Sustainability Course Identification

Course Identification

Students are not going to achieve all of the PSU campus wide sustainability learning outcomes or gain a complete understanding of sustainability through one course. Therefore, the question for sustainability course identification becomes what is the most basic concept of sustainability that must be present in a single course’s content regardless of the topic area.

To answer this one can think about the inherent nature of sustainability. At its core, sustainability is about interconnectedness or interrelationships between economic, equity, and environmental systems, i.e. the three E’s of sustainability. Building from this, one can then identify a sustainability course by looking at its content to see if it identifies and describes the relationship between the course topic and at least 2 of the 3 E's of sustainability. A minimum of 2 is required because it’s the articulation of the intersections that define sustainability and not the areas themselves. Therefore if a course identifies and describes the relationships between the course topic and 2 dimensions of sustainability it is sustainability-related. If the content identifies and describes the relationship with all 3 dimensions of sustainability it is sustainability-focused.

This corresponds with the below AASHE definitions for sustainability related and focused courses while maintaining interdisciplinary aspects. It also helps deter the notion that a course about the environment is about sustainability.

By focusing on course content only, it also avoids pedagogical questions and assumptions about how much lecture time or coursework is needed to educate students about sustainability concepts or what constitutes a “concentration” in sustainability. Depending on an instructor's style and teaching methods, a course with one strong sustainability module or comprehensive assignment may be more focused on sustainability than a course that weaves sustainability principles throughout. Instead of trying to make this learning outcome distinction through related or focused classifications, we are working on creating sustainability course IDs or tags that correlate to identified sustainability competencies to help students make better choices and be able to select a series of courses can give them a complete and robust understanding of sustainability.

AASHE Sustainability Course Definitions

“Sustainability related courses incorporate sustainability as a distinct course component or module, or concentrate on a single sustainability principle or issue.”

“Sustainability focused courses concentrate on the concept of sustainability, including connections between environmental, social, and economic dimensions, or examines an issue or topic using sustainability as a lens.”
Sustainability Course Content Criteria and Levels

Sustainability Focused Course

Sustainability Related Course

Not a Sustainability Course

Sustainability Course Content Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sustainability Focused</th>
<th>Sustainability Related</th>
<th>Not a Sustainability Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes Interrelationships</td>
<td>Course content identifies and describes the relationship between the course topic, equity, economy, and environmental dimensions</td>
<td>Course content identifies and describes the relationship between the course topic and 2 of the 3 dimensions of equity, economy, and environment</td>
<td>Course content identifies and describes relationship between the course topic and 1 of the 3 dimensions of equity, economy, and environment or course topic is only about 1 of the 3 dimensions.</td>
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Sustainability Course Evaluation Form

Course Name: ____________________________  Syllabus Year: ____________________________
Course Number: ____________________________  Reviewer: ____________________________
Review Date: ____________________________

Syllabus Components: Check all that apply.

☐ Learning Outcomes (required)  ☐ Readings/Assignments (optional)
☐ Course Description (optional)  ☐ Community partner interface/learning (optional)

Criteria: The course content identifies and describes the relationship of the course topic to which of the following areas of sustainability (please only check one box and insert corresponding learning outcome):

☐ None: Course content does not identify or describe the relationship between the course topic and equity, economy, or environmental issues

Not a Sustainability Course: Course content identifies and describes relationship between the course topic and 1 of the 3 dimensions of equity, economy, and environment or course topic is only about 1 of the 3 dimensions.

☐ Equity
☐ Economy
☐ Environment

Learning Outcome(s):

Sustainability Related: Course content identifies and describes the relationship between the course topic and 2 of the 3 dimensions of equity, economy, and environment

☐ Equity-Economy
☐ Economy-Environment
☐ Environment-Equity

Learning Outcome(s):

Sustainability Focused: Course content identifies and describes the relationship between the course topic, equity, economy, and environmental dimensions

☐ Equity-Economy-Environment

Learning Outcome(s):
**Justification:** If necessary, please explain the rationale for choosing the identified learning outcome and how it relates to the criteria chosen.