



SRS Proposed Living Lab project brief – Sustainable Development Goals – framework for measuring or communicating impact?

Description of the paper

This paper provides a brief overview of a potential project that could usefully inform the SRS Department's work.

This is a template for a potential **MSc dissertation** Living Lab project that a member of staff would like to propose and should therefore equate to no more than **600** hours work. The question and research is intended to inform and/or make recommendations to the SRS Department's work areas. It should also align with one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals (see below for more context).

Key SRS contact for this project

Kat Zabecka, Reporting and Administration Officer, k.zabecka@ed.ac.uk

The Vision for Change

This research would influence the validity of future iterations of the SDG Impact Story by assessing its value, benefit, impact and work associated.

Draft research question

What is the value of the University of Edinburgh producing a stand-alone SDG report on a regular basis?

Background

- The University and Edinburgh University Students' Association signed the SDG Accord in 2018, highlighting our commitment to contribute to SDGs. The University reports on SDGs to a degree through the Annual Report and Accounts, however, common practice in other Higher Education Institutions is to produce a stand-alone SDG report (good examples of this are the University of Manchester or University of British Columbia).
- The University of Edinburgh currently shares its impact through highlights in the [Edinburgh Impact](#) and locally, through individual departments, Colleges, and Schools and their respective webpages.
- The SDG Impact Story is a to-be-published communication tool that will capture impact of the University of Edinburgh's activities through case studies across 5 categories (operations, community, learning and teaching, research, partnerships) in the SDG framework. Addressing each SDG in turn, the publication is "slice of cake," or a cross-section of the University's activities, communicating the range of local, national and global impact happening across the institution. The publication will

combine a storytelling approach to the short case studies to engage with staff and students, while also keeping in mind the needs of the reporting aspects to satisfy the requirements of ranking bodies and awards.

- We are conscious this University is a big institution with devolved communication channels. The dissertation's aim is to assess how to best communicate the publication and reach our target audiences internally in the future and the impact of the publication itself.
- This dissertation project is a follow up to Case Studies in Sustainable Development and the output from the case study and the publicly available SDG Impact Story will be available for analysis.

Objectives

- *Assess the value of the SDG Impact Story across the following areas: staff and students communication and engagement, institutional international reputation, global rankings, measuring and communicating impact.*
- *Identify and assess alternative solutions to SDG reporting at the University of Edinburgh (including other SDG frameworks or existing ranking and award bodies).*
- *Assess the practical implications of producing the publication on an annual or biannual basis, including stakeholder engagement, operational cost, and workload.*
- *Make recommendations to the University regarding the most impactful option for an SDG publication, taking into account the preferences of staff and students and data required for ranking and award bodies.*
- *Identify and assess links between the publication, UoE's Climate Strategy and Social and Civic Responsibility Delivery Plan.*

Data set provision

Data needed for this project	Data sets available from and contact information
Staff and student survey from Case Studies for Sustainable Development	Kat Zabecka, k.zabecka@ed.ac.uk
SDG Impact Story	This will be available upon the start of the project as it is currently set to be published in April. Contact Kat Zabecka for more information.
Carbon reports, Annual Report and Accounts	University of Edinburgh website
Staff and student survey	To be completed as part of the dissertation.
Sector-wide practice publications	Links available from Kat Zabecka, k.zabecka@ed.ac.uk

Secondary Output

*The project write up or dissertation will be a researcher's own piece of research. They will decide what they think the results show and draw their own conclusions. An additional **secondary output** is required of all SRS living lab dissertation projects. This output will be shared with colleagues within and out with SRS, so that we can try to make operations changes based on the researcher's recommendations.*


















Output format	Insert not applicable or Yes (with further detail)
Presentation to a number of stakeholders	Yes. Presentation to the SRS comms team, Dave Gorman (Director of SRS), Scott Davidson (Deputy Director of SRS), Kat Zabecka (Reporting and

	Administration Officer), Matthew Lawson (Learning and Teaching Manager) + other SRS colleagues
Mixed media resource for reuse	N/A
Report with operational recommendations	Yes. Recommendations to SRS for the future of the publication.
Resources for staff/student behaviour change	N/A
Resources for staff/student training	N/A
Other, please specify	N/A
OR To be decided with student	Open to suggestions by the student.

