



Goals for Sustainable Development at Dalarna University 2021-2026

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Environmental Policy C 2022/738

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Why Sustainable Development?

Sustainable development is a term used in many contexts when we discuss the future. What is perceived as sustainable and what we should strive for can, of course, vary. Assessing the likelihood of different outcomes is difficult. It is somewhat easier to assess and describe the dangers of current developments, and research clearly indicates that our enormous and ever-increasing impact on our environment is radically changing the conditions for life on Earth.

It was during the 1960s and 1970s that we really began to understand that environmental changes could threaten opportunities for continued welfare in the long run. Previously, they had been primarily viewed as undesirable yet unavoidable side effects of rapid technological and industrial development. This realisation was the origin of the term sustainable development, which was coined in the early 1980s and became known in connection with the UN report *Our Common Future*¹, often referred to as the Brundtland Report. The report pointed to the need to take a collective approach to a number of issues that had previously been largely addressed separately – for example, issues relating to human rights, peace and security, population and environmental issues. The following definition is included in the report:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

With that definition as a starting point, sustainable development is about *fairness between generations*; we need to manage resources today so that future generations can meet their needs. But it is just as much about meeting human needs today. Here we can talk about *fairness within each generation*. Resources need to be allocated so that more people can have their essential needs met, and social structures – institutions, trust, values and norms – need to be established so that people are given the same chances to shape their lives.

Sustainable development is usually described on the basis of three different dimensions: *ecological, social and economic sustainability*. Ever since the Brundtland Report, the UN has taken various initiatives to influence member states to contribute to sustainable development within these three dimensions – most recently through the new Agenda 2030, which, adopted by the UN member states in 2015, consists of 17 global goals for sustainable development. Through Agenda 2030 and the global goals, the countries of the world have committed themselves to eradicating extreme poverty, reducing inequalities and injustices in the world, promoting peace and justice, and taking steps to achieve long-lasting protection for the planet and its natural resources.²

Together with other higher education institutions, Dalarna University (DU) has unique opportunities to contribute to this work with sustainable development. As a university, we educate future generations of citizens, decision-makers and entrepreneurs. We generate new knowledge and in collaboration with companies and organisations, we can create better conditions for renewal and change. It is evident from the two DU documents – the Vision and the Strategy – that we are determined to contribute to sustainability, and this is something we want to prioritise. The Higher Education Act (Chapter 1, § 5) contains the following provision on the responsibility that a higher education institution has:

¹ World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our Common Future, Report of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

² The Swedish Government. (2018). Agenda 2030 and Global Goals. Retrieved from: <https://www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/globala-malen-och-agenda-2030/>

In their activities, higher education institutions must promote sustainable development, which means that current and future generations are assured of a healthy and good environment, economic and social welfare and justice.

In the activities of higher education institutions, equality between women and men must always be observed and promoted.

The collected international activities of each higher education institution must enhance the quality of its research and education, and make a national and global contribution to the sustainable development described in paragraph one above.

Higher education institutions shall also actively promote and widen recruitment to higher education.

In their operations, higher education institutions must promote lifelong learning.³

This document aims to specify what DU will achieve during the period 2021-2026 so that it can meet the requirements for promoting sustainable development in its operations.

Vision, Strategy, Goals and Activities

In 2019, intensive discussions took place where DU's University Governing Board as well as staff discussed the University's focus for the future. The point of departure was the DU Vision, which had been adopted a couple of years earlier and which stated that we were *to create open pathways to knowledge for a good society*.⁴ The result of the discussions was a new strategy document for 2020-2026.⁵ One of the overall goals of the Strategy is to establish and develop *cohesive academic environments* where education and research serve to strengthen each other.

At the same time as the implementation of the Strategy began at the beginning of 2020, the *Council for Sustainable Development* was commissioned by the Vice-Chancellor to come with suggestions for sustainability goals. The work with the goals has been conducted in work groups, and the proposals that were put forward were discussed and presented in dialogues with line managers at different levels as well as with employees and students in a workshop and through consultation.

