

# Construct Your Skills

## Context:

Promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Further Education (FE) is essential as sustainability is now central to modern construction. Future professionals need strong People, Planet and Profit (3 Ps) awareness to improve wellbeing, reduce environmental impact and make cost-effective decisions when retrofitting buildings, choosing materials and managing waste.

Contextualising ESD increases engagement: 74% of students are more motivated when sustainability links to their trade, and 93% of educators say it makes learning more relevant. As a major carbon-emitting and highly employed sector, construction requires students to understand green skills, new materials, technologies, regulations and safe, ethical practice.

Embedding sustainability naturally across the curriculum helps students and educators see it as practical and meaningful, rather than simply “saving the planet.”

## The Technique/Method:

1	Challenge stereotypical assumptions that sustainability only relates to environmental issues and how this misunderstanding can lead to overlooking opportunities to embed sustainability.
2	Introduce sustainability using two simple frameworks: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the 3 Ps– People, Planet, Profit, highlighting the connections.
3	Pick a topic you’re already teaching, for example (Using aggregates, planning a build sequence, selecting materials)
4	<p>Ask three simple questions using the 3 Ps and align with the 17 SDGs:</p> <p><b>People:</b> How does this affect workers, clients, or the community? (e.g., noise pollution, site safety, air quality)</p> <p><b>People (SDG 3):</b> The construction curriculum promotes health and wellbeing through health and safety legislation, risk assessment, and reducing hazards such as dust, noise and chemicals.</p> <p><b>Planet:</b> What is the environmental impact of this task/material/process? (e.g., waste, carbon footprint, energy efficiency)</p> <p><b>Planet (SDG 7 &amp; SDG 11):</b> Construction students study insulation, airtightness, heat-loss calculations, energy-efficient building services and renewable technologies, supporting clean energy and sustainable cities.</p> <p><b>Profit:</b> What are the cost implications long and short term? (e.g., cheap materials vs. long-term maintenance, energy costs)</p> <p><b>Profit (SDG12):</b> Responsible production is embedded throughout the construction curriculum: understanding material life cycles, quality assurance and efficient project management, supporting responsible consumption and production.</p>
5	<p>Discuss and connect, for example:</p> <p>Which insulation material is best for People/Planet/Profit?</p> <p>What’s the safest and most sustainable way to dispose of plasterboard?</p>
6	Reinforce that contextualisation boosts engagement and helps educators and students feel more “at ease”, with the concept of sustainability. This turns sustainability into a natural part of construction decisions, not an “add-on lesson”.

## See the Technique/Method in Action:



<https://youtu.be/QTjlHnyTxQg>

## Top Tips:

### 1. Introduce Sustainability Frameworks Early

- When to use: Induction, first theory sessions, or when starting new units.
- Why it helps: Builds early familiarity with the SDGs and 3 Ps, helping educators and students see sustainability as part of their trade—not a bolt-on.  
Intended outcome: Educators and students understand the relevance of sustainability in construction (materials, waste, safety, cost).
- Watch out for: Keep explanations simple and always link back to real construction tasks.
- Resources: SDG and 3 Ps posters on display. Quick starter question: “What does sustainability mean in construction?”

### 2. Use Ongoing Professional Development (PD) to Strengthen Educator Confidence

- When to use: Before planning cycles, course reviews, or during department PD.
- Why it helps: Boosts educator confidence in spotting natural sustainability links in their trade and ensures a consistent approach across courses.
- Intended outcome: Educators can embed sustainability easily in lessons, workshops, and assessments.
- Watch out for: Avoid theory-heavy PD. Use practical, trade-specific examples. Be aware that some staff may know the SDGs but not the 3 Ps.
- Resources: Subject-specific ESD examples (e.g., sustainable materials, waste reduction) Simple curriculum-mapping templates

### 3. Work With Curriculum Teams to Identify Natural Links

- When to use: Curriculum planning, reviews, and team PD.
- Why it helps: Ensures sustainability connections are trade-relevant and authentic. Helps educators identify where they are already embedding SDGs/3 Ps.
- Intended outcome: A clear, consistent, whole-programme approach to sustainability across all construction areas.
- Watch out for: Don't force links—keep them natural. Ensure People, Planet, Profit are all considered, not just environmental aspects.
- Resources: SDG mapping tools. 3 Ps audit sheets. Time for collaborative planning

## Dig Deeper:

- UN Sustainable Development Goals - <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>  
A Clear breakdown of the 17 SDGs with downloadable graphics. Useful for connecting construction tasks to global goals
- “What is Sustainable Construction?” - [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=sustainable+construction+explained](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=sustainable+construction+explained)  
4 min video: Animated overview perfect for lessons; introduces environmental, social and economic considerations.
- ESD resources. <https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/resources/esd/esd-resources/esd-in-different-subject-areas/>  
A bank of contextualised sustainable resources for FE.

## Monitoring Progress and Impact:

- 1. Peer / supportive observation** - Ask a colleague to look for moments where the 3 Ps / 17 SDGs are referenced through either construction specific content or teaching and learning strategies being used.
- 2. Student and educator feedback** – Collate feedback at varying points throughout the year to monitor progress and the developments of ESD awareness
- 3. Self-reflection** – What worked well? What construction specific examples were most engaging?