Transformational change with the SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals showcase 17 things humanity must do to ensure peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. This project addresses the following SDGs.

The information in this table was obtained with permission from the UN sustainable goals website, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

The Sustainable Development Goals for 2030	Yes (x), sub-SDG (s)	The Sustainable Development Goals for 2030	Yes(x), sub-SDG (s)
 1 NO POVERTY Economic growth must be inclusive to provide sustainable jobs and promote equality.		 2 ZERO HUNGER The food and agriculture sector offers key solutions for development, and is central for hunger and poverty eradication.	
 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING Ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being for all at all ages is essential to sustainable development.		 4 QUALITY EDUCATION Obtaining a quality education is the foundation of improving people's lives and sustainable development.	
 5 GENDER EQUALITY Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.		 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION Clean, accessible water for all is an essential part of the world we want to live in.	
 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY Energy is central to nearly every major challenge and opportunity.		 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH Sustainable economic growth will require societies to create the conditions that allow people to have quality jobs.	
 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE Investments in infrastructure are crucial to achieving sustainable development.		 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES To reduce inequalities, policies should be universal in principle paying attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalised populations.	
 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES There needs to be a future in which cities provide opportunities for all, with access to basic services, energy, housing, transport & more.		 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION It's about doing more and better with less and decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation.	
 13 CLIMATE ACTION Climate change is a global challenge that affects everyone, everywhere.		 14 LIFE BELOW WATER Careful management of this essential global resource is a key feature of a sustainable future.	
 15 LIFE ON LAND Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss.		 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS Access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.	
 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS Revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.	Yes		

The University of Edinburgh Strategy 2030

Strategy 2030 can be found here:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/strategy-2030>

The Social and Civic Responsibility Delivery Plan.

To deliver Social and Civic Responsibility at the University of Edinburgh, we have chosen three strategic objectives and one cross-cutting theme. This projects alignment is outlined in the table below.

The Social and Civic Responsibility Delivery Plan can be found here:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/social_and_civic_responsibility_delivery_plan_2020.pdf

Social and Civic Responsibility Delivery Plan – Objectives and one cross-cutting theme	Briefly describe the project’s link to the objectives, how it is relevant and how this project works towards those objectives.
<p>We will become a zero carbon and zero waste university - Increasing opportunities and raising aspirations by making education and employment an achievable goal for more people in Scotland and globally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By helping SRS produce an efficient, comprehensive and accessible publication, the SDG Impact Story is able to highlight sustainable practices and encourage progress in reaching zero carbon. • By showcasing case studies, SDG Impact Story raises awareness of progress made to date, promotes climate action, and enhances the University’s reputation which can have positive impact on availability of opportunities in education and employment.
<p>We will widen participation in higher education and support inclusion - Increasing opportunities and raising aspirations by making education and employment an achievable goal for more people in Scotland and globally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The publication highlights EDI initiatives and raises awareness of the importance of EDI in climate action. • The publication highlights accessibility and inclusivity in the framing (using SDGs that cover a wider range of targets in tackling climate change), format (using plain English and accessible practices), and content (focusing on story-driven case studies that capture impact, supported by quantitative data). • SDGs tend to resonate with students as they are more accessible and holistic – giving them the opportunity to engage with tackling climate change in a way that is meaningful.
<p>We will work together with local communities – to contribute to improve the lives of people across the Edinburgh City Region and beyond.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The publication highlights the University’s commitment and significant progress in social impact and social and civic

	<p>responsibility in Edinburgh and beyond through specific case studies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to develop the publication as a tool for collaboration and knowledge exchange with local communities and key stakeholders.
<p>Cross cutting theme: In our operations, research and teaching we will engage critically with, and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals - including the promotion, protection and respect for human rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The publication directly addresses each SDG and the dissertation project will be key in identifying how we can communicate this most efficiently and effectively. • The project will help SRS (and beyond) understand how we can engage with our internal target audiences, while managing expectations, global HEI trends, awards and rankings. • The publication addresses 5 categories, including operations, research, and teaching, and as such directly informs our progress and shortcomings in these areas. There is a potential for the publication to highlight where more work by the University is required. • The publication enables critical engagement with SDGs as a framework and asks whether SDGs are an appropriate measure or communication tool of impact and progress.