The sustainability goals are valid for the years 2021-2026 and include the areas of internationalisation, gender equality and inclusion as well as the environment and climate, and they are intended to address all the provisions included in the fifth section of the first chapter of the Higher Education Act (above). Seven overall sustainability goals have been identified.

An important point of departure has been that the sustainability goals and activities for achieving the goals must be integrated into the regular routines for planning and follow-up. Since each School has its own unique conditions and as such its own challenges and possible solutions, and since the administrative support departments have their own special competences, there is a great deal of scope for the Schools and departments themselves to plan and conduct relevant activities that can contribute to achieving the overall goals. To

³ Higher Education Act (1992:1434)

⁴ Dalarna University. (2014). Our Vision. Retrieved from: <http://www.du.se/globalassets/global/visionen/hda-vision-2015.pdf>

⁵ Dalarna University. (2019). Strategy for Dalarna University 2020–2026. Retrieved from: <https://www.du.se/globalassets/local/om-oss2/planering-och-uppfoljning/visionsdokument/strategi-for-hogskolan-dalarna-20202026.pdf>

support efforts in this area, the Council for Sustainable Development has written a guide that contains suggestions for ways in which the Schools and Central Administration can help achieve the goals. The guide is updated each year and is made available to the Heads of School, the University Director and the heads of department prior to the development of operational plans. The Council for Sustainable Development offers opportunities to discuss this work.

1. Education

The encounters with the thousands of students who take courses and programmes at DU every year provide enormous potential. Using the knowledge, skills and values that students take with them from their education, DU can contribute to promoting sustainable development. Society has high, and well-justified, expectations of us, and other universities, to equip students well in these encounters. As a university, we must meet these expectations. However, in order not to clash with the university's role as an independent societal institution where the motivation of the individual and the free pursuit of knowledge are central, a well-thought-out approach is needed where research-related education of high quality is at the foundation.

Science has largely been characterised by specialisation and the establishment of disciplinary boundaries, which sometimes makes it difficult when we seek solutions to complex societal problems.^{6, 7} It is important that different perspectives and interests are related and problematised in relation to each other. Students need to be given the opportunity to discuss and critically reflect on all three dimensions of sustainable development – the ecological, the social and the economic – in order to better identify possible conflicts of interest and evaluate or argue for different positions. There is also a need for the individual to be given the freedom to reflect on how their own values and those of others affect decisions and actions.

In the literature on education for sustainable development, there are descriptions that are primarily based on the central aspects of the subject content: What do students need to learn? Another way is to begin with the study forms of the course or programme: Which activities best support learning? A third common point of departure is to look at study results: What kinds of skills do students need to take with them after their education? It is reasonable to ask all kinds of questions when developing or following up on sustainable development in education.

Overall Goal 2021-2026

In all educational programmes at Dalarna University, issues dealing with different aspects of sustainable development must be introduced, discussed and problematised based on the subject area or the student's future professional role. This is to strengthen the student's ability to understand and handle complex problems and to reflect on how different perspectives, interests and values affect the priorities of individuals and societies.

⁶ Hirsch Hadorn et al. (2008). The Emergence of transdisciplinarity as a form of research. In Hirsch Hadorn et al. (eds.), *Handbook of Transdisciplinary Research* (1st ed., p. 19-29). Springer Science + Business Media B.V

⁷ Max-Neef (2005). *Foundations of transdisciplinarity*. Ecological Economics, 53, 5-16.

Link to Global Goals and Their Targets

This goal contributes to Agenda 2030 goal 4: *Good education for all*, in particular target 4.7: *Education for sustainable development and global citizenship*.

Link to Dalarna University's Strategy

This goal relates mainly to the following aspects of the strategy:

- 1: *Education for the benefit of society and self-formation (Bildung)*
- 5: *Global perspectives and intercultural understanding*
- 8: *Hallmark: Holistic view of the student*

2. Research

Higher education of good quality must have its foundations in the latest scientific findings. Therefore, a fundamental idea within higher education is that there should be a close connection between research and education. A strong research connection contributes to strengthening the ability of students to evaluate knowledge and follow the development of knowledge, to be able to independently formulate problems and to make critical assessments. To maintain this, research must be free, that is, those who are best qualified to do research in a particular area must be able to formulate their questions freely, develop methods and decide where and how the results are to be published.

