

UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO



Co-operative and
Experiential Education

SDGs **at** Work

activity workbook



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SDGS AT WORK OVERVIEW

Welcome to SDGs at Work. This is an activity created by Co-operative and Experiential Education (CEE) to help you have meaningful and impactful conversations about sustainability and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during your work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunity — whether that takes the form of a co-op work term, internship, or other WIL experience.

How do I participate in SDGs at Work?

- Complete section one: self-reflection prior to meeting with your supervisor.
- Connect with your supervisor to chat about sustainability. Complete section two and three with your supervisor or other members of the organization.
- You can meet one time or have ongoing conversations – that's up to you and your supervisor.
- After you've finished SDGs at Work, complete the [survey for students](#), and encourage your supervisor to complete the [survey for supervisors](#).
- Review section four for more actions or learning opportunities about the SDGs.

Visit the [SDGs at Work webpage](#) for more information about completing the activity.

Questions? Contact Shabnam (Shay) Ivkovic at sivkovic@uwaterloo.ca.

SECTION 1: SELF-REFLECTION

Use the space below, or your own notebook/document, to record your thoughts on the following self-reflection prompts.

1. What do you think about when you hear United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals? Write down the first five things that come to mind.
2. Now, review the [SDG website](#) and this article about [SDG myths](#).
→ See [Appendix A](#) for more resources and a quiz to test your sustainability literacy.
3. Compare your understanding with the facts. Where is your understanding aligned and what did you learn?
4. What are 2-3 of the SDGs that resonate with you? Why?
5. What are some strategies you have chosen to advance your chosen goals – professionally and/or personally?

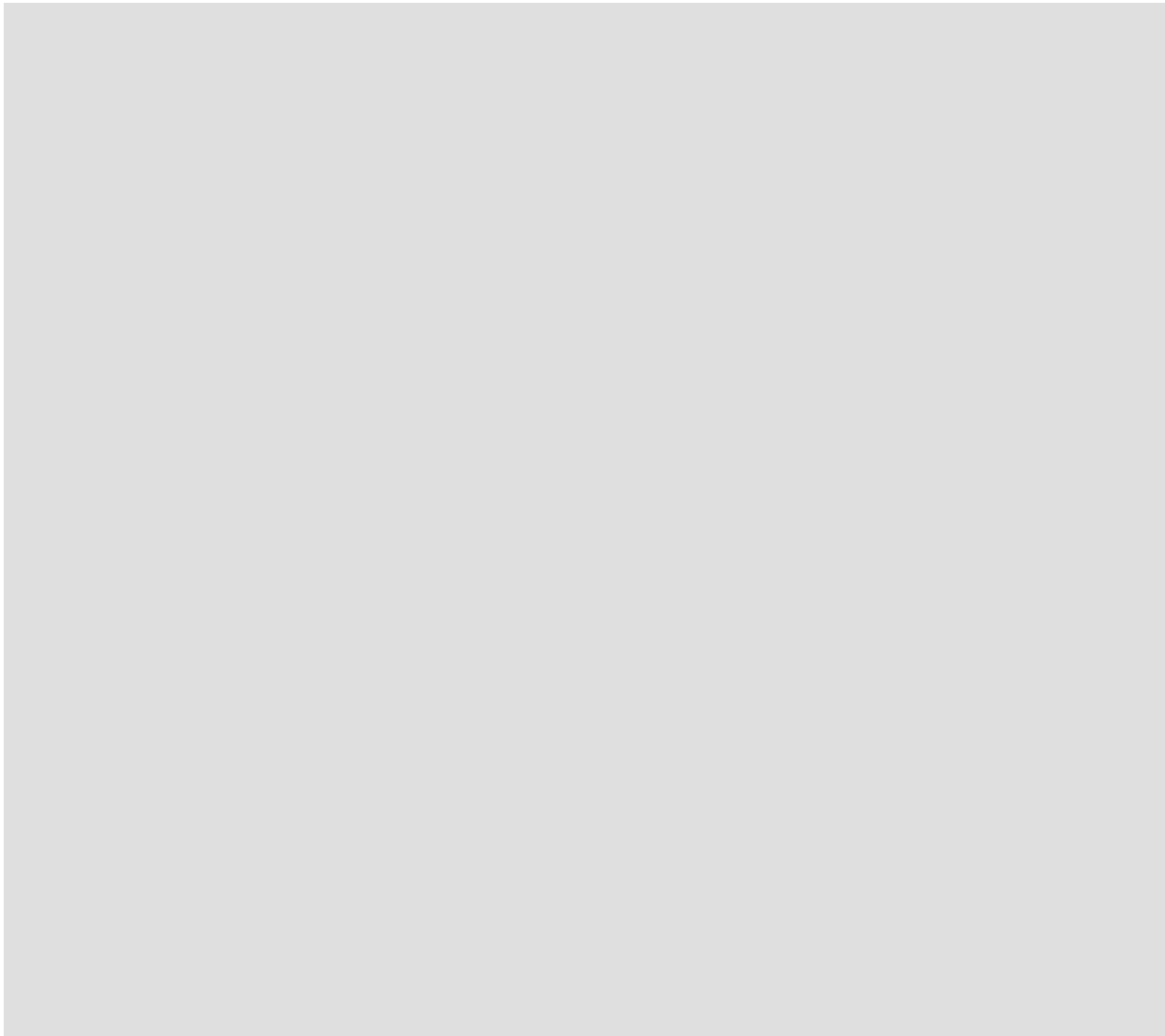
Notes:

