

Graduate Attributes for Sustainability

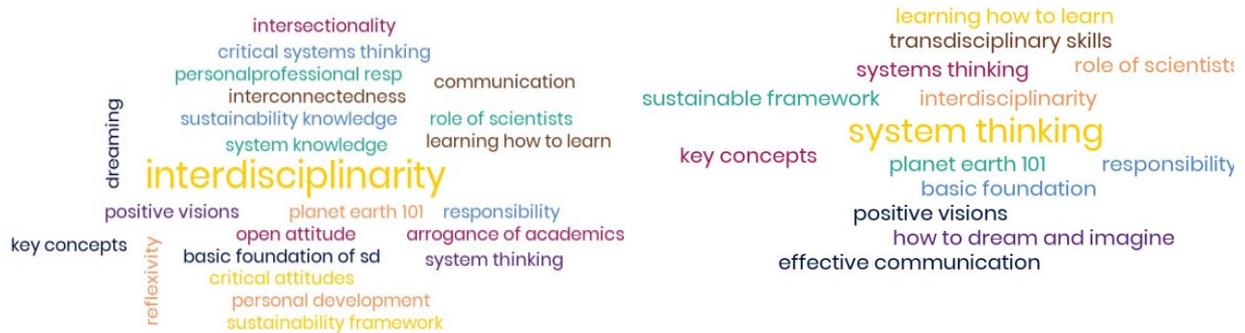


Utrecht University aims for students across all disciplines to be acquainted with sustainability and to be able to contribute to a sustainable society after their graduation. How can we achieve this goal and which knowledge, skills and attitudes should students acquire/have?

The 'Graduate Attributes for Sustainability' session on Monday, 11th October, 2021 focused on attributes, all UU students should have in terms of sustainability. An interdisciplinary group consisting of students, researchers, teachers and support staff joined us in the Utrecht University Hall (Academiegebouw). It was nice to meet everyone on location to exchange ideas and have fruitful discussions. To enhance deeper discussions, participants were divided into five brainstorm groups which lead to creative and inspiring discussions. The participants came up with lots of ideas and shared their own experiences with the group.



In the end, each group shared the 5 essential attributes which according to them, all UU graduates should have (left). They also thought about the role of Utrecht University and the attributes they should be responsible for (right). Interdisciplinarity, systems thinking and a basic foundation of sustainability were mentioned. It was also pointed out that academics should be aware of their own limits and the limits of academia in general. When it comes to getting things done and to achieve change, academics need to collaborate with disciplines inside but also outside academia. Which roles can graduates play outside of academia?



Thinking about what we want to achieve automatically raises the question of how to achieve it. How can Utrecht University support and enable students to acquire and develop their attributes? Various ideas were shared pointing towards 'co-learning' approaches in which students and teachers learn together about sustainability challenges. This is especially useful when learning about complex sustainability challenges, e.g. wicked problems and dealing with a rapidly changing world where teachers cannot know it all. Teachers could co-create learning material, sessions, activities and courses with colleagues from other disciplines and ensure a structural implementation of sustainability education at the UU. Hands-on activities and games in which students can link their own discipline to sustainability, kick-off weekends, electives and many more ideas were proposed.

All in all we had a great session and enjoyed each other's input. The session was organized by Karin Rebel, Anouk Schuren, Geertje Agricola and Julia Kasch. We would like to thank all participants for this inspiring session. The outcomes of this session will be used to for future initiatives around this topic.