The freedom of research is statutory, but so too is the requirement that higher education institutions must “promote sustainable development which means that current and future generations are assured of a healthy and good environment, economic and social welfare and justice” (Higher Education Act, Chapter 1, § 5).⁸ We therefore consider it essential that we address matters concerning the challenges facing society so that our research can have an impact and benefit society. Of equal importance is our collaboration with partners in society – regional, national and international. Collaboration fosters the exchange of knowledge between the university and society. When learning takes place together, it benefits the development of both parties and means DU is better set to fulfil its mission.

Overall Goal 2021-2026

Research at DU will generate new knowledge that strengthens our education, that promotes the development of knowledge in society and that can be useful in many cases. DU should encourage research on issues that address important societal challenges and that can contribute to sustainable development.

Link to Global Goals and Their Targets

Research at DU can contribute to all 17 of the Agenda 2030 goals depending on the focus of the specific research project; however, with regard to the areas where DU has research within existing or potential cohesive academic environments, there are mainly links to the following goals:

⁸ Higher Education Act (1992:1434)

- Goal 3: *Good health and well-being*
- Goal 4: *Inclusive and equitable quality education*
- Goal 7: *Affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for all*
- Goal 9: *Sustainable industry, innovations and infrastructure*
- Goal 11: *Sustainable cities and communities*
- Goal 12: *Responsible consumption and production*
- Goal 16: *Peaceful and inclusive societies*

Link to Dalarna University's Strategy

This goal links primarily to strategy area 2: *Research for knowledge growth and societal benefits*

3. International Cooperation

Issues regarding globalisation and justice and the work to address the global challenges are important aspects of what we do in the region and in the world. International and intercultural perspectives contribute to a greater understanding of ourselves and others – of how local action has global consequences – and are important for preparing students for tomorrow's labour market. A key starting point in the DU Strategy is the continued development of cohesive academic environments that must have close and well-established national and international contacts. Internationalisation is a means to increasing the quality of our operations: research benefits substantially from collaboration with other researchers, the quality of education increases as a result of the exchange of experience, and the content of education is placed in a larger context, which gives students the conditions to work sustainably in a globalised world.

The DU Strategy states the importance of the cohesive academic environments having strategic, long-term partnerships with relevant foreign universities. The Strategy states that the work to increase international cooperation in education and research, both physical and virtual, will be intensified during the coming operational period. It also states that the proportion of international students and teachers will increase, and that efforts will be made to encourage international students to stay after completing their studies. DU as an international workplace will be developed through improved service and expanded support services for students and teachers / researchers from other countries.

Overall Goal 2021-2026

Dalarna University will be a higher education institution where international cooperation and mobility contribute to high-quality education and research and where global perspectives and intercultural understanding permeate the organisation.

Link to Global Goals and Their Targets

This goal primarily contributes to achieving the following goals in Agenda 2030:

- Goal 10: *Reducing inequality*

Goal 16: *Peaceful and inclusive societies*

Goal 17: *Implementation and global partnership*

Link to Dalarna University's Strategy

This goal mainly links to the following areas of the Strategy:

1: *Education for the benefit of society and self-formation (Bildung)*

2: *Research for knowledge growth and societal benefits*

5: *Global perspectives and intercultural understanding*

7: *An attractive workplace*

8: *Hallmark: Holistic view of the student*

9: *Hallmark: Net-based teaching - digitalisation competence*

10: *Hallmark: Creative models for collaboration*

4. Gender Equality and Equal Opportunity

A prerequisite for fair sustainable development is that people are given equal rights and opportunities. A number of different initiatives have been taken and efforts have been made at the national level to combat discrimination, to contribute to achieving equality and to embrace diversity. The Government has commissioned colleges and universities to actively work with gender mainstreaming so that the gender equality policy goals⁹, such as equal opportunities for career paths, gender-specific study choices and student success, can be achieved. According to the Discrimination Act¹⁰, higher education institutions are obliged to take active measures and work actively to counteract discrimination.

