

Sustainable Development
at Edinburgh

Study Sustainable Development at a world-leading university.



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
School of Social and
Political Science

Welcome to the School of Social and Political Science

The School of Social and Political Science is one of the leading schools of social science in the UK and we pride ourselves on our innovative teaching, lively community of staff and students, and pursuit of academic excellence.

Our research is world class and it informs and shapes our teaching. As one of our students, you will enjoy a challenging, rich and rewarding learning environment, as well as the opportunity to engage in the most current debates from the start of your studies.

The School of Social and Political Science brings together specialists in a wide range of disciplines and is also home to many research centres and groups.

Our school is a vibrant and intellectually stimulating place to study, which will provide you with an education enriched with insights from across the social and political sciences and beyond.

Why Edinburgh?

World-class reputation

The University of Edinburgh is one of the world's leading universities. We are consistently ranked amongst the 50 best universities in the world, which allows us to attract some of the brightest academics, and students. This means that you will learn from and amongst the best and you'll experience the very best in teaching and research.

Invest in your future

Choose to study at Edinburgh and you'll be investing in an education that will support you to build a successful future. We help students to develop a broad range of skills, grow in confidence and learn more about themselves

As a result, employers regard Edinburgh as an excellent training ground for high-flyers and value our graduates for their intellectual ability and the attributes they're able to develop while studying with us.

Make the right connections

Sustainable Development is a multi-disciplinary degree. As one of our students you will learn from experts in a wide range of disciplines from across the University. This will allow you to engage with sustainability issues in the interdisciplinary manner that the subject demands.

Flexibility and choice

The programme allows you to focus on the social science issues that are crucial to Sustainable Development, although you can choose to study science courses if you want. You will be able to take courses in subject areas across the University, and you will specialise in a discipline within our School - Sociology; Politics and International Relations; Social Anthropology; Science, Technology and Innovation Studies; or in Geography, which is a subject area in the School of GeoSciences.

A supportive environment

Student support is embedded within the School: you will have a named Student Advisor and an academic cohort lead to guide you through university life. There are also a number of student peer-learning opportunities in place to ensure you always feel supported.

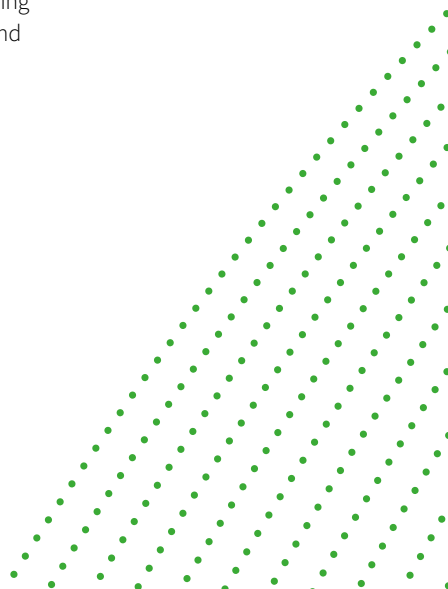
What is Sustainable Development and who is it for?

