

The International Sustainability Diploma

by fida

FIDA - The Futures Institute at Dollar Academy - is delighted to offer the International Sustainability Diploma to schools across Scotland. The course is free of charge, and schools may register from November 2024 for the 2025-26 session.

The Diploma is an innovative one-year programme. Students learn by tackling real-world projects aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and co-created with experts from industry and universities. The course is designed to develop the important skills of independent research, problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, communication and entrepreneurship. Instead of examinations, students are assessed on a varied Portfolio of work which they build throughout the year. Assessment is carried out in schools and verified by FIDA.

The Diploma credit-rated at SCQF Level 6 and is worth 24 tariff points (equivalent to one Higher). As such, it is recognised by UCAS, universities, colleges and employers, and also carries international recognition.

To register, contact: Smith-JA@dollaracademy.org.uk

Course Structure

Unit 1 – Understanding Sustainability and Design Thinking (20%)

Students explore the concept of sustainability through the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and create a social media campaign to raise awareness of an SDG of their choice. Next, they undertake a 'design sprint' challenge to learn the principles of Design Thinking – a methodology for problem-solving and solution design that they can use throughout the course and in their wider learning and personal development.

Unit 2 – Designing Sustainable Solutions (60%)

Students choose a minimum of two 'Global Challenge' projects from a range of options, each rooted in the SDGs. For instance, they might design an accessible playground for all generations to keep fit, healthy and connected; a new wave-powered method for water desalination; a video game to combat climate anxiety; or a monument to represent unheard voices in their community. In each case, students research the issue and the needs of their target users or audience; generate ideas; and iterate their solution through a process of feedback and testing. For assessment, the emphasis is on process rather than outcome, and students have the opportunity to build and develop their skills as they move from one project to the next.

Unit 3 – Entrepreneurship: Ideas Into Action (20%)

This Unit is co-developed and delivered with the University of Stirling Enterprise Team. Students learn about the crucial role of business and social enterprise in achieving the SDGs. They select one of their project outcomes from Unit 2 to develop further as a business or social enterprise proposition. Students present their 'pitch' and have the opportunity to receive feedback from entrepreneurs.

REFLECTIONS FROM TEACHERS LEADING THE DIPLOMA IN 2024-25:

"This is possibly one of the most important courses we could offer our pupils. The world is grappling with the urgent need for sustainable solutions and our current generation of school pupils are deeply committed to safeguarding the planet's future. They're not just passive observers; they are seeking knowledge, solutions and ways to reduce their ecological impact. This Diploma will allow our students to be prepared for future career sectors, policy and personal challenges in a world that faces a climate crisis."

"I've already seen how the Diploma takes my learners out of the subject silos and helps them see the bigger picture, which is great!"

"I'm finding that the way the Diploma is structured, it's great preparation for University. It's not as teacher-led as a typical Higher, so it's a good transition. It's fascinating to be involved in it."

"We're looking for a lot more interdisciplinary learning and project-based learning opportunities as well as embedding sustainability across the curriculum and this is a fantastic opportunity to actually look at these two things in the senior phase, which we don't often get as much time to do."

"We were looking at opportunities for pupils who would not be comfortable at Higher, but could achieve at Level 6, looking for a wider range of opportunities for them that were really providing them with skills to get them into work, to college."

"It's about developing project-learning confidence, giving them the opportunity to do that before they leave. Without it, they don't have the kind of resilience, those problem solving skills, that creativity, that innovation, that they need. Pupils are trained in a certain fashion at school – to do well at exams - but have a hard time transitioning to what universities are looking for and what employers are looking for. So, we were looking for something that offers that really great combination, up to now, that has been impossible to find."

SOME LEARNER REFLECTIONS FROM THE 2024-25 COHORT:

"I'm learning about different sustainable practices and how to implement them in my school and community. It's also a chance for me to explore innovative ideas that can really make a difference."

"I hope to become more informed on problems within our society and be able to think of creative and innovative solutions. I also hope we can take the knowledge and skills we will have developed and apply them to many opportunities and projects in the future."

"I am very excited to get fully stuck into this Diploma, I feel it is a great opportunity, and a qualification in something that I deeply care about yet rarely get enough time to delve into within school. I also know that my classmates are very like-minded and so I believe this will be a very fun and productive year, so thank you for setting this Diploma up as it is a great opportunity."