

Sustainability is Everybody’s Business

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Supporting University Teachers to Integrate Sustainability Across Disciplines

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ABSTRACT

Universities need to prepare students to engage with complex sustainability challenges. Yet many instructors—especially in disciplines without an obvious sustainability focus—struggle to see how sustainability relates to their teaching or where to begin, whereas instructors in disciplines with obvious connections sometimes overestimate how much sustainability teaching they are doing. This makes *educational development for sustainability across all disciplines* essential. At the University of Bergen, we developed *UPED 687C: Approaches to Sustainability Education*, a flexible online course that helps university instructors find meaningful entry points into sustainability education. At its core is a framework distinguishing five approaches: *teaching about, with, in, through, and for sustainability*. Rather than prescribing one way of teaching sustainability, these approaches invite instructors to identify what is relevant and feasible within their own disciplinary context, start from there, and build on it over time. *Our aim*: to make sustainability education accessible to *every* university teacher—and thereby to students across the university.

Why Sustainability Belongs in Every Discipline

Sustainability challenges cannot be addressed by one discipline alone. Every field contributes knowledge, perspectives and competencies that students will need to shape more sustainable futures. In addition, overarching key competencies for sustainability have been suggested (e.g., Brundieters et al., 2021). Sustainability is therefore not simply another topic to teach—it is a perspective on what, how and why we teach and requires teachers to explore their own role and responsibility as teachers and citizens.

Five Ways Into Sustainability Teaching

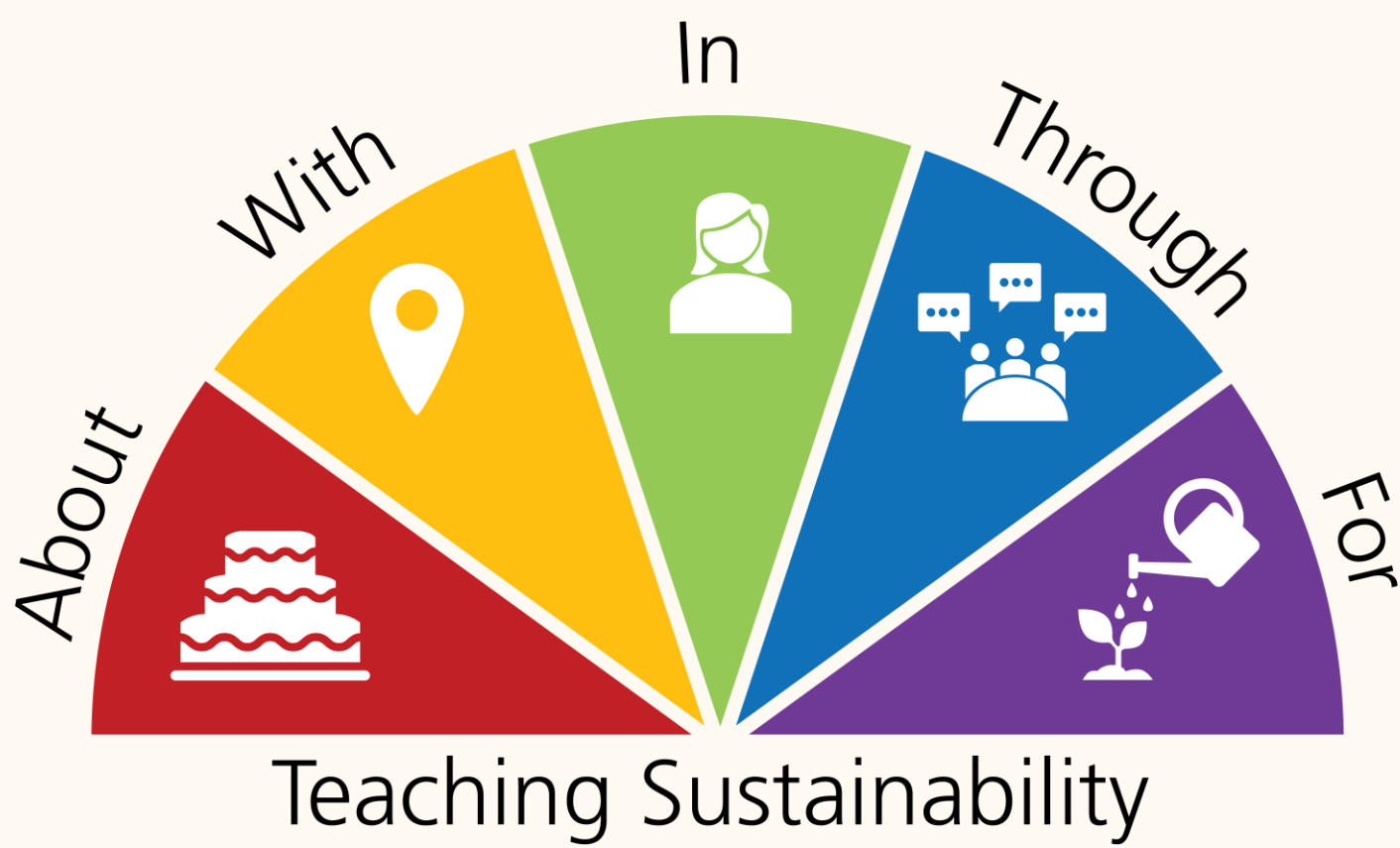
(based on Glessmer et al., in press)

