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WSB University

Standard for Education for Sustainable Development at WSB University

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Dąbrowa Górnicza, 2026

1. Introduction and Context

This document sets out WSB University's Institutional Framework for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

It defines the University's approach to integrating sustainability into teaching, learning and quality assurance processes across all study programmes, and establishes the principles, structures and mechanisms through which this integration will be implemented, monitored and sustained over time.

Definition of ESD:

Education for Sustainable Development is the intentional integration of sustainability knowledge, values and competences into the educational experience of every student, across all disciplines and at all levels of study.

1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Document

This framework serves three distinct but interrelated functions.

1. It is an institutional policy document that sets out **WSB University's commitments, minimum standards and governance architecture for ESD** across all study programmes and quality processes.
2. It is a strategic instrument **that positions ESD as a distinctive feature of the educational identity** of WSB University, relevant to its students, employers, accreditation bodies and the wider higher education community.
3. **It is a practical guide** that provides the University's academic staff, programme councils and staff of the units responsible for course design and quality assurance with the frame of reference needed to integrate ESD into everyday academic work.

This framework covers all study programmes offered by WSB University, all quality assurance processes within the University's Internal Quality Assurance System, and all members of the academic and administrative community involved in designing, delivering and evaluating these programmes.

1.2 ESD: External Drivers

WSB University's decision to develop ESD systematically stems from a convergence of drivers at three levels.

- At the global level, the key drivers include the UN 2030 Agenda, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the growing importance of climate education and climate literacy, rising expectations among employers and investors regarding graduates' understanding of ESG issues, the PRME initiative (Principles for Responsible Management Education), and UNESCO's framework for competences in Education for Sustainable Development.
- At the European level, relevant factors include the Bologna Process and its emphasis on graduate competences that matter to society and the economy, the EFMD and CEEMAN accreditation frameworks, and the European Green Deal and its implications for higher education.
- At the national and institutional level, relevant factors include growing competitive pressure in the Polish higher education market, the Act on Higher Education and Science as the regulatory

framework, the quality standards of the Polish Accreditation Committee, which take into account the social relevance of programmes, and WSB University's strategic engagement and social impact.

2. Conceptual Foundations

2.1 What Does ESD Mean at WSB University?

At WSB University, ESD is understood as follows:

- **ESD is a shared perspective, not a separate subject.** It is not a stand-alone course or a separate study programme dedicated to sustainability. **It is a perspective that every discipline incorporates into its content, its teaching and learning, and its methods of assessing learning outcomes,** prompting reflection on how the field can support sustainable development and how students can apply this perspective in practice.
- **ESD encompasses all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, not only the environmental ones**, which are commonly associated with green solutions. Every discipline taught at WSB University has natural and meaningful links to at least one of these goals in addition to Goal 4: Quality Education. It is recommended that each study programme be linked to a greater number of goals.

2.2 Institutional Principles of ESD

The following six principles govern the design, implementation and evaluation of ESD at WSB University. They should be read not as aspirations but as operational commitments – standards against which the University's practice can be assessed.

1. **ESD is a shared responsibility, not a specialisation**. Every academic discipline has a relationship with sustainable development. ESD is not the domain of a single department or a dedicated course – it is a responsibility distributed across all study programmes offered at WSB University.
2. **ESD covers the full spectrum of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals**. WSB University understands sustainable development as encompassing environmental, social and governance dimensions. ESD at WSB University is not limited to environmental issues or climate action.
3. ESD is proportionate and sensitive to the specific nature of each discipline. The framework defines a **universal minimum – at least one programme-level learning outcome relating to sustainable development** – while recognising that some fields have richer natural connections and are expected to go further.
4. **ESD is embedded, not added on**. ESD content is integrated into existing study programmes and their scope. Academic staff are expected to recognise and highlight the elements of ESD that are already present in their field.
5. ESD shapes students. The aim is to equip them with the knowledge, values and competences that enable them to act responsibly in a complex and interconnected world.
6. ESD is an evolving institutional commitment. **Fully embedding ESD across the University is a multi-year process of continuous improvement**. The framework sets the direction and minimum standards, recognising that ambition, scope and depth will grow over time.

