

Uncovering Students' & Educators' Perceptions of Sustainability in Global Fashion Education: A Comparative Study Across Five Institutions.

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Abstract

Increasingly educational institutions are incorporating sustainability into their curricula to respond to the climate emergency and global fashion industry needs. Aligning fashion curricula with student and educators' perspectives and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ensures that the next generation of fashion designers and entrepreneurs are equipped with the knowledge and skills to thrive in an evolving industry. Although many fashion programs have made significant strides, further work is needed to address social and environmental considerations in fashion education holistically.

This paper explores students' perceptions of sustainability within the fashion curriculum globally, examining how practices influence understanding and attitudes towards

sustainable fashion in consumer and producer countries. Building on a collaborative research project between the University of Portsmouth and RMIT University Vietnam in 2023, this next phase includes additional cohorts and educators from Istituto Marangoni London, RMIT University Melbourne, and the University of Lisbon as well as collaborative educator dialogue.

Through a mixed methodology including student surveys and educator reflective discussions, this research identifies key factors shaping views on sustainability and evaluates pedagogical effectiveness. The team collected rich qualitative and quantitative data for a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions and educators' experiences. By analysing current pedagogical approaches, the study identifies crucial factors that shape students' views on sustainability and evaluates the impact of differing contexts.

The findings highlight the need for integrated and holistic approaches to sustainability in fashion education, and emphasise co-designing pedagogies that actively engage students and educators to foster deeper commitment. By understanding influential factors on students' perceptions, institutions can develop effective strategies to enhance student engagement and advocate sustainable leadership from within the fashion industry. This project advances the dialogue on education's role in shaping the future of fashion, calling for pedagogies that combine creative inquiry and practical innovation to support a more sustainable, future-oriented fashion system.

Keywords: Creative Pedagogy; Design Education; Fashion Curriculum; Social Responsibility; Sustainability

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

It is now more crucial than ever for universities to incorporate sustainability into their curricula to respond to the climate emergency and global fashion industry needs. Aligning the fashion curriculum with student perspectives and the UN Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs) ensures that the next generation of fashion professionals are equipped with knowledge and skills to thrive in an evolving industry. Although some fashion and textiles programs have made significant strides, there is more to achieve when addressing both social and environmental considerations in education.

For more than a decade, the project initiators have concentrated on fashion education with a sustainability lens at various international universities. An observed transformation in students' attitudes towards sustainability is evident: a decade ago, they often questioned the necessity of learning about sustainability, now, its integration into the curriculum is increasingly expected. This evolving mindset aligns with the current trend of youth-led climate demonstrations that are actively engaging educational institutions throughout Europe (Gayle, 2023) and the United States (Noor, 2025).

Through shared dialogue, it has been recognised that adopting a student-centred approach in curriculum development is required to have a better understanding of students' perceptions and expectations. This realisation led to the initial rationale for this research project, which aims to establish an understanding of what students have learned about sustainability and what they want to learn more about. Drawing on the author's academic network, a team of seven was built, across five universities in four countries and across three continents (Table 1).

Name of Institution	Country	Fashion Academic
Istituto Marangoni London	United Kingdom	Noorin Khamisani
University of Portsmouth	United Kingdom	Karen Ryan, Dr. Lara Torres
University of Lisbon	Portugal	Dr. Graziela Sousa
RMIT Vietnam	Vietnam	Corinna Joyce
RMIT Melbourne	Australia	Dr. Daphne Mohajer va Pesaran, Dr Carolina Quintero Rodriguez

Table 1. Participating Institutions and Academics.

Particularly significant for us was exploring the perceptions of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, studying fashion situated in countries with vastly different parts of the fashion industry's global supply chain and therefore affected differently by climate change. For example, according to UNICEF Vietnam is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change (2024). As a leading fashion manufacturing country, it faces significant

challenges due to rising temperatures, extreme weather events and water scarcity which pose threats to their textile and garment industries and its population. In contrast, the UK is one of the largest fashion consumers globally and a high contributor to negative environmental impacts overseas where most of the garments are produced (Institute of Positive Fashion, n.d).

The core aim of this study is to investigate how sustainability is understood, valued, and integrated in fashion education across culturally and economically varied international contexts. The central research question asks: How do curriculum design and local student experiences shape approaches to sustainability in fashion education, and what lessons can be drawn to inform future best practice globally?