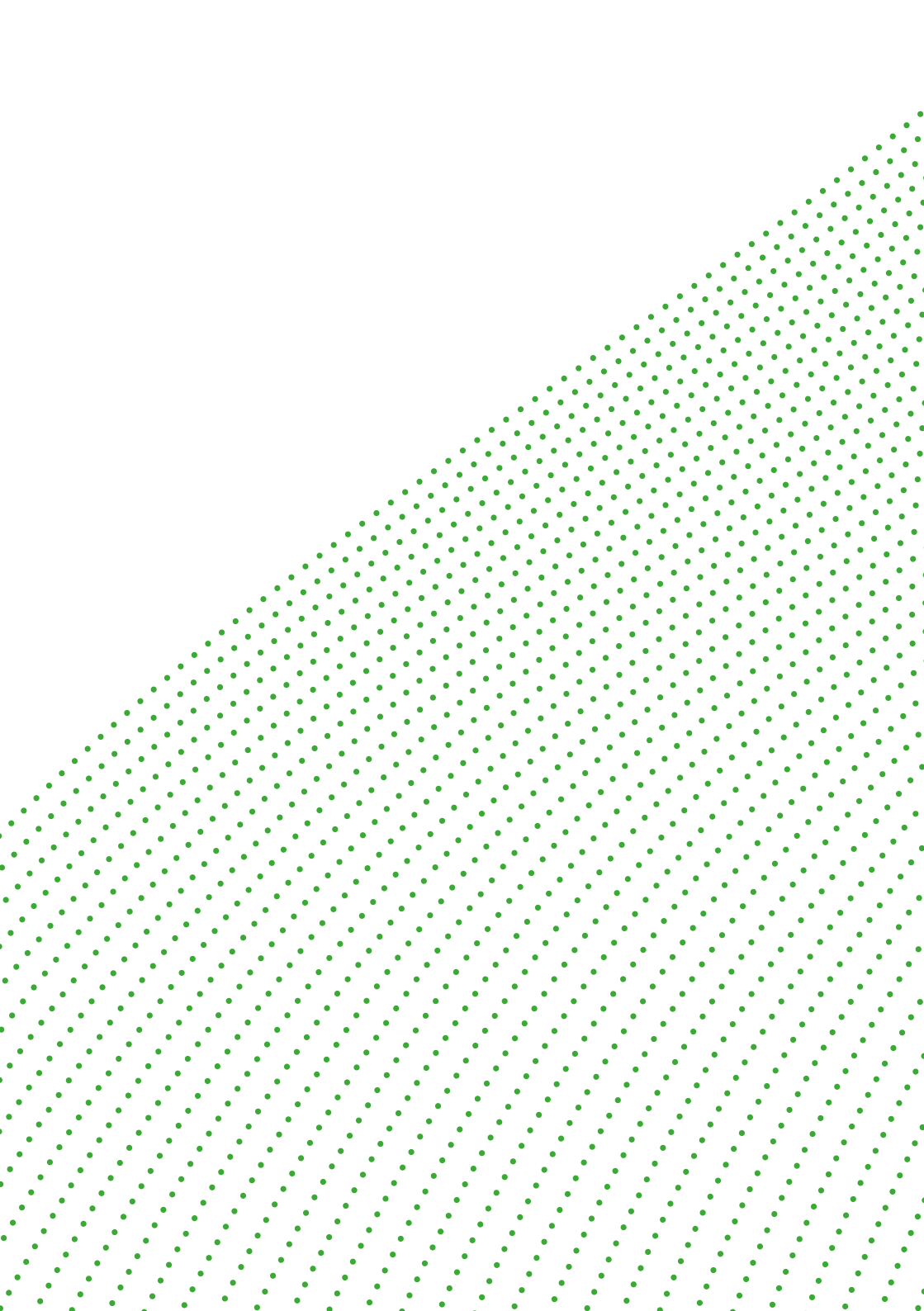
Sustainable Development is about the challenges of reducing global inequity and poverty, and promoting wellbeing, while reducing threats to the Earth's systems from industrial production and consumption. Long-term, effective management of material resources and ecosystems requires an understanding of institutions, social structures and the relationship between people and their natural environment.

This degree will appeal to students interested in developing the broad knowledge and multi-perspective understanding necessary to address questions such as: Can we achieve economic growth, and meet the essential needs of present and future generations without endangering the earth's ecosystem? Is a complete transformation in governance, social interaction, and economy necessary? Who should decide?

Sustainable Development is studied as a single honours degree. As an intrinsically interdisciplinary degree students pursue core Sustainable Development courses alongside one of the following five subject areas, known as 'pathways': Geography; Politics and International Relations; Science, Technology and Innovation Studies; Social Anthropology; or Sociology.

This will empower you to critically engage with sustainable development and its future.



