

# Sustainability Designation for WSU Courses: Description and Process

Designator Approved by Faculty Senate January 17, 2019

## Application and Review Process

The **SUS designation** on courses stands for “sustainability” and formally indicates that a course involves some sustainability components (as outlined below), which aim to both further students’ understanding of and ability to address real world sustainability challenges. As noted above, we define sustainability in a pluralistic and inclusive way, encompassing human and ecological health, social justice, secure livelihoods, and a better world for all generations. Often depicted as a three-legged stool, this multidimensional concept includes social, economic, and environmental components with each representing one of the stool’s legs. Teaching sustainability in an array of courses across the curriculum will increase students’ awareness and comprehension that healthy human societies are fostered and supported through a complex web of interconnections between their physical, social and economic dimensions.

Application process:

- Complete an application found online at the WSU Sustainability website and submit it and a syllabus via Curriculog to the review committee. The application will require an explicit explanation of how sustainability is tied to the existing course (whether as the focus of the course or as component(s) of the course), the course syllabus, and the sustainability-related learning outcomes. New courses would need to go through the regular College and University Curriculum process for approval as courses, prior to or while simultaneously seeking the SUS designation.

Determination/Review Process:

- The Sustainability Curriculum Committee (SCC), consisting of faculty experienced in sustainability teaching, will review each application. The course instructor, department chair and secretary will be notified by the Sustainability Curriculum Committee chair after the committee completes its review of applications.
- The SCC will consist of the director of SPARC, and a sub-committee of faculty experienced in sustainability teaching, likely members of the Faculty Senate Environmental Initiatives Committee (EIC). There will be one representative from each WSU college.
- The committee reviews the proposals with a rubric developed by EIC.
- Applications will be due
  - October 1st (for upcoming spring courses)
  - March 1st (for upcoming summer and fall courses)
- The SCC will determine whether an existing course is designated based on fulfillment of the following four criteria:
  1. The following CORE sustainability learning outcome is included in the course syllabus: “Students will be able to comprehend the interconnection between environmental, social, and economic systems in relation to sustainability.”

**AND**

2. At least one additional learning outcome explicitly linking/applying the faculty's disciplinary/topic area(s) of focus to sustainability.

The following are examples of possible disciplinary areas/topics of focus with respect to sustainability, revealing the range of connection across disciplines.

- A. Sustainability as a concept: the history, politics, culture and science of ideas of sustainability and sustainable development.
- B. Natural limits: the relationship between human population and lifestyle in relation to the finite capacity of natural ecosystems (including the global ecosystem) to provide for human needs.
- C. Maintaining ecosystems: Natural resource conservation science and practices to maintain the integrity of ecosystems in the face of rising human demands.
- D. Health professions: The interconnections between health, wellness, and environmental quality (e.g. air quality and respiratory health, active transit and wellness).
- E. Business and economics: Re-shaping market conditions to address “market failures” with respect to the environment and to provide incentives for businesses and economic systems to better maintain the integrity of ecosystems.
- F. Social capacity: The social factors (e.g., psychology, sociology,) that support behavioral shifts (including but not limited to economic choices) necessary to enable and encourage societies to live in ways compatible with maintaining the long-term integrity of ecosystems.
- G. Social equity: The mutual interactions between social inequality and environmental degradation, including theories of social reforms required to ensure an environmentally healthy and socially just society.
- H. Sustainability discourse and representation: The framing, discussion, and/or presentation of environmental/social/economic sustainability in the visual and performing arts, literature, media, politics, and everyday life.
- I. Culture, religion, and ethics: How culture, religion, values, and ethics—from consumerism to environmental stewardship—shape human behavior toward the natural world.
- J. Governance: How legal frameworks and policies shape human behavior toward the natural world.
- K. Science and Technology: The role of science and technology (broadly and individual technologies) specifically in influencing human impacts on and adaptations to the natural world and its systems.
- L. Planning and design: Concepts and techniques from urban, regional, and rural planning and/or building design and/or product design that can influence human impacts on the environment and environmental impacts on humans.
- M. Sustainability science: The new field of sustainability science that specifically attempts to build interdisciplinary perspectives from the themes (and related academic disciplines) listed above to promote human-environmental balance.
- N. Applied sustainability: Experience working to address an environmental/social/economic sustainability challenge in a particular context/community/locale.
- O. Other emerging fields and topics relevant to sustainability.

*\*This list was adapted for WSU from the University of Oregon's STARS Curriculum Definitions (2010)*

3. Through both the core outcome and the disciplinary area(s) outcome students have an understanding of the interconnection between the course topic and sustainability. In addition to the learning outcomes, a plan to assess these outcomes will also need to be evident on the syllabus.

4. Includes sustainability content, as assessed from the syllabus and completed application form, using the Sustainability Course Rubric.

- Proposals will either be approved for the SUS attribute as is, returned for some additional info/modification, or denied (with a rationale for why).
- Once a course is approved for the SUS designation, the designation will be valid for 5 years, at which point a faculty will be prompted to apply for renewal, if s/he wishes.
- The designation would run with the faculty for a particular course section, or for the whole course, if it is a departmental level request for all sections of a course to have the attribute.

#### SUS Designation Management:

- Administration of the designation will be managed by the SPARC (e.g., maintenance of a master list of courses carrying the designation, reminders for renewal, annual reporting, and sending SUS course lists to the registrar).
- An email will be sent by the SPARC to faculty prior to each semester to verify that they want the designation to continue for their course(s) that semester.
- The SPARC will each fall/spring send a list of all SUS courses and associated faculty for the upcoming semester to the Registrar's office in advance of the class schedule being finalized (deadline to be determined).