SECTION 2: CONVERSATION WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR

Schedule 30-to-60-minutes to begin the conversation with your supervisor. Share your perspectives and ask your supervisor to share their perspectives about the SDGs. Chat about which SDGs are important to each of you and why. Use this question, and the note space below, to capture highlights of your conversation with your supervisor.

- I. What is your opinion or perspectives on the SDGs?

Notes:



SECTION 3: LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Determine which of the organization-based questions are relevant to your organization or position. You may need to schedule additional time, or meet with someone else in the organization, to cover the organization-based questions.

→ See **Appendix B** for more detailed versions of the questions.

About the organization's basic business model:

1. Does the organization have a strong commitment to sustainability?
2. What are some of the ways the organization/company is working towards the SDGs in each of the following categories (if applicable)?
 - a. Products and services
 - b. Local or regional community and physical space of organization
 - c. Human rights, equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace

Sustainability culture and governance:

1. Is the organization certified under a relevant sustainability framework or formally committed to any local, national or international sustainability initiatives?
2. Does the organization publicize its SDG impacts?
3. Has the organization applied for or won any awards for their impact on the SDGs?

Value-chain influence:

1. Does the organization work with suppliers that may themselves be considered SDG champions?
2. Are the organization's products or services certified with any environmental or ethical standards?
3. Does the organization have an end-of-life takeback program or disposal management program for its products?

SECTION 3: LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION (CONTINUED)

Co-op experience and your role in the organization:

- I. Does your role involve learning about the SDGs or sustainability goals of the organization?
 - a) What training or educational resources, if any, are available from the organization?
2. To what degree does your work contribute to the SDG/sustainability-driven mission of the organization?
 - a) What opportunities are within your role that could be utilized to contribute to the SDG driven mission?

Notes:

SECTION 4: WHAT YOU CAN DO AFTER YOUR WORK TERM IS COMPLETED

1. Reflect on this entire activity and plan out which SDGs you still want to experience and work on. Take some time to think about the following:
 - How can I learn more about sustainable development and the SDGs, especially in business and industry?
 - How do professionals in my field generally advance the SDGs?
 - What kind of jobs am I looking for to further engage with the SDGs that resonate with me?
 - How can I be more involved in sustainable development and SDG-related initiatives?
 - What impact might my interest in the SDGs have on my career purpose?
 - How can the business/industry sector align with the SDGs?

→ See additional resources in Appendix B.
2. Carry this activity with you into your future academic terms and work experiences:
 - Continue to seek more information about the SDGs and pursue work terms that provide opportunities to engage with the SDGs.
 - Consider taking the [Diploma in Sustainability](#).
 - Complete the Sustainability Certificate modules on [LEARN](#) (self-registration).
 - Please note that the Sustainability Certificate is designed for University of Waterloo staff. Interested students are welcome to take the modules, but will not obtain any academic credit or certification.
3. Get involved with campus and community SDG groups, such as:
 - [Sustainable Development Solutions Network \(SDSN\) Youth](#)
 - Impact Alliance, WUSA's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Student Hub
4. Subscribe to the [Sustainability Office newsletter](#).
5. Apply the SDGs into your [Professional Development](#) courses. Many of the PD courses you take at Waterloo contain a major reflective report as the concluding assignment. Think about how you can integrate your experience with the SDGs into your answers.
6. Explore SDGs and your career: Consider your interest in the SDGs and how you might develop skills related to advancing the SDGs when discussing career purpose and aspirations with advisors from the [Centre for Career Action](#).

APPENDIX A – Find out more about your sustainability knowledge and interests:

Sulitest.org defines sustainability literacy as “the knowledge, skills and mindsets that allow individuals to become deeply committed to build a sustainable future and that help them to make informed and effective decisions to this end.” The Sulitest organization offers an Awareness Test, which improves and maps awareness about sustainable development topics such as sustainable humanity and ecosystems, global and local human-constructed systems, transition towards sustainability, and individual and systemic change.

