



unitar

United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Introduction to a Green Economy: Concepts and Applications

An e-learning course developed by UNITAR and UNEP

Course Syllabus



Knowledge to lead



Table of Contents

Background	3
Target Groups and Learning Objectives	3
Course Structure and Content	4
Learning Materials	6
Learning Methodology and Activities	6
Study Plan	7
Technical Requirements	9
Key References	9
Contact Information	9

Background

The concept of a green economy is receiving increasing international attention, as countries explore new patterns of development that take into account economic, social and environmental sustainability considerations. In this context, an important milestone was Resolution 64/236 of the General Assembly in 2010 through which the topic of a “green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication”, was endorsed as one of the main themes for the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), 20-22 June 2012, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The Green Economy e-Learning Course seeks to provide interested stakeholders from government, business, civil society and academia with an introduction to the “green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication”. The course has been developed through collaboration of the United Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It draws upon publications recently published by UNEP and the UN Environmental Management Group (EMG) in 2011, and from other international organizations, such as other UN bodies and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Target Groups and Learning Objectives

The course targets groups and individuals that are interested in obtaining a general understanding about the green economy concept and latest developments. They include:

- Civil servants in national Ministries, provincial departments and local authorities
- Diplomats from Permanent Missions and Ministries of Foreign Affairs
- Environmental managers in private sector and civil society organizations
- Faculty, researchers and students
- Interested citizens

Participants will learn about different concepts and facets of the green economy, as well as global, national and sector-specific challenges and opportunities to advance low-carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive development. Additionally, participants will begin to develop basic skills for applying the green economy concept in a real world economic, policy and/or personal context.

After completing the course, participants will be able to:

- Define the concept of a green economy and explain its value
- Describe social, environmental and economic benefits of advancing a green economy
- Identify enabling conditions for greening national economies
- Provide examples of successful green economy investments, initiatives and projects
- Identify principal challenges and opportunities for greening key economic sectors
- Describe national planning processes in support of a green transformation
- Recognize the range of international and regional green initiatives and support services to foster green development
- Apply the green economy concept to a real world economic, policy and/or personal context

Course Structure and Content

The course is composed of 5 modules. Each module has specific learning objectives and is sub-divided into lessons.

Module 1: Introduction to a Green Economy: Rationale and Concepts

Module 1 introduces the rationale for a green transformation, explains relevant concepts and discusses the coherence and complementarity of the green economy with sustainable development. Lesson 1 provides a preview of the green economy concept. Lesson 2 outlines the limitations of traditional development patterns. Lesson 3 provides the rationale for developing a balanced and inclusive green economy. Lesson 4 discusses the origins of the green economy and gives an overview of priority areas for policy-making. Lesson 5 presents key concepts related to the green economy, including green jobs and green growth. Lesson 6 analyses the relation between green economy and sustainable development.

After completing Module 1, participants will be able to:

- Indicate the main characteristics and limitations of traditional development patterns;
- Define key aspects of a green economy;
- Describe social, environmental and economic benefits of a green economy;
- Identify key concepts related to the green economy;
- Discuss how the green economy contributes to sustainable development.

Lessons

- 1.1 Green Economy in a Nuttshell
- 1.2 Traditional Development Patterns and its Limitations
- 1.3 Rationale for a Balanced and Inclusive Green Economy
- 1.4 Origins, Definitions and Priority Areas of a Green Economy
- 1.5 Key Concepts Related to a Green Economy
- 1.6 Green Economy and Sustainable Development

Module 2: Enabling Conditions for Advancing a Green Economy

Module 2 provides an overview of the main policy tools that could be introduced in the short to medium term by governments to create the enabling conditions for a green transformation. Lesson 1 introduces ways to address environmental market failures. Lesson 2 and lesson 3 discuss options to promote green investments and reorient government spending. Lesson 4 analyses and presents options for establishing a sound regulatory framework in support of a green transformation. Lesson 5 presents international mechanisms relevant for a green transition such as the international trade regime and investment framework. Lesson 6 reviews issues related to mobilizing finance. Lesson 7 and 8 discuss learning and skills development as well as institutional capacity development as enabling conditions for a green economy.

After completing Module 2, participants will be able to:

- Identify diverse policy tools to foster a green economy;
- Indicate green investments;
- Describe international regulatory mechanisms relevant for a green transition;
- Analyse the role of individual and institutional capacities in advancing a green economy.

