



Supplement of the WWF Study Guide

Sustainability-focused Bachelor, Master and
Continuing Education Programs in Switzerland

Application available online at



www.wwf.ch/studysustainability



www.wwf.ch/nachhaltigstudieren



www.wwf.ch/etudierdurablement



www.wwf.ch/studiarelasostenibilita

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Although every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this publication is correct, WWF Switzerland gives no guarantee that the information contained in this publication is complete, accurate or up to date. The descriptions of the degree programs are excerpts from the study program websites. If information is missing or unclear, it is worth contacting the relevant universities and study programs directly.

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Introduction

Humanity is facing complex and pressing challenges: the climate crisis, water scarcity, habitat and biodiversity loss, famine, international migration flows, overexploitation of natural resources and global financial market risks—to name just a few. Tackling these issues requires dedicated individuals with the knowledge, skills and drive to shape a more sustainable future.

Do you need information on sustainability-oriented bachelor, master and continuing education programs in Switzerland? Are you looking for a study program that provides the necessary foundations and strengthens relevant practical skills? Or are you a working professional looking for a continuing education program to deepen your expertise in sustainability? This study guide is for all those who want to drive positive change towards sustainability through their work.

When choosing a study program, WWF recommends to clarify the following questions:

1. Type of university: university or university of applied sciences?
2. Sustainability-focused major or study of a traditional discipline combined with a sustainability-focused minor course or specialization? And related to this:
3. Degree program with a broad focus or with a disciplinary or thematic focus?

The decision-making process depends on personal interests and motivations, as well as the anticipated opportunities for meaningful and engaging work and development after graduation. Practical factors also play a role, such as admission requirements, tuition costs, study location, and language(s) of instruction.

Additionally, the choice of university is an important factor in selecting a degree program, as different institutions integrate sustainability to varying degrees. You can find more information on this in the [WWF University Rating 2024](#).

WWF hopes this study guide helps you find the degree program that best suits your interests and ambitions. We wish you success in completing it and hope it opens opportunities for you to actively contribute to sustainability in your professional life. WWF wishes you joy and success on your journey—the environment, society, and economy need you!

Understanding of Sustainability

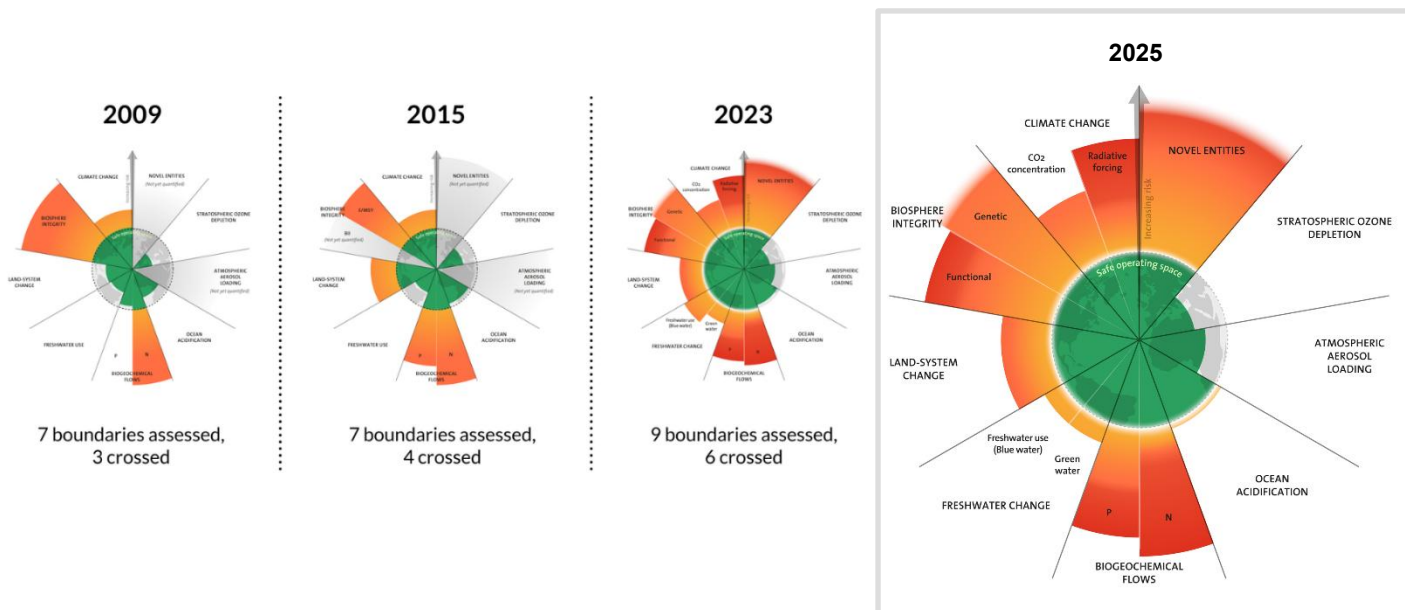
The WWF's understanding of sustainability is characterized as follows:

Broad understanding of Sustainability and Sustainable Development: The ecological, social and economic dimensions are important for sustainability. A broad understanding of sustainability goes beyond those dimensions and also considers technological, cultural, psychological, and philosophical perspectives, recognizing the complex interconnections that shape sustainable development. This approach emphasizes long-term resilience, ethical responsibility, and the need for systemic change at local, national, and global levels. Sustainable development as defined by the Brundtland Report (1987) is the process of meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. It balances environmental protection, social equity, and economic prosperity while respecting planetary boundaries.

Strong sustainability: According to the concept of strong sustainability, the dimensions of sustainability mentioned above cannot be substituted with one another: Ecological systems provide fundamental life-supporting functions that cannot simply be replaced by human-made assets. Planetary boundaries must be respected and the remaining stocks of "natural capital" must be preserved. On this basis, peaceful and adaptable societies can develop. An intact environment and a functioning society are prerequisites for a sustainable economy. This understanding of the dependence of the economy and society on the environment is particularly relevant in the case of conflicting goals. Furthermore, for WWF, the non-human environment ("nature") has an intrinsic value that goes beyond being viewed merely as a "resource".

Education for sustainable development: Education is essential for sustainable development. The concept of education for sustainable development (ESD) encompasses not only topics and content, but also principles, teaching/learning approaches and learning methods that promote sustainability-related skills and behavior at all levels of education, including university teaching. According to the United Nations Agenda 21, environmental and development education should address the dynamics of both the physical/biological and socio-economic environments, as well as human (including spiritual) development to be effective. It should be integrated across all disciplines and utilize both formal and informal methods, along with effective communication channels.

Planetary boundaries



Instruction manual for Study Programs

Only study programs with a primary focus on sustainable development or key areas of sustainability have been included. If this could only be achieved through a specific specialization, the specialization is listed in addition to the program name. Emphasis was also placed on thematic breadth and therefore providing insights from different disciplines and perspectives. This means that programs that solely focus on a single aspect (e.g., energy) or single discipline (i.e. biology) were not considered.

Study programmes are organized by levels (bachelor, continuing education, master) as well as the name of the university or university of applied sciences. The programme name is hyperlinked to its dedicated website, providing access to comprehensive information and contact details for further enquiries. Descriptions of each programme are presented in the primary language of instruction.

Programmes may be delivered in one or more languages: the primary language, as well as additional secondary languages, which are guaranteed as options. To ascertain whether secondary languages are optional or compulsory, it is advisable to consult the linked curriculum carefully.

If you are seeking programmes within specific disciplines, degree levels, or languages of instruction, please utilise the filter function to refine your search accordingly.

Icon description: Inter- and Transdisciplinary



Provides a comprehensive overview of sustainability topics by integrating interdisciplinary perspectives



Made up of several subject areas and thus conveys a highly interdisciplinary understanding



Practical inputs from external stakeholders through project work, case studies, field trips, company visits etc.



Practical experience is a firmly integrated and strong component of the course structure. Fosters deep collaboration with different stakeholders like practitioners, policymakers, and communities

Career prospects

Sustainability-related knowledge and skills such as systemic thinking and forward-looking problem-solving capabilities are increasingly in demand on the labor market and will play an even more critical role in the future. Graduates with expertise in sustainability have access to diverse career opportunities across various sectors. Sustainability-oriented profiles can encompass both generalist and specialized roles.

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The **business landscape** is undergoing a major transformation as industries integrate sustainability into their core strategies. This shift extends from manufacturing and commerce to finance and other service sectors, creating new roles focused on sustainable development.

Professionals may work in corporate social responsibility (CSR) or sustainable management roles. Job responsibilities may include conducting impact and life cycle assessments, monitoring and ensuring compliance with environmental regulations and sustainability standards, writing sustainability, ESG disclosures and compliance reports, developing and improving products and services, developing carbon footprint reduction strategies and corporate climate action plans, advising and collaborating with other departments and external stakeholders and leading sustainability training programs and workshops. Sustainability professionals may also take on project management roles, overseeing specific sustainability initiatives, or work in research and development to drive innovation. Additionally, opportunities exist in consulting, where professionals advise companies or public administrations on environmental and social impacts and the implementation of sustainability strategies.



«For us, sustainability means aligning economic activity with our responsibility for the environment and society. Sustainable finance and sustainable business models are a driver for prosperity. Therefore, it is highly beneficial to acquire academic know how in these fields. »

Romina Schwarz
Head of Sustainability at Zürcher Kantonalbank

In organizations where sustainability is central to the business model, such as sustainability **startups**, professionals often assume multifaceted roles that blend various functions to advance the organization's mission. These roles may encompass but are not limited to areas like product development, marketing and communication.