2.3 Learning Outcomes and the ESD Competence Framework

WSB University's ESD Competence Framework builds on recognised European practice, in particular the GreenComp framework (European Commission, 2022) and the UNESCO framework.

The framework is organised around learning outcomes described in terms of knowledge, skills and social competences. The final wording of an outcome may vary by discipline and study programme, but all three should be present in the educational experience of every graduate.

1. **Knowledge (Understanding sustainable development)**

- Understands the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their interconnections
- Understands the environmental, social, economic and governance dimensions of sustainable development in relation to their field
- Recognises that sustainability issues are present throughout their discipline and are not confined to its most obvious areas

2. **Skills (Sustainable development in practice)**

- Systems thinking: analyses the links, interdependencies and tensions between sustainability goals, stakeholders and the consequences of decisions
- Critical thinking: critically evaluates information, arguments and claims relating to sustainable development, including recognising potential greenwashing
- Problem solving: analyses problems, designs, evaluates and refines solutions from a sustainability perspective, and proposes alternative solutions, taking into account their feasibility and consequences
- Evaluation and decision-making: assesses organisational practices or professional activities from a sustainability perspective and formulates evidence-based conclusions and recommendations
- Anticipatory thinking: anticipates the possible short- and long-term consequences of professional decisions for different stakeholders and for sustainable development

3. **Social competences**

- Identifies ethical dilemmas related to sustainable development and takes them into account in professional decision-making.
- Collaborates with others and takes into account the perspectives of different stakeholders in solving sustainability-related problems.
- Reflects critically on the impact of their own professional choices and understands their responsibility for supporting sustainable development.
- Demonstrates readiness to translate sustainability principles into responsible action in professional practice.

Note: This competence framework defines what graduates should be able to demonstrate upon completing their studies. Programme teams and instructors have the autonomy to determine the most appropriate and authentic ways of developing these competences in the context of their discipline. **These competences should be reflected in programme-level and course-level learning outcomes.**

2.4 The Structure of ESD at WSB University

ESD is organised around six distinct but interrelated touchpoints, each performing a different function along the student's journey from first contact to professional practice.

Touchpoint	Description
1. University-wide introductory course (compulsory, all students, Year 1)	A single, compulsory course introducing all 17 SDGs as a shared frame of reference. Students develop foundational sustainability knowledge regardless of their discipline.
2. Programme-specific courses	ESD themes are woven into existing course content – not as add-ons but as naturally embedded dimensions. For example, marketing courses may address greenwashing, HR courses social equity, and engineering courses circular design, resource efficiency and life-cycle assessment. Courses in medical and health-related programmes and nursing may address accessibility and equity in healthcare and the ethical aspects of AI in medicine. In psychology – mental wellbeing in the context of the climate crisis, occupational burnout and sustainable working environments; in philology – analysis of sustainability discourse and intercultural communication in the context of global challenges. In computer science – the ethics of artificial intelligence, the energy intensity of digital technologies, and the design of accessible and inclusive solutions. In education – inclusive education, developing future competences in children and young people, and education for social responsibility, Economics courses – income inequality and cost-benefit analysis of economic decisions, taking into account their social and environmental effects.
3. Elective courses	In addition to integrating ESD into compulsory programme courses, each study programme should offer **at least one elective course** that explicitly addresses selected Sustainable Development Goals or sustainability challenges. Such a course may be devoted directly to sustainable development or may integrate relevant SDG-related issues within a specific disciplinary or specialist area, enabling students to deepen their professional knowledge while examining its wider social, environmental, ethical or economic implications. Elective courses complement, rather than replace, the systematic integration of ESD into the compulsory content of the study programme.
4. Student projects, coursework and assessment of learning outcomes (throughout the study programme)	Students are expected to address the sustainability dimension in projects, prototypes, case analyses, coursework and diploma theses. In programmes where programme-level learning outcomes include sustainability-related competences, these are translated into corresponding course-level learning outcomes and explicitly included in their assessment. **Assessment therefore plays a key role in integrating ESD**. Students should not only recognise sustainability issues but also analyse them, justify their decisions, evaluate possible conflicts of interest, and demonstrate how sustainability considerations shape their proposed solutions or professional decisions. Questions such as "Is this solution sustainable?", "Who might be

