

Building a greener future:

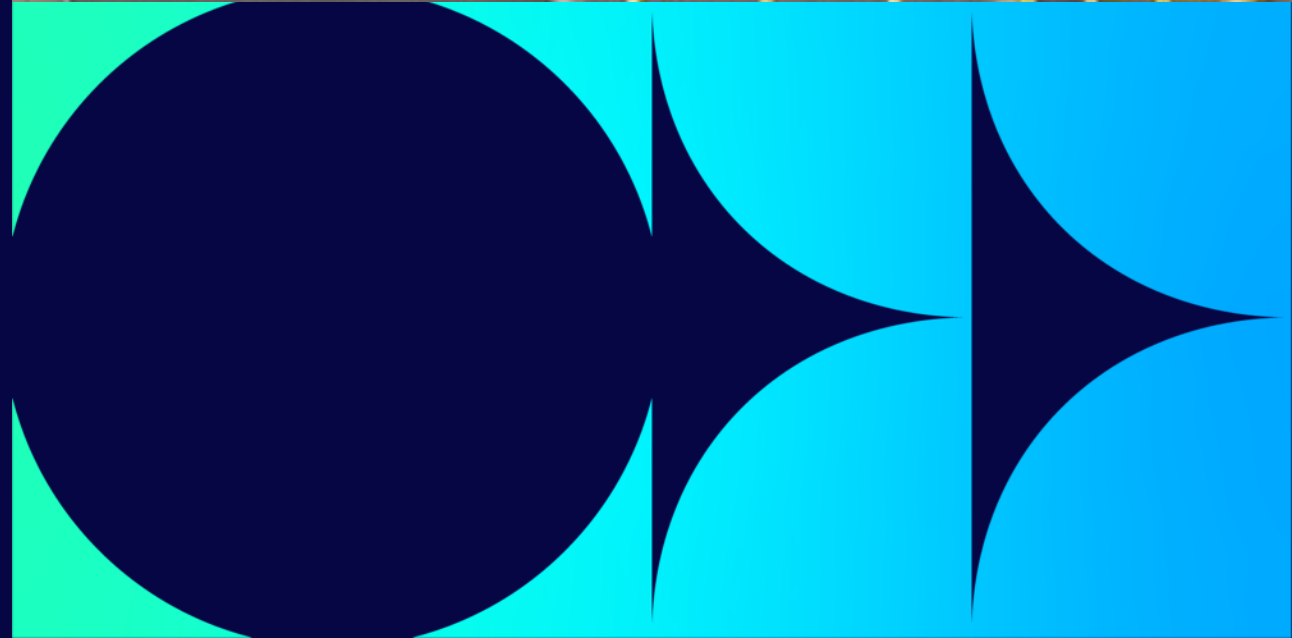
Designing online activities to promote digital sustainability

OU Library

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By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- describe and define the concept of digital sustainability;
- understand how digital sustainability practices can be applied within a HE setting;
- identify opportunities to embed digital sustainability practices within your professional work;
- discuss practical tips to reduce the digital carbon footprint of your online activities.

Defining digital sustainability for our students: practical activity

On your tables, you will find some definitions printed out.