Lessons

- 2.1 Addressing Environmental Externalities and Market Failures
- 2.2 Limiting Government Spending in Areas that Deplete Natural Capital
- 2.3 Promoting Investment and Spending in Areas that Stimulate a Green Economy
- 2.4 Establishing Sound Regulatory Frameworks
- 2.5 Mobilizing Private and Public Investment
- 2.6 International Regulatory Mechanisms Relevant for a Green Transition
- 2.7 Education, Training and Skills Development
- 2.8 Strengthening Institutional Capacities

Module 3: Greening the Economy in Key Sectors

Module 3 introduces key sectors considered to be driving the transition to a green economy. The module highlights existing sectoral challenges and opportunities for a green transformation. Lesson 1 focuses on sectors derived from natural capital – agriculture, fishing, forests and water. Lesson 2 focuses on those sectors that may be characterised as “built capital”, including transportation, energy, waste, buildings, tourism, cities and manufacturing. This sectoral analysis distinguishes between conservation of natural capital on the one hand and energy and resource efficiency improvements in manufactured capital on the other. Lesson 3 provides an introduction to integrated green scenarios.

After completing Module 3, participants will be able to:

- Identify key economic sectors in the economy with the highest greening potential
- Identify challenges and opportunities of greening key economic sectors
- Describe options for intervention relevant for a green transformation
- Provide sectoral examples of successful green investments and initiatives
- Outline main aspects and results of green investment scenarios

Lessons

- 3.1 Investing in Sectors with Natural Capital
- 3.2 Investing in Sectors with Manufactured Capital
- 3.3 Integrated Scenarios to Project Green Investment Impacts

Module 4: Strategies for Developing a Balanced and Inclusive Green Economy

Module 4 addresses national planning processes and governance considerations supporting a green transformation, including its social dimensions. Lesson 1 deals with the integration of green considerations in broader policy and frameworks. Lesson 2 discusses the importance of engaging key actors within and outside government through a participatory process. Lesson 3 covers different governance approaches and strategies to foster a green transformation, drawing upon country examples. Lesson 4 introduces social and pro-poor considerations associated with a green economy. Lesson 5 presents conceptual frameworks for monitoring progress towards a green economy.

After completing Module 4, participants will be able to:

- Describe national planning processes in support of a green transformation
- Identify the role of diverse stakeholders in a green transformation and identify different methods and approaches for ensuring a participatory process

- Provide examples of national strategies to foster a green economy
- Explain how a green economy can contribute to reducing poverty and inequality
- Monitor and evaluate green transition processes and outcomes

Lessons

- 4.1 Integrating Green Considerations in Development Planning
- 4.2 Engaging Key National Stakeholders in a Green Transformation
- 4.3 Strategic Approaches to a Green Transformation
- 4.4 Social and Pro-Poor Considerations
- 4.5 Measuring the Green Economy

Module 5: International Developments and Support to Advance a Green Economy

Module 5 introduces important international initiatives that promote and seek to support a green economy transition in countries. Lesson 1 provides an overview of international policies and supporting activities at the global, regional, national and local. Lesson 2 introduces selected initiatives in more detail. Lesson 3 provides an analysis of issues relevant to the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), 20-22 June 2012, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

After completing Module 5, participants will be able to:

- Give an overview of international initiatives for a green transformation
- Provide specific examples of international support services
- Analyse green economy issues relevant for the Rio 2012 Conference

Lessons

- 5.1 Overview of International Initiatives Relevant to the Green Economy
- 5.2 International Support Programmes and Services
- 5.3 Green Economy and the Rio 2012 Conference - UNCSO

Learning Materials

Each week, an e-book is made available to participants through the online learning platform. It features an essential body of knowledge which is directly responding to the learning objectives. The e-book is available as a downloadable PDF version to allow offline access. Additional resources and readings help participants to deepen their understanding of specific issues depending on their particular needs and interests. Glossaries of Terms provide definitions of relevant concepts and technical terms for each Module.

Learning Methodology and Activities

The course pedagogy is adapted to professionals in full-time work. Participants are provided with the opportunity to learn through various experiences: absorb (read); do (activity); interact (socialize); and reflect (relate to one's own reality). The course will be delivered in an asynchronous manner to allow each participant to set his (or her) own learning schedule. The estimated average workload is seven hours per week over a six week period.