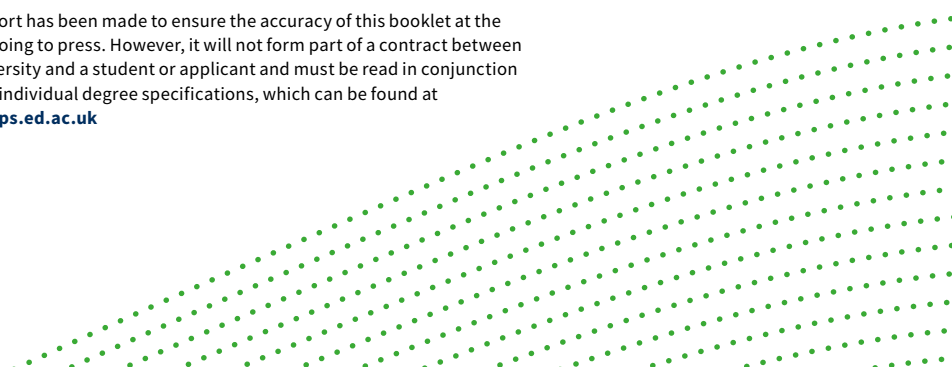


What you'll typically study

Multi-disciplinary study and critical questioning are key features of this degree. The critical analyses from diverse perspectives provided by this degree are essential to understanding the challenges and opportunities in the field of Sustainable Development. Edinburgh is one of only a few universities in Europe to offer a multi-disciplinary programme in Sustainable Development.

Sustainable Development courses cover a range of topics including climate change, energy systems, citizen science, urbanisation, migration and mobility, food systems, international development, care, global health, pollution and toxicity, environmental and social movements, alternative economies, consumption, humanitarianism, conservation and biodiversity, just transitions, and many more. We examine the social, political, spatial, cultural, and technological forces that shape these issues and inform action to tackle them.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this booklet at the time of going to press. However, it will not form part of a contract between the University and a student or applicant and must be read in conjunction with the individual degree specifications, which can be found at www.drps.ed.ac.uk



MMA (Hons) Sustainable Development

YEAR 1

- Sustainable Development 1a: Introducing Sustainable Development
- Science, Nature and Environment
- Two pathway core courses
- Two further semester-long courses in subjects of your own choice

YEAR 2

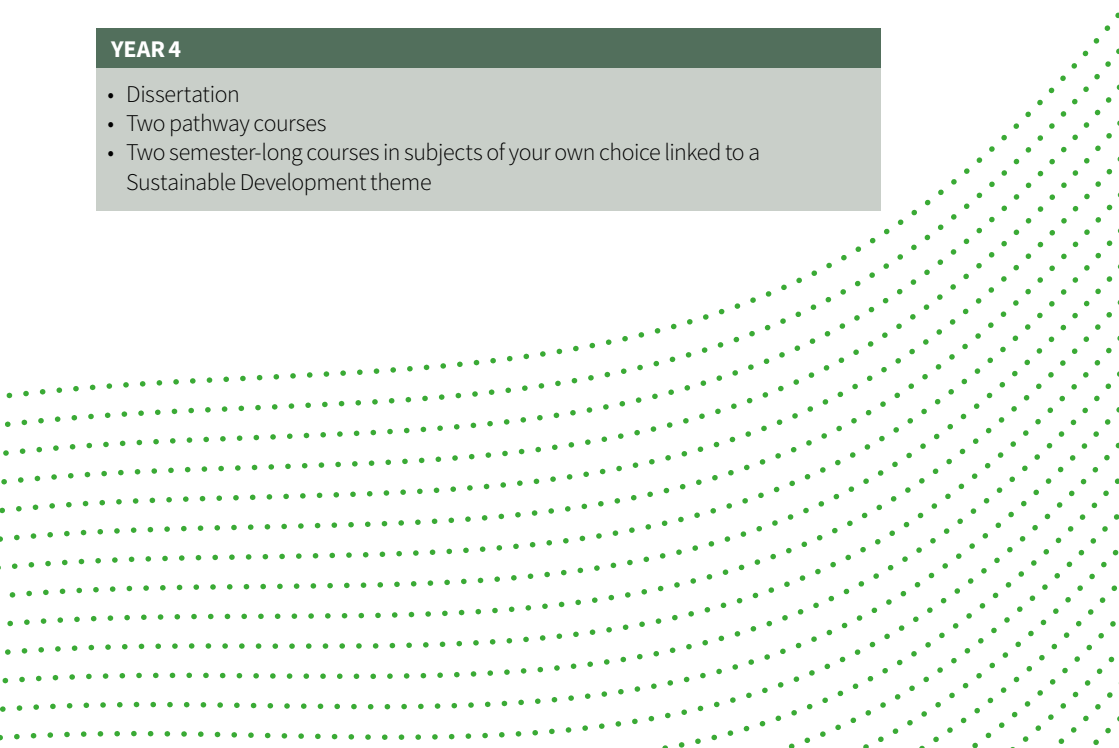
- Sustainable Development 2a: Perspectives on Sustainable Development
- International Development, Aid and Humanitarianism
- Two pathway semester-long core courses
- Two further semester-long courses in subjects of your own choice