By analysing survey data and reflective discussions from multiple universities representing both major producer and consumer countries within the fashion system, the research seeks to identify points of convergence and divergence in pedagogical approaches, levels of student engagement, and curricular as well as institutional challenges. Hooks describes the importance of being able to ‘map out terrains of commonality’ to enable new approaches within academia, where we are able to think beyond and find ways to transgress (1994). This comparative approach is intended to define the conditions under which sustainability education is most impactful, discover effective best practice strategies, and provide recommendations for meaningful future curriculum development. The outcomes offer guidance for educators and institutions seeking to enhance sustainability literacy, building agency for future fashion professionals to advocate for change within the industry, and to contribute towards aligning education with pressing global social and environmental needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of sustainability into design education has been a focal point for design educators, as evidenced by Sala (2019), Brass and Mazzarella (2015), Williams (2016), and Papanek (1995). The Earth Logic Action Research Plan, emphasizes the necessity for a paradigm shift towards degrowth, highlighting the importance of new perspectives among fashion designers (Fletcher and Tham, 2019).

It underscores the need for new knowledge and mindsets, advocating for teaching methods that prioritize student-centred approaches and view teaching as a reciprocal process. Earth Logic proposes "co-learning" as a means to challenge the prevailing growth-centric knowledge hierarchy, promoting more collaborative learning.

John Dewey's educational philosophy stresses bridging the gap between learning and lived experiences to nurture socially responsible citizens (Dewey, 1938 cited in Williams, 2017, 99). Co-creating curricula with students is increasingly recognized as essential, given that students possess firsthand learning experiences that educators may lack (Bovill et al., 2016). Petty's concept of teaching as a reciprocal process serves as a guiding principle, emphasizing feedback mechanisms, appropriate task levels, and the nuanced dynamics within educational settings (2004).

The focus on sustainability in fashion and textiles education has been a global trend, with ongoing efforts. Recent studies in emerging country contexts have highlighted both enabling factors and challenges in integrating sustainability into higher education design curricula. Nguyen et al. (2025) found that active faculty engagement and ongoing departmental dialogue critically underpin successful sustainability-related curriculum updates. Their research in Vietnam revealed that applying the SDGs to authentic assignment scenarios prompted deeper student understanding, underscoring that genuine application requires students to grasp foundational sustainability concepts. Likewise, Nguyen et al. (2023) demonstrate the value of problem-based learning approaches for embedding SDGs across diverse subject areas. By encouraging students to interrogate sustainability in the context of assignment themes, educators can support learning and adaptability positively.

Following the Rana Plaza disaster, UK educators and industry professionals have increasingly drawn on resources provided by activist groups and charities, such as Fashion Revolution and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, to improve global sustainability practices and standards, including concepts like circularity and supply chain transparency.

The literature underscores the critical role of collaboration between educators and students in addressing the complexities of the climate crisis within higher education. By embracing co-learning and co-creation approaches, institutions can challenge existing knowledge hierarchies and foster environments conducive to sustainable practices and socially responsible citizenship.

Existing research and current scholarly discourse surrounding sustainability integration in design education are predominantly educator-led. Notably absent is direct engagement with students, a gap we aim to address in our study, hence our focus here on gathering data specifically from students to inform our future curriculum development strategies and pedagogies. These findings reinforce the need for a shift towards holistic, student-centred pedagogies, underscoring the importance of both institutional support and innovative teaching strategies for effective sustainability integration in global fashion education.

By employing a methodology centred on direct student feedback through questionnaires capturing both quantitative and qualitative data, we seek to uncover students' comprehension across various sustainability facets in fashion, their familiarity with sustainable design and business concepts, perceived importance, and areas for further exploration. This approach, novel in its student-focused nature, diverges from existing literature by prioritizing student perspectives to enrich our understanding and inform future pedagogical strategies and curriculum development in the field.

Integrating Sustainable Practice in Design and Fashion Education

There is an increasing body of research that highlights how higher education design curricula are embedding sustainability and regenerative thinking within both teaching and student project outcomes.

At Falmouth University and the University of Chester, Andrews et al. (2025) developed The Design Compass, a framework that enables students to apply sustainable design strategies through three layers: strategy, question alignment, and benchmarking against industry practice. Although designed for industrial and product design, the tool illustrates how structured pedagogical frameworks can foster sustainability through iterative questioning and evaluation. It also offers a transferable model for fashion and other creative disciplines seeking closer alignment with sustainability goals.

In the built environment and fashion contexts, Fallouh, Ryan, and Wilmot (2025) introduce a Framework for Embedding Regenerative Design in Design Education, emphasising interdisciplinary collaboration and climate-conscious innovation. Their approach integrates experiential learning, storytelling, co-design, and systems thinking to cultivate regenerative

mindsets. By addressing material use, circularity, and systems-level impact, the framework prepares students to approach sustainability holistically and take on leadership roles in driving change.

Building on this, Ryan (2025) published the Sustainable Fashion Design Specification (SFDS), an evaluative model tailored to undergraduate fashion education. Based on longitudinal research across two UK design faculties, the SFDS embeds sustainable and considerate design within project-based learning. It encourages students to evaluate design decisions against sustainability criteria aligned with professional standards, enhancing both sustainable practice and industry readiness.