The mandatory reading of the e-book is complemented by a range of learning activities and experiences that include exercises, discussion forums and experiential learning.

- *Discussion forums* foster interaction and reflection on specific issues. The discussions are supported by resource persons with an expertise in the respective field. Contributions will be directly posted in an online forum where they are available to all students.
- *The creation of a "wiki"* will allow participants to share and debate capacity development issues related to a green economy.
- *Assessment tests* appraise the comprehension of key facts and concepts at the end of each module. Before taking the tests, participants will have the possibility to take practice exercises.
- *An applied case study* provides participants with the opportunity to apply the green economy concept in the framework of a real world situation. Participants will identify the problem context, relevant issues, define appropriate measures, and develop a green action plan for a particular setting. Each case study will be 3-4 pages long and will be peer-reviewed by two other course participants. Peer-reviews will have a length of approximately 1 page.

Study Plan

The average amount of work expected for the completion of this online course of one hour a day/ seven hours a week.

Each module follows the same pedagogical structure: i.e. introduction and learning objectives; core content; additional resources; practice exercise; discussion forum and assessment test. Module 2 also includes an additional learning activity (creation of a wiki on capacity development issues).

Each week, participants will have access to a new module. Once available, modules will remain accessible until the end of the course. Before moving from one module to another, participants should make sure that they have completed the mandatory readings and taken the assessment test. It is recommended that participants complete all the mandatory and facultative learning activities related to one module over a one week period. The sixth week (wrap up week) at the end of the course will allow participants to review the course and make final revision to their applied case study based on the peer-reviews.

	Activity	Status
14 to 20 May: Module 1	Read e-Book 1	Mandatory
	Consult additional resources and readings	Facultative
	Participate in group discussion 1	Mandatory
	Take the practice exercise for Module 1	Facultative
	Take test 1	Mandatory
21 to 27 May: Module 2	Read e-Book 2	Mandatory
	Consult additional resources and readings	Facultative
	Participate in group discussion 2	Mandatory
	Participate in the creation of a wiki	Mandatory
	Take the practice exercise for Module 2	Facultative
	Take test 2	Mandatory
28 May to 3 June: Module 3	Read e-Book 3	Mandatory
	Consult additional resources and readings	Facultative
	Participate in group discussion 3	Mandatory
	Start the development of the applied case study	Mandatory
	Take the practice exercise for Module 3	Facultative
	Take test 3	Mandatory
4 to 10 June: Module 4	Read e-Book 4	Mandatory
	Consult additional resources and readings	Facultative
	Participate in group discussion 4	Mandatory
	Complete applied case study	Mandatory
	Take the practice exercise for Module 4	Facultative
	Take test 4	Mandatory
11 to 17 June: Module 5	Read e-Book 5	Mandatory
	Consult additional resources and readings	Facultative
	Participate in group discussion 5	Mandatory
	Peer-review two case studies	Mandatory
	Take the practice exercise for Module 5	Facultative
	Take test 5	Mandatory
18 to 22 June: Wrap up Week	Make final revisions to case study	Mandatory
	Complete the course evaluation questionnaire	Mandatory

Completion Requirements

At the end of each module participants will take an assessment test to confirm that the learning objectives for the module have been achieved. For each assessment participants will be allowed 3 attempts. In order to receive the *Certificate of Completion* participants need to pass 4 out of 5 assessment tests, participate actively in the discussion forums, submit a case study of 3-4 pages, and draft 2 peer-reviews of 1 page.

Technical Requirements

Access to internet is an essential condition for participation. UNITAR also recommends the following as a minimum in hardware and software to take this e-Learning course:

- Platform: Windows XP / Windows Vista / Windows 7; MacOSX
- Software:
 - Microsoft Word 2007/2010,
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader (downloadable for free at <http://www.adobe.com/>)
- Browser: Internet Explorer 8 or higher, or Mozilla Firefox

Note: Java, cookies and pop-ups must be enabled

Key References

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United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2011). Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication. <http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/GreenEconomyReport/tabid/29846/Default.aspx>

UNEP, ILO, International Organization of Employers (IOE), and International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) (2008). Green Jobs: Towards Decent Work in a Sustainable, Low-Carbon World. http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/UNEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf

United Nations Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Global Sustainability (2012). Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing. <http://www.un.org/gsp/report>

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