Touchpoint	Description
	affected by this decision?" and "What might its social, environmental, ethical or economic consequences be?" may form part of assessment criteria, rubrics, project evaluations, case analyses or reflective assignments. In project-based tasks, assessment may cover not only the outcome but also the process of arriving at the solution, the way constraints and alternatives were considered, and the rationale for the decisions made. Examples of assignments and projects may include: • analysing a marketing campaign for greenwashing and preparing recommendations for more responsible communication; • management or HR students developing a proposal for an organisational policy that supports wellbeing, diversity and social equity; • analysing a clinical case with regard not only to the effectiveness of medical treatment but also to access to services, the rational use of resources and ethical aspects; • in psychology, preparing an intervention project addressing mental wellbeing, occupational burnout or the impact of the climate crisis on mental health; • designing an IT solution that takes into account accessibility, inclusiveness, the ethical use of AI and the environmental impact of technology; • analysing an economic or investment decision with regard to its economic, social and environmental effects; • in the law programme, preparing a case analysis concerning a conflict between economic interests, social responsibility, human rights and regulatory requirements; • in the education programme, designing classes that develop children's future competences, social responsibility or understanding of selected Sustainable Development Goals; • rational use of resources. In each of these cases, assessment criteria may include, among others, the accuracy with which the problem is identified from a sustainability perspective, the quality of the stakeholder and consequence analysis, the ability to recognise conflicting goals, the justification of the chosen solution, and its feasibility and social and environmental responsibility.
5. Work placements	Every student completing a work placement includes in their placement report an assessment of the host organisation's sustainability. This connects academic knowledge of ESD with real professional practice. The decision in this respect is made by the Placement Coordinators for each programme, taking into

Touchpoint	Description
	account the requirements of the education standards applicable to selected programmes.
6. Teaching approach	Sustainability can be introduced not only through course content but also through the way classes are taught, e.g. through the choice of data, source materials and case studies. The same learning outcome (e.g. statistical analysis, case study, modelling, financial evaluation) can be achieved by working with sustainability-related material without changing the learning objective of the class – only the context in which the competence is practised. Examples of classes in: • statistics – analyses carried out on climate or environmental data instead of neutral datasets, • finance/accounting – a case study based on a company's actual ESG report rather than solely on a conventional financial statement, • law – analysis of a judgment or legal act concerning an environmental dispute, • project management – students plan the schedule and budget for a project with a real resource constraint (e.g. reduced use of materials or energy) as an additional criterion of project success,

These touchpoints are designed to reinforce one another. The introductory course provides a shared vocabulary; programme-specific courses develop field-relevant depth, both through course content and through the way classes are taught and the choice of data, source materials and case studies; projects build the habit of thinking about sustainability; and work placements test this thinking against the diversity of real organisations. Together they create a coherent and progressive ESD experience.

3. The ESD Framework: A Four-Pillar Architecture

WSB University's ESD Framework is organised **around four interdependent pillars**. Each pillar addresses a distinct dimension of institutional change; together they form a coherent system in which ESD becomes embedded in the way the University teaches, develops its staff, supports its students and manages its own quality processes.

Pillar 1: Integration into Institutional Quality Processes

For ESD to become a lasting, university-wide element of WSB University's operations, it is included in the University Strategy and is consistent with the WSB University Sustainable Development Strategy. This strategic commitment should then be reflected in other University documents, quality assurance processes, the design and improvement of study programmes, and the teaching and learning practices that shape the student experience. The detailed scope and manner of introducing these changes will be worked out at a later stage, in cooperation with the University Committee for the Quality of Education and the relevant University

units. It is, however, already possible to identify the key areas in which such integration can take place most naturally:

Quality document	Type of ESD intervention
Course syllabus (ECTS course sheet)	Inclusion of a reference to ESD, e.g. related SDGs, learning outcome, assessment method
Programme design guidelines	ESD integration required as a condition for approval of a new programme
Programme review guidelines	ESD audit required as part of the periodic programme review
Periodic staff appraisal	Option to include ESD engagement as a developmental element
Rector's Award criteria	ESD engagement as one of the dimensions for assessing teaching excellence
Report of the Rector's Representative for the Quality of Education	A dedicated annual ESD section with progress indicators
Student satisfaction survey	Formalised and standardised ESD indicators, monitored on a regular cycle
Work placement report	Option to include an assessment of the host organisation's sustainability

The integration of ESD into further elements of WSB University's Internal Quality Assurance System will be carried out in stages, taking into account the specific nature of individual study programmes and the applicable regulatory requirements.

