UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM STAFF COLLEGE

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ONLINE

01 JAN 2026 - 31 DEC 2026

Circular Economy Approaches for Sustainability

Climate and Environment

Stakeholder engagement and partnerships

Sustainable development and the SDGs



LANGUAGE	DURATION	ENROLL BY	PRICE	LOCATION	TARGET
English	25-30 hours	31 Dec 2026	550 USD	ONLINE	Everyone

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This self-paced online course focuses on applying circular economy principles and systems-based approaches to explore how we can redesign our systems, products, and services to enable sustainable living for all, while staying within planetary boundaries.

Introduction

This course explores how Circular Economy (CE) practices can be applied to support the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

With less than a decade remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is clear that business as usual is no longer sufficient. Systems-based approaches, combined with a strong commitment to transformative action, are essential to reducing humanity's environmental footprint. Given the planet's finite resources, circular economy principles and practices offer powerful solutions for designing goods, processes, and ecosystems that are restorative and regenerative by nature.

The course focuses on both the "how" and the "why" of circular economy principles, emphasizing their critical role in achieving the overarching goal of the 2030 Agenda: sustainable development for all.

A combination of theoretical insights, practical applications, and case studies will be used to illustrate key concepts. The course is highly application-oriented, featuring real-world examples from diverse regions and sectors, along with tools to support the advancement of circular economy practices.

Objectives

Upon the successful completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- understand the interconnection between Circular Economy and its potential in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- explain the importance of systems-based approaches to identify effective circular transformations and apply different models of circularity to identify opportunities for circular transformations.
- understand the opportunities to drive circular value across the life cycles of products and processes and examine business models that could support circularity.
- explore the policy environments that support the successful application of circular strategies to cities and examine why citizens can play a crucial role in ensuring circularity.
- recognize the potential of individual actions and sustainable lifestyles in enabling circularity
- identify the barriers and enablers to mainstreaming circular strategies.

Course methodology

UNSSC online courses are designed to maximize learning outcomes through optimal time investment in carefully curated, high-quality learning content. These courses are specifically tailored for professionals seeking to enhance their skills for career advancement or deepen their subject matter expertise. The self-paced modules feature applied learning elements, including case studies.

Learners have the flexibility to complete course activities at their own convenience.

UNSSC online courses maintain the same high academic rigour as their face-to-face counterparts, while allowing participants to set their own study schedule.

Course contents

Lesson 1 introduces the key features of the 2030 Agenda and traces the evolution of the Circular Economy concept and its principles. It highlights the importance of transitioning from a linear to a circular system as a necessary step toward achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Lesson 2 emphasizes the importance of a systems-based approach to the circular economy. It introduces the Butterfly and Circularity diagrams as strategic tools for circular design and explains their operational principles through the technical and biological cycles of products and resources. Real-life case studies illustrate these concepts, along with a discussion on the need for systemic enabling environments supported by effective policies for circularity.

Lesson 3 explores how businesses can adopt circular practices by applying Circular Economy principles to their products and processes. It examines innovative business models, stakeholder relationships, and policy environments that support circularity in the private sector.

Lesson 4 focuses on the design of circular cities, demonstrating how Circular Economy principles can be applied to create sustainable, inclusive, and thriving urban environments.

Lesson 5 examines how sustainable lifestyle choices influence the world around us. It explores practical ways individuals and communities can live better while reducing their environmental footprint.

Lesson 6 analyzes the main barriers and enablers to the wider adoption of Circular Economy principles and practices. It reinforces the importance of a systemic circular economy approach to achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Target audience

This course is offered exclusively to UN staff members interested in accelerating the shift toward circular systems by applying circular economy principles in policymaking, business operations, production and consumption practices, and urban development.

Cost of participation

Staff from UN entities can access this course upon payment of the course fee.

Certificates from the United Nations System Staff College will be awarded to participants upon completion of the course.