

# UCD Community Engaged Learning Impact Case Study

## Sustainable Futures and Public Policy



University College Dublin  
An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath  
Ireland's Global University

SPOL 41120



MODULE TYPE: 10 Credit stage 4



LECTURERS: Dr Orla Kelly



DEPT/SCHOOL: UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work & Social Justice

### Module Purpose

This module challenges students to critically consider varying perspectives on economic reform, from green-growth to post-growth ideologies, ensuring a comprehensive grasp of how to align economies with planetary limits. The heart of the intellectual journey lies in building students' ability to evaluate and assess the practicality and potential of policy solutions to foster a sustainable and just society.

This module is not just an academic endeavour; it's a call to action. By the end, students emerge with a robust understanding of sustainable public policy and the critical thinking skills to navigate the complexities of our global challenges and contribute meaningfully to creating a more equitable and sustainable future.

### Community partners/ collaborators

- *Friends of the Earth*
- *The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC)*
- *Bohemians Football Club*

### Methods of assessment

The assessment strategy provided students with a comprehensive learning experience. They developed strong communication skills through presentations and active class discussions, essential for future leadership and knowledge sharing. The cornerstone of the course was a collaborative research project with Irish social and environmental non-profits. Students co-designed research briefs with their community partners to address specific knowledge gaps identified by the organisations. This community-engaged learning approach bridged the gap between theory and practice, empowering students to apply their knowledge to real-world challenges while supporting under-resourced nonprofits.



### IMPACT of Community Engaged Learning on students



The students gained invaluable experience through this initiative. They developed a deep understanding of real-world challenges, honed their research and problem-solving skills, and built strong professional networks.

I hope the opportunity to contribute to their community fostered a sense of civic engagement and personal growth.

### IMPACT of Community Engaged Learning on the community

The organisation gained access to valuable research and student talent, enhancing their capacity to address pressing issues.

I hope these partnerships fostered a sense of collaboration and mutual respect, and helped to build bridges between the community and the university.

# UCD Community Engaged Learning Impact Case Study

## Sustainable Futures and Public Policy



University College Dublin  
An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath  
Ireland's Global University

SPOL 41120



MODULE TYPE: 10 Credit stage 4



LECTURERS: Dr Orla Kelly



DEPT/SCHOOL: UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work & Social Justice



### Why do I do Community Engaged Learning?

The decision to integrate community-engaged learning into my Sustainable Futures and Public Policy module was driven by a twofold objective: to enhance student learning and to contribute meaningfully to the community.

First, I sought to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. By partnering students with social and environmental organisations,

I aimed to demonstrate the real-world relevance of their studies. I wanted students to understand that the concepts and frameworks they were learning in the classroom could be directly applied to address pressing societal challenges. This experiential approach fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and a sense of purpose as students see the tangible impact of their work.

Second, I recognized the potential of students to contribute to the work of under-resourced non-profit organisations. These organisations often lack the capacity to conduct in-depth research due to limited resources. By providing students with the opportunity to undertake research briefs, I hoped to offer valuable support to these organisations while also equipping students with transferable skills in research, analysis, and communication.

Ultimately, this approach to assessment aligns with the core values of sustainability, emphasising collaboration, community engagement, and social responsibility. By fostering connections between academia and the community, I believe we can cultivate a new generation of informed and engaged citizens capable of driving positive change.

### STUDENT QUOTE



*Working on the SPOL 41120 project, "Welfare State and Degrowth" which was in association with the National Women's Council of Ireland was a great experience. It was different from the usual coursework because we were tackling real-world issues that an actual organisation wanted us to work on. Focusing on the topic of degrowth in a welfare state made me see how complex yet simpler these issues are, especially when you're trying to balance social welfare with sustainability goals. Moreover, the experience of applying what we learned in class to help a real organisation felt meaningful. It gave me a sense of how research and policy can work together to make a difference, and it was great to be part of something that goes beyond the classroom.*



### Tips for other lecturers interested in introducing CEL into their teaching

The project was very well supported and facilitated by the partnership coordinator John Doddy.

In terms of tips, I learned the importance of focusing on building strong partnerships with community organisations, co-creating learning experiences, providing ample support to students and partners, and continuously evaluating and improving the process.



### CONTACT DETAILS



orla.kelly1@ucd.ie