YEAR 3

- Cases in Sustainable Development
- Responding to Sustainability Challenges: Critical Debates
- Two pathway core courses, including Research Methods
- Two semester-long courses in subjects of your own choice linked to a Sustainable Development theme

YEAR 4

- Dissertation
- Two pathway courses
- Two semester-long courses in subjects of your own choice linked to a Sustainable Development theme



Summary of Sustainable Development courses

Sustainable Development 1A: Introducing Sustainable Development addresses the central problems facing us in the twenty-first century, which concern equitable access to water, food, energy, shelter and a peaceful coexistence, in the context of a destabilising climate and degradation of environmental resources. The course debates principles, concepts, contexts, issues and applications of sustainable development from interdisciplinary perspectives.

Science, Nature and Environment considers the ways in which science and technology shape the relationship between humans and the environment, and examines a number of topical historical and contemporary cases and in the process reflect on the role played by science and technology in how societies understand nature and environment. Themes dealt with include: scientific and cultural uses of natural resources; sociology of climate science; science, technology and international development; science and public understandings of environmental debates; science, knowledge and power; and environmentalism.

Sustainable Development 2A: Perspectives on Sustainable Development provides an examination of the key issues surrounding, and strategies for achieving, sustainable development. Organised around a series of core sustainability issues (for example, food security, climate change, waste, consumption and energy) the course explores how different perspectives, (ecological modernisation, practices, approaches, ecofeminism, environmental justice, etc.) provide different interpretations and possible courses of action. Students will examine the sustainability of current social and political practices as well as the opportunities for change (on the local to global level).

International Development and Humanitarian Aid explores the histories, impacts and legacies of international development planning and policy, introducing students to foundational issues in development studies and offering them the opportunity to create a policy brief on a specific theme.



Two examples of honours-level (year three and four) options in Sustainable Development

Responding to Sustainability Challenges:

Critical Debates explores and appraises a diverse range of actual and proposed methods of responding to sustainability challenges, from advertising campaigns aimed at individuals to technological and policy innovations. We will focus particularly but not exclusively on responses to climate change. The course will use active, innovative educational methods such as debates, blogging and peer learning. It will encourage students to reflect on their learning goals and experiences, and their personal responses to sustainability issues.

Cases in Sustainable Development allows students to critically reflect upon the ways sustainable development is varyingly understood and acted upon in Scotland. This course enables students to develop knowledge and understanding of key theoretical and conceptual approaches in the social sciences through the context of field settings. To investigate how sustainable development is understood and practiced in the field, we will focus on five case studies linked to sustainable consumption, sustainable communities and sustainable energy.