« As a sustainability graduate myself, I have seen how our mindset challenges the status quo. We question today's challenges, think in systems, and act with purpose. In start-ups, that's powerful. We're not just building businesses—we're shaping a future that works for both people and planet. »

Jeannette Morath
Founder and CEO reCIRCLE



Similarly, **public administration** at municipal, regional, and national/international levels is placing greater emphasis on sustainability-driven policies, generating demand for professionals with relevant expertise. Depending on the department you can work on topics such as urban planning, water, mountain or forest management, biodiversity and nature conservation, renewable energy, mobility, international cooperation, gender equality, public health, policy development and regulation, public engagement and education.



«Drawing on my background in economics, ecology, and education, I recommend integrating environmental skills into the education of future specialists and managers across all professions in Switzerland. In doing so, the Federal Office for the Environment supports the transition to a circular and resource-efficient economy.»

Nadine Gehrig

**Environmental Education Specialist, Department of Economics and Innovation,
Federal Office for the Environment FOEN**

Beyond these sectors, opportunities exist in **education, communication, and research**, where new knowledge and innovative solutions contribute to sustainable progress.

« Tomorrow's leaders need vital skillsets to tackle grand environmental and social challenges. Business school education is therefore essential to develop sustainability talent and innovative solutions. In preparing our students via dedicated programs or integrating sustainability into existing studies, our graduates are well placed to leverage sustainability insight for impact. »

Prof. Dr. Judith Walls

Full Professor of Sustainability Management, University of St. Gallen



«Graduates in the field of sustainability have been shown to play a pivotal role in raising awareness, fostering dialogue, and generating solution-oriented knowledge through education, communication, and research. Their knowledge and passion are vital for promoting environmental awareness and embedding sustainable practices in society. Bern University of Applied Sciences acknowledges the pivotal function it performs in promoting sustainability, adopting a comprehensive, whole-institution approach.»

Prof. Dr. Sebastian Wörwag

Rector, Bern University of Applied Sciences

Potential employers also include **nonprofit organizations** such as environmental, human rights, development, or health organizations, as well as cultural and sports associations, churches, and other religious communities. Their job functions often include fundraising, activism, awareness raising and communication and project management.

« We need many more motivated and committed graduates of sustainability-oriented degree programs. They bring with them the in-depth knowledge and broad skills that are essential for driving the transformation towards truly sustainable development. »

Thomas Vellacott
CEO WWF Switzerland



Key Questions to ask yourself

Before choosing your study program we advise you to ask yourself the following questions:

What is a meaningful and fulfilling job for me?

The first question to ask yourself is what you expect from your future job: good career opportunities, the highest possible salary, challenging tasks, an innovative and creative work environment, collaboration with interesting people, a good work-life balance, or contributing to solving a relevant (sustainability) problem? Depending on your priorities, different fields of work, industries, and preparatory degree programs may be suitable.

However, hardly anyone stays in the same job for their entire life anymore and priorities can change over the course of a career. During your studies, you should acquire the tools you'll need for your first 5–10 years on the job. Depending on the direction in which you want to develop later, you can choose suitable further education options, such as continuing education programs. This allows you to gain additional and possibly specialized knowledge and skills.

One more thing is important: not all your goals, ideas, and desires need to be fulfilled through your job. Alongside your main occupation, you can pursue a part-time job, volunteer, perhaps hold an honorary position or even a political role (see below).

What sustainability challenges am I most passionate about solving?

Which sustainable development challenge is particularly important to you? Which SDGs (*Sustainable Development Goal*) would you like to contribute to and which problems do you want to help solve? For most people, there is at least one area that they are particularly passionate about. This could be nature or a specific social group or an economic or technical area or something else. This passion often begins in childhood or adolescence and is usually tied to your core values.

If you're already in the workforce, perhaps you've come across a problem that continues to occupy your thoughts. Allowing such meaningful goals to guide your educational or career choices increases the likelihood that your interest will remain strong in the long term and that you'll stay motivated to make a lasting impact.

What are my skills and interests?

Which subject areas, fields, and disciplines interest me? And which ones do I want to avoid in my studies? For example, if you're not interested in mathematics, you should avoid choosing a science-based degree, as math is a fundamental component of every natural science. The field of study is just as important as the topics that interest you. A single topic can be explored by different disciplines, each with its own way of thinking and methods. To develop a deep understanding of a problem and find effective solutions, it's often necessary to integrate multiple academic perspectives. That's why interdisciplinary approaches are especially important for sustainable development.