Together, these studies demonstrate how sustainable design education is advancing through diverse frameworks that balance conceptual understanding with applied practice. The evolution from evaluative tools like The Design Compass and SFDS to broader regenerative frameworks reflects a maturing pedagogical landscape where sustainability is embedded as a core learning outcome across creative disciplines.

To summarise, Sterlacci and Arbuckle (2008) report that there are more than 650 fashion schools in approximately 27 different countries, all will have their own approaches to integrating sustainability into the curriculum. Fletcher and Grose highlight that universities can “be sources of ‘slow knowledge’ and will become incubators for new business models, by providing a safe place for putting sustainability into practice quickly: ‘fail early to succeed sooner’” (2012). Alongside this we face the challenge of the shift to a consumption model in Higher Education which is leading to a proliferation of courses not necessarily preparing students for the future of the fashion industry, hence there is an urgent need for this kind of research to share best practice and student perspectives.

METHODOLOGY

In the exploratory phase of the research, online surveys were employed to gather insights into students' perceptions of sustainability within the fashion and textiles curriculum. The second phase was an online educator's reflective discussion, leading to collaborative survey analysis and exploration of students' work. The mixed methodology allowed for the

collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, which is essential for a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences. The surveys were distributed to students across various levels and courses, this was crucial for uncovering overlooked areas that may not have been previously considered by educators. Purnama et al (2022), indicated the importance of embedding sustainability in fashion education to shape student attitudes effectively. The research team aimed to identify pivotal factors that influence students' perceptions and assess the efficacy of existing pedagogical methods. This aligns with Birdsall (2015), who argued that educators must develop a robust understanding of sustainability concepts to effectively integrate them into their teaching. Furthermore, the study's focus on evaluating the influence of diverse educational environments on students' perspectives is supported by Hur and Cassidy (2019), who highlighted the challenges and opportunities in implementing sustainability in fashion education. The mixed-methods approach utilised in this study, which involved both qualitative open-ended questions and quantitative data collection, is consistent with contemporary research practices in sustainability education. For instance, the integration of qualitative insights into students' attitudes towards sustainability, as explored by Sammalisto et al. (2016), underscores the necessity of understanding students' self-perceived sustainability actions post-education.

This comprehensive methodology identifies key factors that shape the views of students and educators on perceptions of sustainability in fashion education across diverse global contexts to evaluate the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches. By examining the effectiveness of current pedagogical approaches, the study identifies key factors that can shape students' views on sustainability and evaluates the impact of different contexts. The following section presents institution-specific findings, highlighting both shared themes and contextually distinct challenges across the five participating universities.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Academics from each university individually created a summary of the initial findings from the data collected ahead of the more holistic analysis conducted together.

Findings at RMIT Vietnam reveal tension in delivering an enterprise-focused fashion programme within a country ranked among the top three manufacturing nations in the global fashion system. Vietnam's economic dependence on mass garment production is deeply intertwined with historical patterns of global labour extraction, where local communities supply cheap labour to feed overseas consumption, often with little opportunity to influence systems or define alternative futures. At the same time, Vietnam is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, facing frequent flooding, and increasing environmental degradation directly linked to global industrial practices, including fashion. This context shapes both curriculum development and the lived reality of students, who grapple with the contradictions of participating in a seemingly economically beneficial yet environmentally damaging sector.

Students at RMIT Vietnam embody this tension: many are unsure whether to work within the existing system but, out of economic necessity, most graduates join multinational supply chain enterprises in roles that reinforce the global status quo. Against this backdrop, the Bachelor of Fashion (Enterprise) (BoFE) programme seeks to equip students not just with creative and business skills, but with the ethical and critical mindsets needed to question and potentially shift the system from within. The curriculum aims to position students as future leaders, able to navigate and reimagine the supply chain for environmental stewardship and social innovation, while negotiating the very real pressures of employability and economic survival. This tension also presents a unique opportunity: by situating student agency at the heart of the curriculum, the programme aims to inspire change through the students joining the fashion industry.

The curriculum at RMIT has evolved to prioritise sustainability at multiple levels, exemplified by the introduction of a transdisciplinary, university-wide minor focused on regenerative futures. This shift represents a key institutional commitment to embedding sustainability principles holistically, moving beyond siloed disciplinary approaches towards integration across the university. Institutional support signifies a transition from lecturer-driven models to student-centred learning, with active encouragement for practical engagement, critical inquiry, and student-led projects throughout the BoFE programme.