Additional year three and four options in Sustainable Development

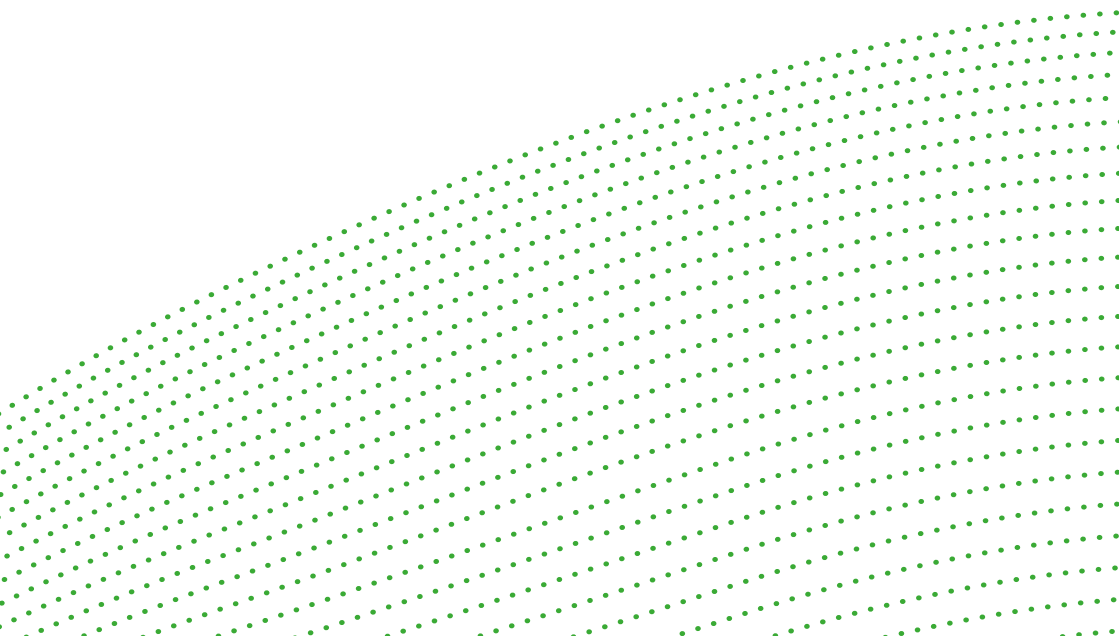
Below is a selection of honours courses which may be taken in year three and four depending on the pathway chosen:

- Global Justice and Citizenship
- International Political Economy
- Energy Policy and Sustainability
- The Social Life of Food
- Citizens and Science: Public Participation in Science and Technology
- Anthropology of Energy in the Global South
- Environmental Justice
- Social Development
- Consumption, Exchange, Technology
- Sociology of the Environment and Risk
- Gender and Environment
- Climate Justice
- Anthropology and Environment
- Waste: Anthropologies of Pollution and Repair
- Digital Global Development
- Environmental Politics

Teaching

In years one and two, students normally have seven hours per week of lectures and three tutorial hours a week. Both lectures and tutorials will require considerable individual, and sometimes group, preparation.

The lectures can be relatively large, but tutorial groups will normally have no more than 12 to 15 students. In years three and four teaching is based on a combination of lectures, seminars and field work. Many seminars also include debates, group presentations or projects. Assessment varies from course to course, with some courses assessed by essays and exams, and others including assessed seminar presentations, field work diaries, policy reports or projects. It is expected that students will engage in independent study and learning throughout their degree, based on the guidance provided by their instructors and course reading lists. There are also many opportunities to engage with staff and other students apart from formal teaching sessions.



