Sustainable Development

Why study Sustainable Development here?

- Addresses pressing issues for humanity through critical interrogation of the concept of ‘sustainable development’.
- Employs an integrated and holistic approach spanning arts and sciences, drawing on experts across disciplines.
- A unique and highly interdisciplinary programme. Specialist subject areas include Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Geography, History, International Relations, Management, Social Anthropology.
- Allows you to tailor your individual programmes of study through selection of partner subjects.
- Research-led degree orientated around problem solving, linking theoretical and practical aspects of sustainable development.
- Set of varied assignments and experiential learning that enhance employability.
- The programme has close links with broader sustainability initiatives, offering scope for practical involvement.
- Part of an institution that is on course to become the UK’s first carbon neutral university.
- The School was top in Scotland in the UK’s Research Excellence Framework 2014.

Resources
Very few universities offer undergraduate degrees in Sustainable Development. Uniquely, our interdisciplinary programme draws on the combined expertise of several Schools across the University.

BSc or MA? (Single Honours degree)

Sustainable Development BSc

For BSc degrees – at least two Highers or one A-Level must include Biology (or Human Biology), Chemistry, Computing Science or equivalent, Geography, Geology, Mathematics, Physics, or Psychology.

Joint Honours degrees are being proposed, please check online at your time of application for options available.

The BSc degree requires that at least 40 credits are gained in Science subjects in 1000- and 2000-level modules – see Cross-Faculty subjects on page 5.

Likely grades considered for an offer

We consider all aspects of every application, including context, equivalent qualifications and the Personal Statement and offers may be higher or lower than the grades stated here.

SQA Highers: AAAB BSc
GCE A-Levels: AAA BSc
International Baccalaureate Points: 36

For full Faculty entrance requirements, see page 53.
For further country-specific qualifications and pre-degree foundation programmes see: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study/international

Do I need previous knowledge of this subject? – No.

If you are most interested in Arts subjects as partner subjects within Sustainable Development, then you should apply for the MA degree; if you are most interested in Science subjects, you should apply for the BSc degree.

Subject enquiries

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What will I study?

The University of St Andrews is a world-class learning community in which top-level research influences educational design and practice, and all programmes are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. We are currently reviewing and modernising the undergraduate curriculum for Sustainable Development. The information below is an example of what the curriculum covered in 2016-2017. When the curriculum has been approved, full details will be available online under Subject information – 2018 entry: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study/ug/prospectus

Sustainable Development element of your Honours degree

First year (2 x 20-credit modules required)

Our first year modules illustrate the breadth of issues involved in sustainable development, examine what this much-used term means and explore what its implications are. They explain how
sustainable development has emerged as such a powerful idea, and examine different disciplinary perspectives on the issues that it should be addressing, as well as exploring the value of an interdisciplinary approach in tackling unsustainable practices. They also introduce underpinning ideas such as social justice, human well-being, intergenerational equity and environmental stewardship.

Second year (2 x 30-credit modules required)
The focus of the second year modules in Sustainable Development – Frameworks for Implementation and Tools for Action – is on the practicalities of how to move from unsustainable to sustainable pathways. A range of conceptual and practical approaches are explored, including traditional governance and regulation, the market-based mechanisms of environmental economics, behavioural change, community-based enablement, and the principles of conservation science. This programme also provides training in ‘the tools of the trade’ – the methods of gathering and analysing evidence so that problems can be understood and addressed.

Honours – third and fourth years
(Compulsory modules totalling 120 credits and the balance of credits chosen in consultation with an Adviser of Studies)
At Honours level, the compulsory modules engage with a range of important contemporary debates surrounding sustainable futures, and provide training in advanced research methods, including statistical and qualitative analytical skills. In addition, you will choose from a range of modules from different Schools that allow you to pursue your specific interests and explore the practice of sustainability; these may include field visits. In the final year, a research project allows you to combine your expertise from partner disciplines with an understanding of sustainable development in researching a topic of your choice, with structured support from an academic in an appropriate School. Training for this includes a residential field course where you will learn how to do research.

Typical class sizes and teaching information
First year: lectures 150 - 200, seminars 15 - 25, tutorials 8 - 12
Second year: lectures 80 - 100, seminars 15 - 20, tutorials 8 - 10
Honours: 10 - 30, laboratories and seminars 10 - 30, tutorials 1 - 5, research project – individual supervision

Teaching is based on semester-length modules comprising lectures, tutorials/seminars, laboratory classes, field excursions, a range of assignments, investigations of case studies and research projects. Performance is measured by continuously assessed work, examinations and, at Honours, by a research project. You are encouraged throughout the programme to develop literacy and numeracy skills and to acquire appropriate IT and life skills.

Typical methods of assessment
Most of the specific SD-coded modules are assessed by a variety of methods that include coursework and examinations. Students will also gain experience in presentations and individual research projects.

Fieldwork support
The Department subsidises all required fieldwork, reducing the charged cost to <£50 in each of the first two years. The cost of the Honours field trip is around £300 - 500; students experiencing financial difficulties can apply to the Department’s Hardship Fund which may cover some or all of this cost. Students also have the opportunity to apply for Departmental scholarships.

Study abroad
You may apply to the University’s St Andrews Abroad programme. See page 22.

Careers
St Andrews was one of the first universities to offer undergraduate degrees in Sustainable Development. Our graduates are highly literate and numerate, with a unique combination of skills acquired at a prestigious university. At a time when sustainable development is rising ever higher up the national and international agenda, and as businesses and organisations accept the need to adopt more sustainable practices, graduates with a degree in Sustainable Development are in strong demand. Career pathways are very varied, reflecting the breadth of the subject, but include central and local government, NGOs, teaching, conservation and other environmentally related areas, impact assessment, management, strategic planning and consultancy. Many will proceed to further training, acquiring applied skills in a sustainability-related area or undertaking postgraduate research.

Graduate comments:
“My role has been more about sustainability in its broadest sense (balancing social, environmental and economic factors). It is this latter understanding of SD, which I gained in great depth from the degree, which has allowed me to take this approach within Rydon.”

Catriona (graduated 2010)
Rydon Group (Sustainability Consultancy), Sustainability leader

“The degree gave me a great grounding in how to think critically, and a strong background in renewable energy systems. Most of all, the interdisciplinary nature of the degree gave me a broad outlook, which is important in my job – we deal with a huge range of technical, social, environmental and political issues whilst assisting community energy projects, so this was very useful.”

Jamie (graduated 2008)
Community Energy Scotland, Development Officer