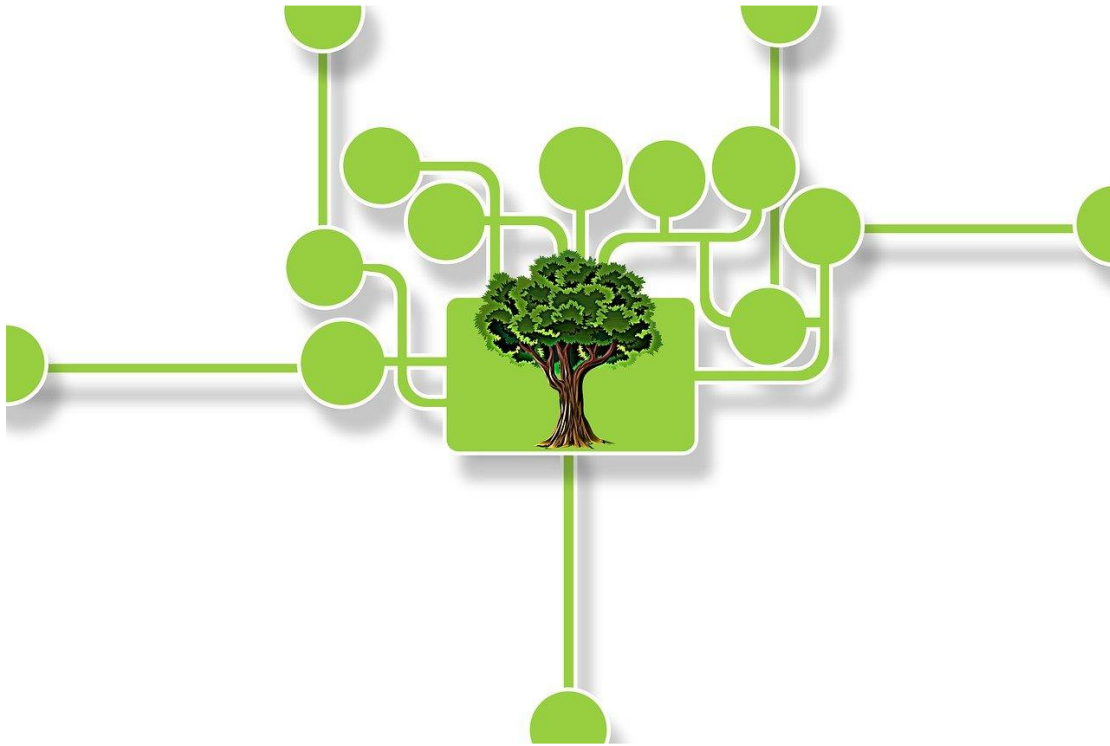
In your groups discuss what you understand by the term digital sustainability and create a definition applicable to HE settings.

Time: 5 minutes



Source: Alan Warburton / <https://betterimagesofai.org> / Image by BBC

Defining digital sustainability for our students: our definition



Digital sustainability

Learn about the environmental impact of everyday online activities and tools and discover ways to minimize that impact.

Consider how your digital information literacy skills can be used to mitigate climate anxiety.

Source: <https://pixabay.com/illustrations/technology-tree-green-icon-symbol-6742648/>

Introducing the Digital Sustainability pathway

The Digital Sustainability pathway comprises three standalone activities:

Greener online study raises awareness of the environmental impact of online activity such as email, online searching, video and data storage. It provides practical tips on how to reduce digital carbon footprint.

Coping with Climate anxiety explores the concept of climate anxiety and shows why digital and information literacy skills are essential tools both in how we respond to climate change and how we manage climate anxiety.

Sustainability of generative AI explores the impact of using AI tools in education on the environment and provides practical suggestions on how we can make our AI use more sustainable.

Rationale for the pathway

- Introduce students to the concept of digital sustainability.
- Encourage students to consider the carbon cost of digital activities.
- Provide practical tips to help students reduce their digital carbon footprint.
- Position digital sustainability as a core Digital and Information Literacy (DIL) competency, and therefore part of the library's areas of responsibility.
- Show students how DIL skills can be useful when considering climate-conscious actions.

Content development Part 1

- Inspiration: OU talk entitled **Dirty Digital Habits;**
- Originally intended as a standalone activity;
- Team of four L&T librarians;
- Division of the work into three activities;
- Regular contact to keep up with progress and garner the thoughts of the other team members, and exchange of feedback;
- Further review and comments from the Green Library Network team.

Design principles

The **Digital Sustainability collection** is

- built on [Xerte](#)
- housed on [Being Digital](#), the Open University's **public facing** platform

To satisfy our design criteria the activities had to be:

- ✓ short (no longer than 15 minutes)
- ✓ written in plain English
- ✓ easy to use
- ✓ interactive
- ✓ visually appealing yet accessible
- ✓ evidence-based
- ✓ an example of good sustainable practice – minimal images, no videos
- ✓ suitable for 1st year undergraduates, but also accessible to the public
- ✓ coherent in design, content and tone
- ✓ complementary to each other but also working as standalone activities.

Next steps

- Embed the pathway within OU modules
- Include in Badged Digital and Information course
- Promote to staff
- Incorporate digital sustainability tips in everyday practices
- Add new activities, e.g., how we can use technology to be more sustainable.

Digital sustainability tips:

Our top 3 tips for being more digitally sustainable

Jo's top tips

- Think before you thank
- Use [Ecosia](#) search engine
- Climate-conscious camera use in online meetings

Inga's top tips

- Consider if using any media will add to the outcomes
- Think carefully about prompts when using AI
- Research which apps / platforms use more environmentally friendly engines.

Group discussion

- Which tip are you going to incorporate in your work and digital use?
- Do you have any digital sustainability tips to share?
- How might you use the digital sustainability activities at your institution?

For further information or feedback on the activities,
please contact us:

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Thank you for attending.