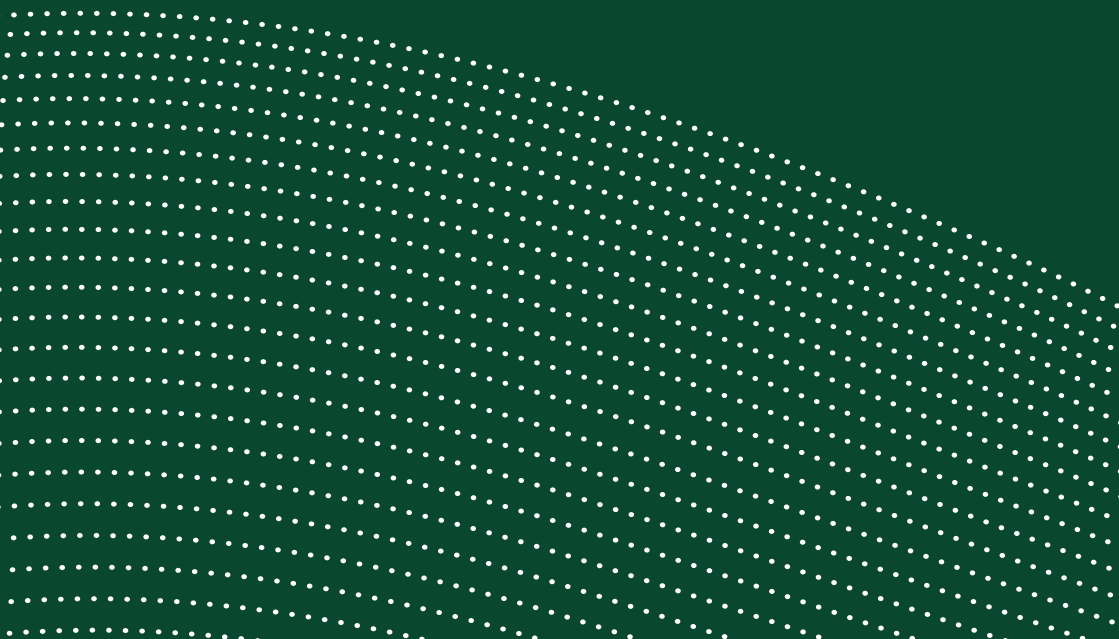
Study Abroad

We offer students an extensive range of opportunities to study abroad as part of their degree. Our exchange partners include a wide range of institutions across the world, including universities in the US, Canada and China.

International study allows you to immerse yourself in different cultures. It gives you the opportunity to try new things, take on new challenges and to make the most of your time at University.

Studying abroad provides you with a different perspective on your degree subject as well as the opportunity to learn a new language.

Sustainable Development has an established exchange programme with Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany.

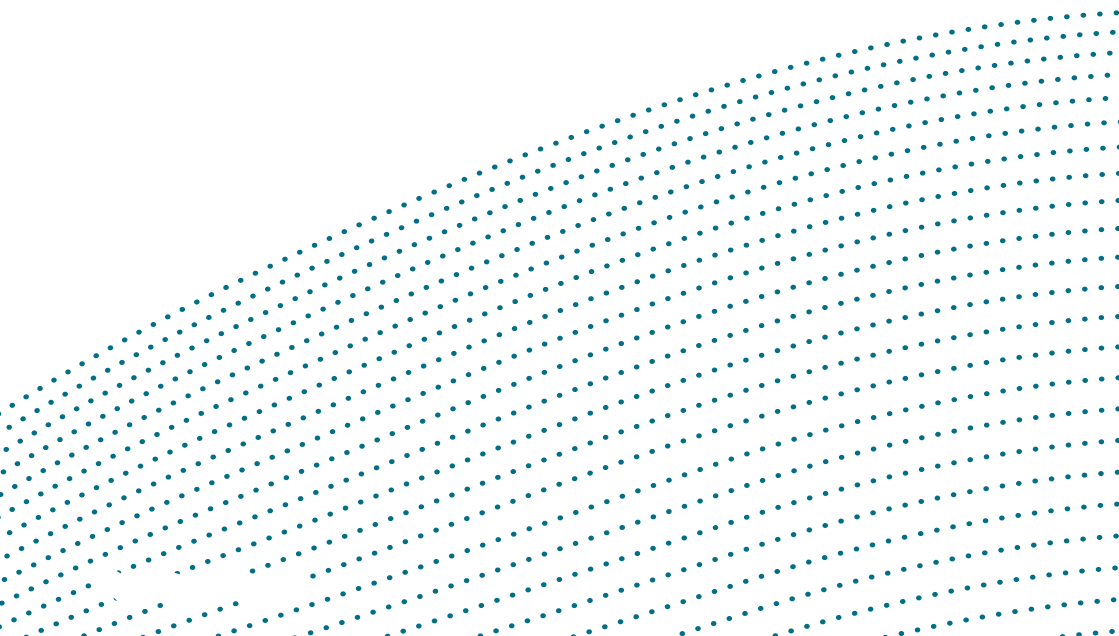


Careers

A degree in the social sciences provides the knowledge, analytical and communication skills that employers require. Our Careers Service will help you plan for the future and provide advice and guidance with the job application process.