To take the awareness test, follow these steps:

1. Navigate to <https://en.sulitest.org/> and register.
2. Create an account using your @uwaterloo.ca email under the section “Awareness Test”
3. Validate your email by clicking the link they'll email to you.
4. Navigate to the sessions section.
5. Type in the code D8DB-7572-EF8A.
6. Complete the test and review your results!

Sparkpath provides a Challenge cards method to help you discover exciting new career possibilities and explore challenges in the world you want to solve related to the SDGs. If you wish to try the challenge cards, contact the Centre for Career Action to book an appointment or register for their Mapping Out Your Career workshop on WaterlooWorks.

APPENDIX B – Detailed prompts for your conversation with your supervisor:

About the organization's basic business model:

- Does the organization have a strong commitment to the SDGs or sustainability?
- Where does the organization offer most of its products and services (e.g., in developing, transitioning or developed economies)?
- Does the production and supply chain include direct business or sub-contracting in developing countries?
- What socioeconomic strata are the organization's core beneficiaries from (e.g., do the organization's products and services benefit disadvantaged or marginalized populations, underserved communities or the natural environment)?
- Does the organization engage in local training for skills development, hiring in underprivileged communities, co-design of products and services, local leadership development, re-investment of financial gains, or advocacy for reducing inequalities?
- Does the organization demonstrate a strong commitment to human rights, equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace?

About sustainability culture and governance within the organization:

- Does the organization have a public or internal sustainability or corporate social responsibility statement or report?
 - Are any of the SDGs (or closely-related terms) specifically mentioned in the organization's mission, vision, values or public statements?
 - Does the organization monitor, evaluate or publicize its SDG impacts? How?
 - Does the company make or report on sustainable investments (e.g., tree-planting efforts or international development projects)?
- Is the organization certified under a relevant environmental or sustainability framework (e.g., ISO14001, BCorp, FairTrade, or others)?
- Is there a staff position responsible or accountable for sustainability or corporate social responsibility performance at the organization?
- Is the organization a member of or signatory to any local, national or international (voluntary) sustainability initiatives?
- Has the organization applied for or won any awards for their impact on the SDGs?
- Does the organization have internal focus on any of the following?
 - Waste minimization, reduction and diversion
 - Repair, recycle, reuse programs
 - Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
 - Low carbon footprint business travel and transportation

APPENDIX B – Detailed prompts for your conversation with your supervisor:

About the value-chain influence of the organization:

- Does the organization directly support or work with other organizations that may be considered SDG champions?
- Does the organization have publicly-committed (or internal) goals for engaging with environmentally-friendly or ethically-sourced supply chain management or sourcing?
- Are the products or services certified with any environmental or ethical standards?
- Does the organization have an end-of-life takeback program or disposal management program for their products?
- What has been the impact of COVID-19 on amplifying challenges and revealing opportunities in engaging with the SDGs?

About the work term experience and your role as a student:

- Does your role involve learning about the SDGs or sustainability goals?
 - What organizational resources are available on sustainable development and the SDGs?
 - How can you, as a student, support this area within the organization?
- Do you receive training or educational resources from your organization that specifically reference the SDGs or sustainability goals?
- Do you feel that as a student you are able to advance the SDGs?
 - Can you ask to get involved with an SDG-related endeavor even if not directly related to your work?
 - Will your current work in SDGs help future students by creating a case study?
 - Do you have influence on decision-making?
- To what degree does your work contribute to the core SDG-driven mission of the organization?
- Are there other ways within your role that could be utilized to contribute to the SDG-driven mission?
- To what extent do you experience the SDGs firsthand in the field? For example:
 - Do you know of a specific problem?
 - Can you develop or contribute to developing a solution to the problem?
 - Are you involved in local community initiatives?
 - Can you educate your peers and take collective action?
- What impact does your presence in the organization have on the following:
 - Sustainable consumption and production patterns
 - Respecting race, ethnicity and cultural diversity, and fostering intercultural understanding
 - Reduction of inequalities of outcome

APPENDIX C – Resources for continuing to stay connected with the SDGs:

Learn more about global challenges, sustainable development and the SDGs, especially in business and industry:

- [What are the 10 biggest global challenges?](#) (World Economic Forum)
- [Global indicator framework for the SDGs](#) (United Nations Statistics)

SDG-related jobs & careers:

- [Using SDGs to guide your sustainability career](#) (LinkedIn)
- [UN's 170 jobs with a purpose](#) (United Nations Geneva)
- [Careers related to the SDGs](#) (SDG.careers)

Aligning the business/industry sector with the SDGs:

- [SDGs for Businesses: A better way of doing business](#) (Green Economy Canada)
- [The SDGs explained for business](#) (United Nations Global Compact)
- [SDG Compass – The guide for business action to advance the SDGs](#) (SDG Compass)
- [The SDG Impact Assessment Tool](#) (Gothenburg Centre for Sustainable Development)