In a Master's and even more so in a continuing education program, the key question is how you can complement your existing knowledge with another area of expertise in order to build a competence profile that opens up new functions or job opportunities. You might choose to pursue a broad range of subjects or specialize more deeply in one or two areas.

Which industries or sectors interest me the most? What are the skills and profiles needed in that sector?

It's worthwhile to research different sectors and industries, as there is almost always at least one sub-industry that is relevant and could be a good fit for you. Broadly speaking, you can choose between the private sector, public administration, the non-profit sector, academia, or the field of education (see above). Within the private sector, industries are typically divided into services, manufacturing, and agriculture. Each sector and industry is shaped by its own ways of thinking, values, conditions, and challenges, which may or may not align with your personal interests and strengths.

You don't need to decide on a specific sector or industry when choosing your field of study; these choices can evolve throughout your career. However, if you plan to switch industries later on, it may be helpful to pursue a continuing education program that aligns with your target sector.

What specific sustainability roles align with my skills? How could my tasks look like?

Finally, the question arises regarding the company or organization you want to work for and the specific role you want to have. There's a big difference between working at a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME), a large corporation, a municipal, cantonal, or federal government agency, a non-profit organization (NPO), being self-employed, or starting your own business. In addition to size, the company culture is important for most people: is a dynamic, competitive, reflective, harmonious or intellectual work culture important to you?

In a company, there are usually different departments and functions: e.g. production, sales and distribution, development, communication/marketing, central services and specialized departments (e.g. sustainability department). Whether a function is suitable for you depends mainly on the tasks it involves. You probably have the most influence in a management role, but you can also make an effective contribution to sustainability as a competent specialist.

Of course, you don't have to decide in favor of a specific employer or a specific function when you start your studies. However, it is worth researching which employers and which functions might interest you at the latest when choosing a Master's program. After all, subject knowledge alone is not enough: graduates are often expected to possess certain personal, social, and methodological skills. These can be acquired through practice-oriented and transdisciplinary learning methods during your studies, in a part-time job, through an internship, or through volunteer work (see below).

Job portals for sustainability-related jobs in Switzerland

<https://www.oebu.ch/jobs/aktuelle-jobs>

<https://www.kampajobs.ch/>

<https://www.umweltprofis.ch/>

<https://umwelt-stellen.ch/>

<https://klima-jobs.ch/home>

<https://naturschutz.ch/jobliste>

<https://www.publicjobs.ch/>

Getting involved

Explore your University's sustainability initiatives

Many universities have dedicated sustainability offices or student committee that organize events and support student-led projects



Swiss Association of Student Organisations for Sustainability

Umbrella association of Swiss student organisations for sustainability such as **AG Nachhaltigkeit** (University of Basel), **Student Sustainability Committee** (ETH Zurich), **NHK** (Uni Zurich) **Ve-nalu** (University, University of applied sciences and teacher education Lucerne), **L'EDD** (University of Geneva) etc.



Sustainability Week Switzerland

Network for student-led Sustainability Weeks at higher education institutions. Empower students to bring sustainability into all aspects of higher education institutions

Participate in national and international student led programs



SOS Students organizing for sustainability international

Supports student and youth groups globally to lead on sustainability and environmental justice



Rethinking economics Switzerland

Promotes pluralism in Economics teaching at the Swiss Universities



Oikos International

A global network of students committed to sustainable business and management

Attend events, study weeks, Summer Schools and workshops

Check your (and also other) Universities offerings on Summer Schools and Hackathons. A few examples: Swiss Sustainability Challenge, SDG Summer School, THRIVE Summer School, Design Ideas for Sustainable Food Systems, International School for Sustainability, Hack4social good.

Volunteering

Countless non-profit organisations are committed to sustainable development goals. Depending on your interests and goals, you can get involved with an organization working in areas such as the environment, social issues, education, culture, health, development cooperation, human rights, or animal welfare. The types of involvement range from hands-on activities like maintaining a nature reserve or supporting refugees to organizational and communication work, behind-the-scenes tasks on the computer or on a board, and even political advocacy. You can choose a one-time volunteer opportunity, contribute to a specific project, or take on a longer-term volunteer role. You might even decide to launch your own project with others and start an association. Perhaps you'd like to discover a new region through your volunteer work or even take part in a program abroad. This is possible, but requires a little more planning and organization. In addition to the sense of purpose that comes from contributing to a meaningful cause and connecting with other committed individuals, volunteering also gives you the chance to gain experience in new areas, expand your network, and most importantly, strengthen your professional, methodological, personal, and social skills. Employers recognize and value this when reviewing job applications. It implies that you take initiative, pursue goals, and are willing to make a difference. You can find information on volunteering and volunteering opportunities [here](#) (in DE, FR and IT).



Our Mission

Together, we protect the environment and create a future worth living for generations to come.

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