Teaching *with* Sustainability
Including examples of sustainability applications within the discipline (what we teach more specific)

Teaching *about* Sustainability
Teaching general sustainability concepts and challenges (what we teach more general)

Teaching *in* Sustainability

Positioning the discipline as part of a sustainable world (instructor, study program, discipline etc.)

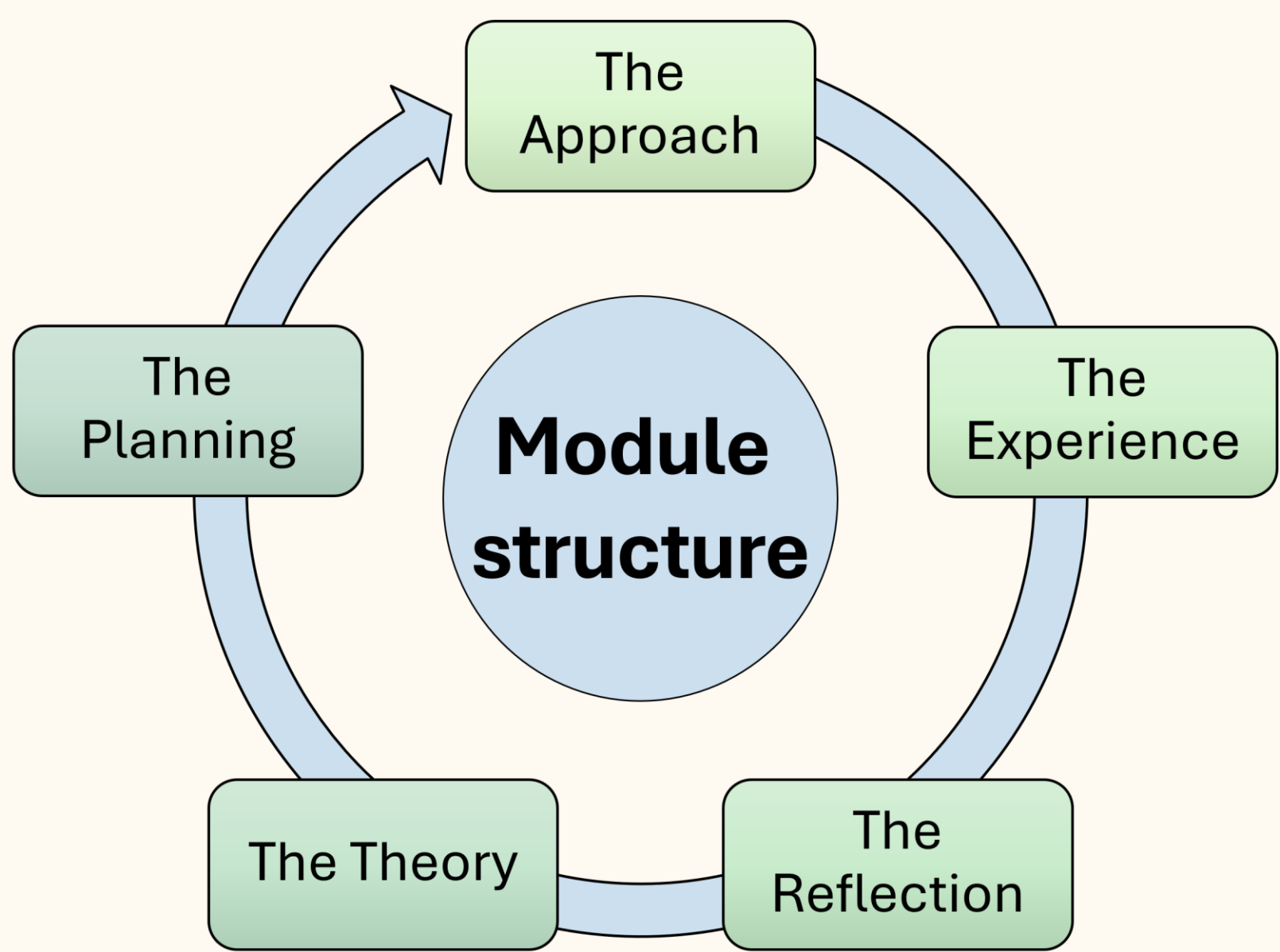


Teaching *through* Sustainability
Using sustainability as a framework for teaching (make teaching sustainable/how we teach)

Teaching *for* Sustainability
Inspiring action for sustainable development (sustainability competences etc.)

A Flexible Course for Every University Instructor

For each of the approaches (above), the course includes five elements. These are websites, different types of assignments (research, write, talk to someone, revise teaching plans etc.):



Most of the course is asynchronous: participants work on it when and where they choose to. To ensure relevance to and application in participants' own context, several of the assignments require engagement with their own colleagues.

A Mid-Way Reflection and the Sustainability Education Portfolio are to be delivered with the Final Reflection:

7.3 Final Reflection

1 svar, 1 ulest

As final assignment, please write a text of at least 150 words where you reflect on your approach to sustainability education, include your own thoughts and beliefs about the topic, and describe at least two concrete examples of how you could/will include sustainability in your (future) teaching. For this, please refer to at least 1 publication about sustainability education, e.g., one that you have found in this Mitt UIB course.

Add this text to this discussion by clicking on "Respond/Svar" here. Alternatively, you can also create and link to a video (max. 10 min. length) with the same content.

In addition, please add comments of at least 80 words on at least one text by another colleague that you find here (reply to their post here). This comment can be supportive (when you share views etc.) or critical-constructive (when you would like to offer constructive feedback).

The deadline for all of your comments is 30 November 2026.

Svar

7.2 Sustainability Education Portfolio

Start oppgave