Universities and colleges also have a responsibility to take advantage of the diversity that exists in society by taking into account differences and promoting opportunities for individuals to study and work. In 2001, an amendment to the Higher Education Act was made stating that universities and colleges must actively promote and broaden recruitment to higher education, and this remains an area prioritised by the Government. Both in Sweden and internationally, the discussion about broadened recruitment has increasingly come to include broadened participation and employability. In practice, this means that measures and resources should not only be limited to the recruitment of students, but that the responsibility should continue throughout their studies. Naturally, DU must meet the legal requirements imposed on higher education institutions in general, but in addition to these, it must work for gender equality and inclusion.

⁹ Swedish Government (2016). *Mål för jämställdhet*. Retrieved from www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/jamstallldhet/mal-for-jamstallldhet/

¹⁰ Discrimination Act (2008:567)

Overall Goal 2021-2026

DU must be an equal, inclusive, accessible and responsible university, where everyone has the same opportunity to have power and influence. DU must ensure an environment free from discrimination against individuals or activities, and we must offer support and provide what is needed for students to succeed in their studies.

Link to Global Goals and Their Targets

This goal primarily contributes to achieving the following goals in Agenda 2030:

Goal 4: *Inclusive and equitable quality education*

Goal 5: *Equality*

Goal 10: *Reducing inequality*

Goal 16: *Peaceful and inclusive societies*

Link to Dalarna University's Strategy

This goal relates mainly to the following areas of the Strategy:

1: *Education for the benefit of society and self-formation (Bildung)*

7: *An attractive workplace*

8: *Hallmark: Holistic view of the student*

5. Meetings and Travel

Together with 36 other universities in Sweden, DU has joined a common climate framework, and we have thus committed ourselves to “reducing our own climate impact in line with society’s commitments”.¹¹

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report from 2018¹² underlines the seriousness of climate change. Even with a global warming of 1.5 degrees, the effects will be serious, and they will be dramatically exacerbated if the increase is 2 degrees. In order to achieve the goals of keeping the global average temperature increase well below 2 degrees and trying not to exceed a 1.5 degree increase in accordance with the Paris Agreement, we need to halve our emissions every decade.¹³

The objectives for DU activities relate to the Swedish objective of net zero emissions by 2045 at the latest¹⁴, an objective that in real terms means reduced territorial emissions by 85 percent by 2045, with 1990 as the first year for this. The net-zero objective corresponds to an annual reduction of 6 percent, a rate of reduction that should also apply to DU’s climate impact.

A significant part of DU’s climate impact is a result of business travel¹⁵, where air travel accounts for the absolute majority (85 percent of travel emissions), followed by car travel

¹¹ The Climate Framework for Higher Education Institutions (2019). Retrieved from: www.kth.se/om/miljo-hallbar-utveckling/klimatramverket-1.903489

¹² IPCC (2018). *Summary for Policymakers*. In: Special Report – Global Warming of 1.5°C.

¹³ Rockström et al. (2017): *A roadmap for rapid decarbonization*, Science, 355, 1269-1271.

¹⁴ Naturvårdsverket (2020). *Sveriges klimatomål och klimatpolitiska ramverk*.

¹⁵ Dalarna University (2020). *Klimatrapport 2019*. Retrieved from: www.du.se/contentassets/eb3aed6a2c0840e88fb4dae0673767f8/klimatrapport_hda_2019_2020-10-06.pdf

(close to 10 percent) There is great potential for reducing the amount of travel in accordance with current rules for meetings and trips: for example, short flights. Something else that is important to make use of is our experiences from the Corona pandemic. Dalarna University had already come a long way in terms of net-based teaching, but for other meeting situations, experiences were mixed. It will now be important to continue to develop the technical solutions, know-how and culture relating to digital meetings.

Overall Goal 2021-2026

The climate impact from business travel must be reduced by 6 percent per year. Travel-free meetings must be a functional option for all employees and must always be considered while taking into account the requirements for the respective meeting and its efficiency, accessibility and creativity.

Link to Global Goals and Their Targets

This goal contributes to the Agenda 2030 goal 13: *Combating climate change*, in particular target 13.2: *Integrate action against climate change into policy and planning*.

