

Introduction:

De Montfort University (DMU) is proud to be the United Nations Academic Impact Hub for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions. The hub oversees initiatives to advance all SDGs both in teaching, research and outreach. To do this effectively, DMU collaborates with the United Nations and Economic and Social Council partners, universities and other institutions to promote local and global peacebuilding efforts, particularly in developing countries and areas of deprivation using research projects, educational opportunities, and policy advocacy aimed at strengthening governance and promoting peaceful societies. The university engages with outreach programs, workshops, and events that aim to address social inequalities and promote social justice within the local context by fostering strong community ties and encouraging civic participation. The university frequently organises campaigns and events to raise awareness about issues related to SDG16, such as human rights, justice, and peace. These activities engage both the university community and the broader public in discussions and actions that contribute to the advancement of peace, justice and strong institutions and all SDGs. These are some lessons learned:

Teaching

Work to embed the SDGs in the curriculum is led by DMU's Academic Lead for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), working with a member of the Academic Quality team. In 2022, DMU went through a significant curriculum transformation project, transitioning to the delivery of taught programmes in 'block' mode meaning that all programmes required re-accreditation. After redesign and re-accreditation, courses would typically be delivered in four consecutive 30-credit 7-week blocks. Through DMU's 2022 curriculum renewal process, every taught course is now required to address sustainable development issues. DMU is leading a UK-wide project to produce sector guidance on how to ensure sustainability is addressed in the curriculum. Approximately half of taught courses (220+ degrees) now have the SDGs embedded. DMU also commits to the national SDGs 'TeachIn' Week across all faculties. The SDGs TeachIn is an initiative run by the Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS) that encourages academics at all levels of education to embed the SDGs within their classes, labs, workshops, and seminars. The project was created to implement the links between the SDGs and academia with the hope that the future leaders of tomorrow will apply these teachings to make a positive change to society. The lesson learned is that despite being challenging and time consuming this has proved popular and DMU has ranked as one of the highest performing higher education institutions in the UK for the past five years and inspires many staff to get involved in embedding the SDGs.

Research

DMUs research institutes are focussed on SDG 16 and all SDGs. Researchers are encouraged engage in international collaborations to address global challenges related to peace and justice. For example, the university partners with organisations like the United Nations and World Health Organisation to conduct research on conflict resolution, governance, human rights and universal access to healthcare. This research seeks to influence policy and practice, to SDG16. Our three new research themes at DMU focus on all SDGs through research and knowledge exchange. The themes are:

- Empowering Futures: Supporting the SDG 16 hub, this theme includes research in decolonisation, health and geographical inequalities, migration, and modern slavery.
2. Connected Futures: touching on the interlinkages for the SDGs prevalent in leading research in AI, cybersecurity, digital humanities, digital health, and the influence of culture and history on future generations.
3. Resilient Futures: Driving research with a significant sustainability focus on SDGs which link to wellbeing, economic regeneration, sustainable fashion and design, carbon literacy, creative practice, energy conservation, and recycling and upcycling.

The lesson learned is that by refocusing the work of researchers around the SDGs, a new culture of engagement can be created using the global goals framework. This has worked especially well with international relationships.

Community outreach

De Montfort University (DMU) engages with both local and global communities in several impactful ways to advance Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16), which focuses on promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions. The university enjoys various collaborations with marginalized groups, including refugees, asylum seekers, and minority communities through its SDG projects including Project Atefa and Net Zero Football and other initiatives. DMU works closely with Leicester City Council and the NHS to address social challenges in the Leicester area. These partnerships often focus on improving enhancing public safety and fostering community resilience. The collaborations include workshops, public lectures, and events that address issues like discrimination, inequality, and social exclusion. These activities help raise awareness and foster dialogue on critical social issues, contributing to the creation of more inclusive and peaceful communities. A good example is the work of the Stephen Lawrence Research Centre at DMU which has worked with local primary schools to bring teachers together to tackle discrimination and inequality in local schools. The lessons learned are anchored in the outcomes that, outreach can be difficult to undertake but the results can be valuable.

Campaigns and dialogue:

DMU regularly hosts and supports UN SDG campaigns that raise awareness about issues related to peace, justice, and human rights. These campaigns often involve public dialogues, panel discussions, and social media outreach, engaging both the university community and the broader public in conversations that are crucial for advancing SDG16. A good example was the action taken by staff and students during World Refugee Week, which saw staff and students volunteer with migrant communities in Leicester and overseas. Lessons learned from this are to take the opportunity of the media materials provided by the UN and join the global level. It serves to remind staff and students that despite doing good work locally, they are part of something bigger

Global Partnerships and Networks:

The university is an active member of various global networks dedicated to sustainable development. These networks enable DMU to share knowledge, best practices, and resources with institutions around the world, accelerating the implementation of SDG16 globally. DMU's involvement in the International Network of Universities and the Association of Commonwealth Universities are two key example of how it contributes to global efforts to achieve the SDGs in the global north and south. One lesson learned, or observation, might be to consider whether the current hubs did enough to work successfully together on SDGs impacts in the same manner they did with existing networks.