent Work and especially **Target 8.1** "Sustainable economic growth" featured for most, usually alongside SDG 10 and often with SDG 5.

For example, the work of seventeen faculty is integrated with **Target 10.2** – "By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status". Faculty were found to use their professional background and research for the benefit of others, for example, (i) to highlight employment inequalities to Government, (ii) the use of technology for humanitarian aid, (iii) creating engagement toolkits for sharing best practice for equitable public engagement, (iv) founding organisations and advising on governance for disability rights nationally and internationally, (v) supporting voices of people who have experienced mental health difficulties, (vi) examining the costs of discrimination against

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migrants and persons with disabilities and (vii) chairing an international organisation aligned with UNESCO to promote the ethical use of technology for the public good.

Interdisciplinary approaches to research on the Life course was evident from work integrating **Target 8.8** "Protect labour rights and promote safe working environments including pregnancy loss and job quality in the home care sector" and on **Target 3.8** "Achieve universal health coverage". Leading the work on multi stakeholder engagement on the economics of aging the [Irish Centre for Social Gerontology](#) within the Business School supports the work of marginalised groups of the older population and integrating these perspectives into research, public policy design and development. Equally the multi disciplinary research of [The Health Economics and Policy Analysis Centre](#) in the Business School integrates **Target 3.b** "Support research, development and universal access to affordable vaccines and medicines by applying health economic methods to explore a range of research questions relating to global challenges, sustainable development goals, and public policy needs". This also reflects the research led approach to teaching epitomised by the established MSc in Health Economics.

Social inclusion was relevant across disciplines, demonstrated in the way staff engaged with non- traditional communities, small and medium businesses, social enterprises and charities and half of all faculty in the School are integrating SDG 1 in their work. This approach influenced the way **Target 4.7** "Education for sustainable development and global citizenship" was integrated across the School. Indeed **Target 4.4** "Increase the number of people with relevant skills for financial success" was integrated through sharing knowledge translating financial information on public expenditure for a public audience, financial literacy in mainstream media outlets and a Tax Clinic for students and underserved communities.

Twenty three faculty described integrating SDG 13 in their work, led by staff from the [Centre for Economic Research on Inclusivity and Sustainability](#) in the School, and in particular **Target 13.1** "Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related disasters". The established MSc in Global Environmental Economics reflects the expertise of this group and the extent that they integrate the SDGs into their research led teaching.

Twelve members of faculty included the integration of SDG 14 "Life below water" in their work, led by members of the [Socio-Economic Marine Research Unit](#) within the School focusing on **Target 14.7** "Increase the economic benefits from sustainable use of marine".

Equally the new MSc in Sustainability Leadership Programme was found to reflect research led teaching where the participants learn to value the importance of preserving relationships with communities, employees and the environment, ensuring responsible business models integrating **Target 12.6** "Encourage companies to adopt sustainable practices and sustainability reporting" and **Target: 12.2** "Sustainable management and use of natural resources."

3. Cross cutting themes emerged, including the importance of ethics across disciplines and topics. The importance of responsible technology emerges as a key concern not just in the discipline of business information systems, but also in marketing, accountancy, economics and management. Examples..

### **What barriers or challenges did you encounter in embedding this aspect of the SDGs into your work and how did you overcome them?**

1. Elsevier owned by Scopus SciVal is the internationally accepted source of information on the tagging of published research by SDG. Analysis of research outputs found that for example one academic only had one out of her top seven publications tagged by SDG and one of the remaining papers was not on SciVal at all. These omitted papers should have been tagged SDG 3 Good Health and Well being. For another academic, only six out of 14 of her key papers were tagged by SDG, largely due to an important journal in her field not being indexed by Scopus. The missing tags were in SDG 16 Peace Justice and Strong Institutions and SDG 8 Decent Work. Another academic in the School had only one of his two solo-authored books listed in Scopus, the other – on climate change – inexplicably missing since 2018. To make the tagging process more transparent the open source EU SDG mapper was used to suggest tags for each publication, and this was reviewed by the publication author and the research team to decide if the tags should be added to the faculty profile.

2. Some faculty who were teaching technical subjects found it challenging to integrate the SDGs meaningfully into teaching. Some used SDG oriented datasets or brought in guest speakers with appropriate expertise. For some to integrate their teaching with the SDGs they identified an important element from their teaching e.g. the role of decision making to integrate **Target 16.7** "Ensure responsive, inclusive and representative decision-making" or the role of supply chains to integrate **Target: 8.1** "Sustainable economic growth".

3. Despite the best efforts to find a technologist to join the team to create the website for the project, none could be found. Instead we had to make do with what was available to us which turned out to be a digital storytelling tool already available within the University and an SDG assessment platform that was introduced to us through the National Sustainable Development Champions programme. These digital tools were tremendously helpful, and this approach helped to reduce research waste: we recycled instead of creating from scratch. The customisation of the existing platform created a really useful learning opportunity for faculty, and their use also enabled a high level of flexibility for faculty users to cocreate with the research team meaningful and aesthetically pleasing profiles integrating with **Target 17.6** "Knowledge sharing and cooperation for access to science, technology and innovation". Despite the difficulties, then, this was in effect what the entire project set out to achieve!

### **What are your conclusions and recommendations for others?**

Without doubt having champions at senior management level helped to ensure that staff were motivated to collaborate. The project confirmed the utility of mapping the strategic impact to the SDGs in the planning phase, from this holistic perspective we found that customising pre-existing platforms and solutions rather than re-inventing the wheel has been both a cost-effective and successful strategy, and in keeping with Goal 17 – establishing partnerships with other groups, companies, and teams making use of appropriate tools. Otherwise, we would not have met some of the people we have met, who have already become engaged with other parts of the University as a result of our commissioning them to work with us.

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In short – work with others already in the Sustainability space, to both improve your chances of success with your own project, and to help others to achieve their goals.

**Web link to further information:**

<https://jecairnessdgshowcase.org/>