Link to Dalarna University's Strategy

This goal mainly links to strategy area 7: *An attractive workplace*

6. Buildings and Energy

The environmental impact of the construction and real estate sector accounts for a significant proportion of society's total environmental impact. For DU, energy use is estimated to account for about the same proportion of our climate impact as business travel.¹⁶ This includes energy use for heating and cooling as well as electricity energy used to run premises, IT equipment and so on. For a description of DU's commitment within the Climate Framework, see goal 5.

In addition to the impact on the climate, the environmental impact of buildings includes resource consumption, emissions of nitrogen oxides and particles, use of chemical products hazardous to health and the environment, and the generation of large amounts of waste. This environmental impact arises mainly both during the manufacture and transport of construction products and during the construction process.

To cope with climate change and other environmental challenges, we need to both streamline and reduce our total energy use. As DU does not own its premises, the opportunity to implement measures is limited, but it is often possible to work with the companies who own the buildings to reduce energy use or to invest in producing their own solar power. In terms of electricity and heating, DU has its own contracts with suppliers in some cases; in other cases, electricity and heating are included in the rent, so even here our ability to make environmental demands varies. When renovations and new construction are underway, it is possible to set requirements for environmental certification of buildings.

¹⁶ Dalarna University (2020). *Klimatrapport 2019*. Retrieved from: www.du.se/contentassets/eb3aed6a2c0840e88fb4dae0673767f8/klimatrapport_hda_2019_2020-10-06.pdf

Overall Goal 2021-2026

Climate impact and resource use linked to buildings will be reduced through more efficient use of the energy supplied, more efficient use of the premises, more own-produced energy and requirements for environmental certification in rebuilding, and new construction. Energy consumption must be made more efficient by at least 2 percent per year.

Link to Global Goals and Their Targets

This goal primarily contributes to achieving the following goals in Agenda 2030:

Goal 7: *Affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for all*

Goal 11: *Sustainable cities and communities*

Goal 13: *Combating climate change*

Link to Dalarna University's Strategy

This goal mainly links to strategy area 7: *An attractive workplace*

7. Circular Resource Flows

In order to operate, DU is dependent on the purchase of a large number of different goods, services and types of equipment. However, the way our society currently produces, uses and then discards things is not sustainable. Both goods and services affect the environment throughout their life cycle: during manufacture, transport, consumption, recycling and waste management.

For DU, a recent climate study¹⁷ showed that emissions linked to procurement have by far the greatest impact on the climate, significantly greater than both business travel and energy use. The inquiry used a consumption-based perspective in its calculations, which tries to capture the climate impact of entire production and supply chains for the goods and services consumed, regardless of where the emissions occur.

In addition to the climate, the environmental impact of consumption includes land use; resource and water use; and the use and release of chemicals. Public consumption has enormous potential to bring about change in this context; public procurement has a turnover of around SEK 700 billion every year (compared with Sweden's total GDP, which amounts to around SEK 5,000 billion annually).

The only long-term solution is that society uses fewer resources and that the resources used are included in circular flows as much as possible. This means that we should strive to use what has been manufactured for as long as possible, and then reuse or recycle materials repeatedly. In principle, that is when there is no residual waste, and the need to extract new natural resources decreases. We also need to remove substances that are hazardous to our health and the environment so that they do not continue to spread. A circular economy means closing cycles and optimising the use of resources.

¹⁷ Dalarna University (2020). *Klimatrapport 2019*. Retrieved from: www.du.se/contentassets/eb3aed6a2c0840e88fb4dae0673767f8/klimatrapport_hda_2019_2020-10-06.pdf

Overall Goal 2021-2026

Climate impact and other environmental impacts resulting from goods and services will be reduced through high sustainability requirements in procurements and through an increased degree of reuse and recycling.

Link to Global Goals and Their Targets

This goal primarily contributes to achieving the following goals in Agenda 2030:

Goal 12: *Responsible consumption and production*

Goal 13: *Combating climate change*

Goal 14: *Marine and marine resources*

Goal 15: *Ecosystems and biodiversity*

Link to Dalarna University's Strategy

This goal mainly links to strategy area 7: *An attractive workplace*