

**Limits to Growth: A Systems Perspective**

Course code: SUSD 3180

Total contact hours: 60 hours

Pre-requisite: None

**Course Overview**

This 'Limits to Growth' course is designed for curious and forward-thinking students who are concerned about sustainability, equity, and the future. Students are introduced to the overarching and vital concept of limits to growth (LtG), developing an appreciation and understanding of why unlimited economic growth is impossible on a planet with finite resources. The course examines the history of the LtG concept, as well as the trends that have contributed to the depletion of resources, the breakdown of ecosystems, and a decrease in well-being over the last 50+ years. By exploring the current economic system, which is designed to ensure exponential growth but which fails to consider the essential services provided by the biosphere on which we depend, students gain an understanding of the bigger picture.

The relentless pursuit of growth under the 'business as usual' (BAU) scenario is examined, as are other scenarios. The course introduces students to a practical, hands-on systems approach, basic systems thinking tools and the sustainability lexicon to help them communicate effectively, regardless of their background. This systems-thinking-focused approach fosters an understanding of the dynamics and interdependencies of real-life systems, revealing a variety of economic, environmental, and social externalities excluded by traditional economic systems and value chains.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>1</sup> form an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup> adopted in 2015 at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The SDGs provide a key framework for systems analysis. Students discover that systems thinking is valuable for understanding the complexity of the world around us. The SDG targets enable students from diverse backgrounds and with different interests to envisage a variety of potential roles as young professionals with a more integrative and holistic perspective on sustainable development and a better understanding of the interconnected nature of the world in which we live.