Forfall 30. nov. av 23.59 Poeng 0 Må leveres en filoplasting

At this point, we ask you to upload your Sustainability Education Portfolio.

This portfolio consists of a selection of the work that you have done throughout this course. We ask you to upload at least 1 piece of your work for each of the course modules 2, 3, 5 and 6, so at least 4 pieces. You can select what you would like to show case to us as evidence of your work with the four central modules.

The pieces of your work can have any size/length (there are no minimum requirements and they can come from any of the sub modules of 2, 3, 5 and 6 (you select), but they have to be pieces of your own work (so no copies of texts of others, for instance).

Please create one file that contains all of the pieces you want to share with us. Please label them with the correct module number and upload the file here.

The deadline for this assignment is 30 November 2026.

Collaborative Course Development

This course was developed in collaboration with Lund University (LU), based on a course co-taught by RK and MG. LU has developed the course *Teaching Sustainability – The MOOC for University Teachers* that will be freely available. Similarly to the course described here, the MOOC is designed to work as a self-study course or to be used in a flipped way in pedagogical development courses. A guide for how to use the materials to facilitate conversations about the materials with colleagues is provided as well. Please visit the website teachingsustainability.org and explore!

How Could Sustainability Teaching Look Like at Your University?

REFERENCES
Glessmer, M. S., Thoni, T., Richter, J., Schreiber, F., & Kordts, R. (in press). *Teaching for Sustainability – Designing a Massive Open Online Course for Educators in Higher Education*.
Brundieters, K., Barth, M., Cebrián, G. et al. Key competencies in sustainability in higher education—toward an agreed-upon reference framework. *Sustainability Science* 16, 13–29 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-020-00838-2>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
For the course development, we received funding by the UiB Sårnornsmidler Klima og Omstilling in 2025 and for the video production, we received support by the UiB Learning Lab. Thank you to everyone who was involved!

