Higher education didactics for sustainability

This course is a collaboration between Mid Sweden University, Karlstad University (KAU), Linköping University (LiU), Mälardalen University (MDU), Lund university (LU) and Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (Inn). The course is offered jointly, while credited separately by each of the participating universities.

Duration: 2 weeks / 80 hours (equivalent to 3 ECTS)
Prerequisites: None
Course syllabus last revised: [insert date]

Aim

The course aims to empower educators, pedagogical developers, and others involved in teaching and/or curriculum design in higher education, to integrate sustainability into teaching practice.

Learning outcomes

After completing the course, in addition to the general objectives in Chapter 1, Section 9 of the Swedish Higher Education Act for the second cycle, the participant should be able to:

- Critically analyse the paradigms and principles of educational practice in relation to a just transformation of society towards sustainability
- Apply and evaluate sustainability competencies in the planning and/or implementation of teaching activities, assessing their integration into existing curricula
- Critique and give suggestions for how to integrate didactical models like holism, pluralism, and transdisciplinarity in relation to education for sustainability, understanding and challenging subject-area educational practices and norms
- Reflectively explore and assess possible roles of universities in relation to future scenarios, contemplating the ethical implications and responsibilities of higher education institutions in fostering sustainability

Content

The course advances understanding of pedagogical frameworks like Education for Sustainability (EFS) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), by fostering a collaborative and collective learning environment that combines theoretical knowledge with practical examples. Through literature, discussions, and group work, course participants explore how these frameworks can be effectively implemented in their educational settings.

The course contains four modules:

1. **Making Sense of Sustainability:** Explores foundational questions about sustainability, including underpinning principles and paradigms, aiming to deepen understanding of why the incorporation of sustainability is crucial in higher education curriculum.
2. **Competencies, Frameworks, and Curriculum:** Introduces key sustainability competencies such as systems thinking, values thinking, and problem-solving, along with critical perspectives. The module also allows participants to explore the consequences of these concepts for existing courses and programme curricula.
3. **Didactical Models for Teaching and Learning Sustainability**: Considers various didactic models – like holism, pluralism, and transdisciplinarity – relating these approaches to teaching and learning for sustainability in relation to existing disciplines.
4. **The Future Role of the University:** Prompts learners to reflect on the evolving role of universities in relation to future scenarios and grand challenges. Discussions will focus on how universities can prepare students to meet the needs of the future, while considering our ethical responsibilities as educators and academics.

We believe in the value of self-directed learning and encourage you to adapt and apply the course content to your unique context, considering your professional responsibility, teaching style, personality, and personal values.

Teaching and forms of study

The course is designed using a problem-based learning approach, which engages learners in small groups to collaborate – through discussion, experience sharing, and collective learning – to explore tools and competencies needed to foster a more sustainable world through education.

The course language is English and conducted entirely online, providing you with the opportunity to engage with course materials and collaborate with international peers. To fully participate, you'll need access to a computer and a stable internet connection. The course primarily utilizes Zoom for virtual meetings and may incorporate other digital tools based on the needs of each group.

Course participants are invited to attend course meetings (e.g. connecting webinars, discussion webinars) as well as interact in their problem-based learning groups. Course meetings are not mandatory and are always recorded for review later. However, participants are expected to actively engage in their own problem-based learning groups approximately twice per week as a condition for receiving a course certificate.

Assessment and grading

The grades used for the course are Pass (G) and Fail (U). In order to get the grade Pass (G), the participant need to contribute in the PBL-group work and gain a pass on all the assessed course components.

The course assessment is continuous and consists of several assignments linked to the course modules and learning outcomes, including discussion posts and group work.

Literature

All literature is open access and will be posted on the course webpage at least one month prior to the course starts.