Six months after graduating over 90 per cent of our students are in employment or postgraduate study.

The interdisciplinary focus of the Sustainable Development programme, alongside the disciplinary training provided by the pathway structure, develops analytical and transferable skills that will provide a solid foundation for dealing with a changing world. Graduates of this programme would be particularly equipped to work a range of agencies and companies, in the public sector, governmental and non-governmental organisations and private-sector companies, engaged in issues of environmental planning and management, regulation and social inclusion as well as development and sustainability at local, national and international level.





Getting ready for Edinburgh

If you'd like to get ahead with some background reading, we recommend the following books:

Simon Dresner. (2008), *The Principles of Sustainability*, Earthscan.

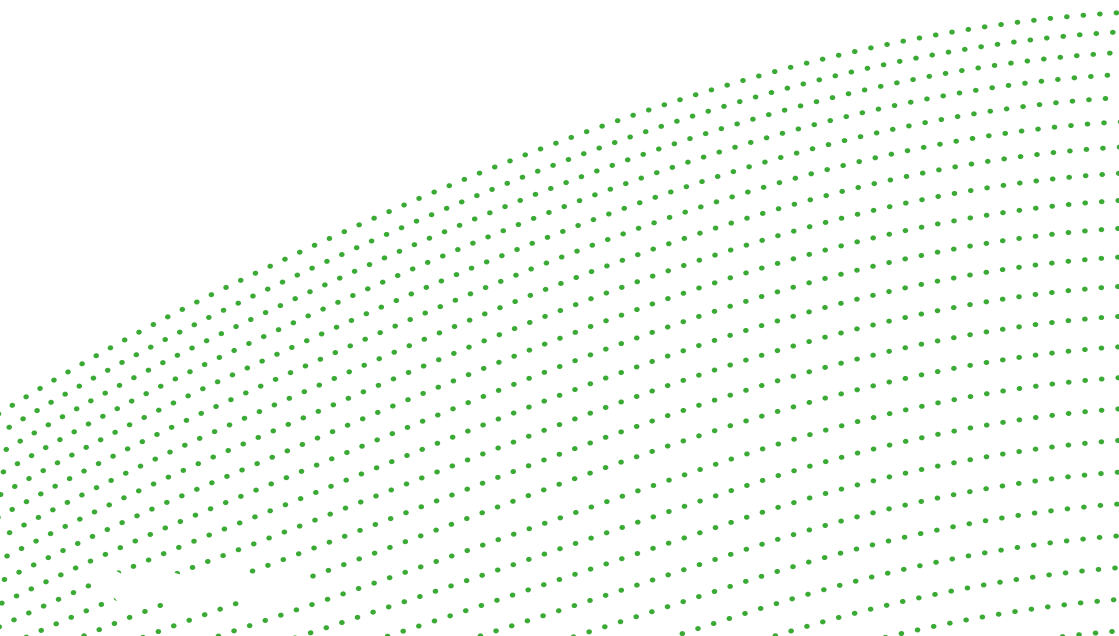
Tim Jackson. (2011), *Prosperity without Growth*, Earthscan.

Naomi Klein. (2015), *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate*, Penguin.

Giorgos Kallis. (2018), *Degrowth*, Agenda.

Wangari Maathai. (2021), *The World We Once Lived In*, Penguin.

Ashley Dawson. (2024), *Environmentalism from Below: How Global People's Movements Are Leading the Fight for Our Planet*, Haymarket Books.





Undergraduate degrees in Sustainable Development

- Sustainable Development (MA Hons)

Available pathways within the degree are:

- Geography
- Politics and International Relations
- Science, Technology and Innovation Studies
- Social Anthropology
- Sociology

For further information on entry requirements visit: [edin.ac/entry](https://www.ed.ac.uk/entry)

Read more about our programmes at: [edin.ac/ourdegrees](https://www.ed.ac.uk/ourdegrees)

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