Pillar 2: Staff Development Pathway

The effective integration of ESD into study programmes depends on institutional arrangements and on the knowledge, confidence and commitment of individual academic teachers. **WSB University therefore takes a progressive approach to developing staff competences** – from basic awareness, through practical application, to institutional recognition of sustained commitment to the development of ESD.

Level	Description
Level 1 – Awareness (all teaching staff)	Completion of the University's online ESD training: the Education for Sustainable Development and Climate Literacy modules. A baseline expectation for all full-time staff. The courses are available to all employees.

Level	Description
Level 2 – Application (staff who have completed Level 1)	Supported application of ESD in teaching practice through the teaching community, course redesign workshops and consultations with the ESD Coordinator and instructional design specialists – evidenced, for example, by a revised syllabus, coursework and examination tasks.
Level 3 – Recognition (voluntary, aspirational)	Institutional recognition for academic teachers who have incorporated ESD into their teaching practice and actively contribute to the development of ESD across the University. Recognition may include Rector's Awards, showcasing good practice in the annual ESD report or in online training, opportunities to share experience, and other forms of institutional support and incentives that strengthen and sustain further engagement in the development of ESD.

Key principle

Staff members are not expected to specialise in ESD. The three-level model has been designed to require little effort at entry while gradually raising expectations.

Pillar 3: The Student ESD Experience

Students encounter ESD at various stages of their studies through the elements described in Section 2. These include programme- and course-level learning outcomes, programme-specific and elective courses, assessment, projects and coursework, work placements and the university-wide introductory course.

Rather than treating ESD as a separate component of the curriculum, WSB University seeks to create a coherent pathway in which sustainability issues are successively introduced, deepened, applied in practice and assessed in different contexts and at increasing levels of complexity.

From the student's perspective, this means that every graduate should have the opportunity to:

- develop a shared understanding of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the principles of sustainable development;
- engage with sustainability issues in the context of their own discipline;
- apply a sustainability perspective in assignments, projects, professional practice and decision-making;
- demonstrate the achievement of sustainability-related learning outcomes through appropriate forms of assessment;
- reflect on the social, environmental, ethical and economic consequences of professional decisions.

Pillar 4: Institutional Governance and Coordination

Effective implementation of ESD requires clearly defined responsibilities and coordinated action. WSB University will integrate ESD into its existing governance and quality assurance processes, supporting this process through regular monitoring and reporting.

ESD Coordinator

WSB University will appoint an ESD Coordinator/Representative responsible for overseeing the implementation of this framework, supporting staff development, monitoring KPIs, preparing the annual ESD report and acting as the institutional point of contact for ESD-related matters. Until this role is formally established, ESD coordination duties are shared between the quality team and the academic leadership.

Annual ESD Report

The ESD Coordinator will prepare an annual ESD report documenting progress against KPIs, summarising key developments across all four pillars and identifying priorities for the coming year.

Integration with Existing Governance

ESD governance is not a parallel structure; it operates through existing institutional mechanisms: the quality assurance cycle, programme approval and review processes, staff appraisal and the annual planning process. The role of the ESD Coordinator is to ensure that ESD has a consistent presence in these existing processes, not to create a separate bureaucracy alongside them.

4. Stakeholder Map

This section maps the key stakeholder groups relevant to the implementation of ESD at WSB University.

