Sustainable Development

Degree options

BSc or MA (Single Honours Degree)
Sustainable Development

Contributing Schools
Biology; Chemistry; Computer Science; Geography & Geosciences; History; International Relations; Management; Mathematics & Statistics; Modern Languages; Philosophical, Anthropological & Film Studies; Psychology & Neuroscience.

[The BSc degree requires that at least 40 credits are gained in Science subjects in 1000- and 2000-level modules]

Entrance Requirements

Obtaining the following grades will not guarantee you a place as we consider all aspects of every application, including the Personal Statement.

First Year Entry
SQA Highers: AAAB**
GCE A-Levels: AAA**
International Baccalaureate Points: 36

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

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.

Second Year Entry
Direct entry to second year may be possible for very well qualified applicants with an appropriate academic background. If you are interested in direct second-year entry then contact the Admissions Officer (see below) to discuss options.

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.

Features

* 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 many academic Schools (see list on left).
* A unique and highly interdisciplinary programme.
* 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.

Resources

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

BSc or MA?
You can register for either a BSc or an MA degree in Sustainable Development (SD), depending on your interests and background. Because they are based in different Faculties, the range of other subjects available to you in the first two years is different. At each level of the degree there are specific SD modules which are supplemented by modules taught in the contributing Schools. To a considerable extent, therefore, you can construct a degree pathway of your choice, matching your interests, enthusiasms and aspirations.

What will I study?

Indicative programme information

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. The Semester 1 module, shared with Geography, adopts a global perspective in exploring the complex interrelationships between people and planet, and the implications (physical and socio-political) of humans becoming a force of nature.
Sustainable Development has given me the opportunity to explore the numerous drivers of our world’s current socioeconomic and environmental issues. The beauty of the subject is that it introduces you to a wide variety of potential ‘out of the box’ solutions that encapsulate aspects from all disciplines across both Arts and Science Faculties. The modules offer a diversity of thought provoking assignments which I, for one, find tremendously stimulating.”

George (Limmasol, Cyprus)

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
(4 compulsory modules totalling 130 - 160 credits and the balance of credits chosen in consultation with an Adviser)
At Honours level, 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 through field visits. You will undertake extensive training in research, including a residential field course where you will learn how to do research, explore a broad range of research methods, and gain statistical and qualitative analytical skills. Electives will allow you to deepen your analytical skills and to continue exploring your interests. Finally, the dissertation module 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.

Study abroad
You may apply to study abroad under the University’s St Andrews Abroad programme. See page 46.

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 - 50, laboratories and seminars 10 - 50, tutorials 1 - 5, dissertation – 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 an extended critical review essay and a research dissertation. You are encouraged throughout the programme to develop literacy and numeracy skills and to acquire appropriate IT and life skills.

Typical methods of assessment
All the specific SD modules are assessed by at least 50% coursework at sub-honours. The balance of the assessment is made up either of further coursework or written examinations depending on the specific module. At Honours levels, SD-specific modules are assessed by a variety of methods that include coursework and examinations. Assessment patterns of modules taken from contributing Schools vary.

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 third year fieldtrip 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.

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. For more information: http://bit.ly/sta-susdev-careers

See also page 36 for details of the University’s Careers Centre.

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