4.1 Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder group	Role and scope of activities
WSB University authorities (Rector, Vice-Rectors, Deans, Vice-Deans)	Role: decision-makers on the formal adoption of the framework and the revision of quality documents; Strategy: regular progress briefings; annual ESD report presented to the Senate; ESD as an accreditation asset and a competitive differentiator.
ESD Coordinator/Representative	Role: the person who brings together ESD implementation across the University; point of contact for staff, programmes and external stakeholders on ESD-related matters Activities: day-to-day coordination, KPI monitoring, annual report
University Committee for the Quality of Education	Role: “guardians” of quality processes; embedding ESD indicators in reporting cycles. Activities: direct involvement in co-designing revised documents; consultation on procedures and changes within the quality system
Chairs and members of programme councils	Role: “guardians” of programme changes; Activities: design changes to the programme and to selected courses.
Academic staff	Role: the main agents delivering ESD in teaching practice. Activities: implementing ESD in their classes, proposing improvements, participating in training, supporting other teachers through class visits, peer observation and peer mentoring
Students	Role: beneficiaries of ESD-enriched programmes;

Stakeholder group	Role and scope of activities
	Activities: participation in classes; student representatives in ESD governance; feedback on changes through surveys
Employers and industry partners	Role: external validators of the relevance of ESD; "providers" of good practice or challenges, e.g. for student projects Activities: providing feedback on study programmes and learning outcomes; supplying sustainability-related challenges (topics) for Challenge-Based Learning projects; working with students and staff to develop practical solutions; using work placements as a space that connects the assessment of sustainability practice with ESG expectations in professional practice.
Accreditation bodies (PKA, CEEMAN, EFMD)	Role: external validators of commitment to responsible management education. Strategy: documenting ESD integration in self-assessment reports; developing accreditation guidelines; continuous improvement

5. Implementation Plan and Monitoring

5.1 Phased Implementation Plan

Implementation of this framework will be gradual and iterative. Rather than introducing all the elements described in Section 3 at once, the University plans an exploration and pilot phase in which individual solutions – concerning quality processes, staff development and the student experience – will be tested, consulted on and refined before becoming part of established institutional practice. The detailed timeline and scope of individual activities will be developed at the next stage, in cooperation with the quality team and other University units.

5.2 Monitoring ESD

As implementation progresses, it will be important to monitor not only whether ESD is formally present in University processes and programme documentation, but also how it is integrated into study programmes, assessment and students' educational experience. **The areas below may serve as a starting point for monitoring progress; the final indicators, measurement methods, target values and baseline values will be determined at a later stage of the work**.

Area of observation	Scope
Presence of ESD in programme-level learning outcomes	Do study programmes include explicitly formulated sustainability-related learning outcomes, and to what extent?
Integration of the SDGs at programme level	Which Sustainable Development Goals are addressed in individual programmes, how closely are they linked to the specific nature of the discipline, and are they present at successive stages of the student's learning pathway?

Area of observation	Scope
Development of key ESD skills and competences	Do programmes give students the opportunity to develop the skills and competences defined in this standard, including systems thinking, critical thinking, integrated problem solving, responsible decision-making and collaboration?
Assessment of sustainability-related learning outcomes	Are sustainability-related learning outcomes assessed using appropriate methods, and are ESD aspects included in assessment criteria, rubrics, projects, case analyses and other forms of coursework?
Integration of ESD into programme-specific and elective courses	Are sustainability issues incorporated into compulsory programme courses and the range of elective courses, and if so, how?
Student perceptions and experience	Do students perceive the presence of ESD during their studies, and do they have the opportunity to understand, apply and reflect on sustainability-related issues?
Staff participation in ESD competence development	To what extent do academic teachers complete introductory ESD training and participate in further forms of development that support the integration of ESD into teaching and assessment?
Use of the updated syllabus template	To what extent do new or updated syllabi include appropriate ESD-related learning outcomes, content, learning activities and assessment methods?
Integration of ESD into the University's Internal Quality Assurance System	Has ESD become a lasting and systemic element of the University's quality assurance processes, programme reviews, documentation and procedures?
Presence of ESD in programme self-assessment reports	Do programmes systematically address ESD integration, student learning outcomes, assessment and areas requiring further improvement?
Status of formal adoption and implementation of the standard	Stage in the process of institutional approval, implementation, review and further development of the ESD standard.