RMIT Vietnam's engagement with the SDGs is particularly pronounced within the School of Communication & Design and the fashion curriculum. Survey and reflective analysis of student responses show that students are keenly aware of concrete sustainability concepts such as zero waste, modular design, and supply chain stewardship, while abstract frameworks like degrowth and digital fashion remain less familiar. This indicates that when sustainable strategies are explicitly communicated, there is a higher level of awareness and practical uptake among students, reflecting the curriculum's successful integration of applied sustainability topics.

The initial findings from RMIT Vietnam provide an insight into general trends of the respondents representing 20% across the student cohort of 224 of the BoFE. Students express a strong desire for practical and actionable knowledge. There is marked interest in sustainability in the supply chain, ethical business practices, upcycling, and innovative materials and techniques. Digital fashion, currently an underexplored area, emerged as a promising field for future curriculum development. 93% of students found it important to integrate sustainability into their curriculum and 90% wanted to learn more.

The demand for experiential learning and opportunities to address the environmental impacts of fashion was prominent in student feedback, driving continued refinement of the curriculum towards more impactful educational outcomes.

Nevertheless, a key challenge for RMIT Vietnam arises from balancing wider goals for sustainability with the economic realities faced by students entering the workforce. Many students feel the tension between their aspirations for change and their need for employability in a competitive market. The dominant industry narratives, which often focus on limitations rather than possibilities, must be reconciled with the curriculum's approach that positions students as agents of change within the fashion landscape.

The initial findings from the University of Portsmouth offer valuable insights into students' perceptions and learning priorities. The respondents, representing various academic levels across fashion design and marketing courses, emphasised the importance of sustainability, with 100% rating it as 'important' or 'very important' to their education. Similarly, 91% expressed an ardent desire to learn more about sustainability, particularly practical applications.

Students showed familiarity with tangible concepts like zero waste, design for longevity, and circular fashion design. However, awareness was noticeably lower for more abstract or emerging frameworks such as regenerative fashion and degrowth. Similarly, practical sustainable business models like rental services and take-back schemes resonated more strongly than less explored ideas like digital fashion houses.

When asked about integration into the curriculum, 91% of students rated it as ‘well’ or ‘very well’ integrated, though many highlighted areas for improvement. The student feedback points to a demand for more actionable knowledge in areas such as sustainable supply chains, upcycling techniques, and applied business practices. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of embedding both conceptual knowledge and practical and innovative approaches in the curriculum to prepare students as responsible contributors to the evolving fashion industry. In 2026, the University of Portsmouth will undertake a major curriculum redevelopment to establish a more multidisciplinary and collaborative framework across its design programmes. Although institutional transformation is necessarily incremental, the new *Connected Curriculum* presents a timely opportunity to align learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and teaching strategies with sustainability principles and interdisciplinary practice. This process provides a valuable moment to reconceptualise assessment design, embedding reflective, process-oriented, and collaborative pedagogies that cultivate student agency and accountability. The phased transformation reflects broader pedagogical shifts in higher education that position sustainability not only as a framework for content but as an integrated mindset and method of learning.

The courses at Istituto Marangoni London (IML) follow the philosophy of the international private institution which has a focus on luxury and a constant dialogue with industry. Sustainability is integrated across the courses although in a variety of approaches and often linked to industry projects. There is a new MA in Sustainable Fashion & Systems which offers students an opportunity to focus on in-depth research to evolve fashion practice and business although currently enrolment is low.

At IML, both fashion design and fashion business students were surveyed, we gathered 58 responses from MA and 73 from BA, a total of 131 responses (from the cohort of 745). Students are predominantly international rather than from the UK. Most students felt that it

was very important or important for sustainability to be integrated into the curriculum at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Positively they also felt that sustainability had been well integrated into the curriculum, although they still want to learn more 46% at BA and 75% at MA. The students evidenced strong familiarity with practical design approaches like design for longevity, zero waste, and circular fashion design. Knowledge around newer concepts such as regenerative fashion and modular design were significantly lower. Sustainable business models including take-back schemes and rental services were more familiar to students than more emerging explored ideas like digital fashion houses and degrowth. The data indicates a strong rationale for developing the curriculum and project briefs further to ensure we meet evolving student expectations as well as the needs of the future fashion industry. Currently, the integration of sustainability within the curriculum at IML is not driven by institutional mandate; instead, it relies predominantly on the initiative of individual educators who champion these pedagogical shifts. The emergence of the student-supported data from this project now provides a critical evidentiary foundation that can strengthen these efforts and catalyse broader change.

From a cohort of 220 students from the Fashion Design Bachelor and Master at the University of Lisbon, 60 responses were collected making up 28% of the cohort (39 from BA and 22 from MA). The respondents showed a familiarity with most of the sustainable design strategies, except for regenerative fashion design. The most familiar business models, as expected, were second hand/resale models, which is a feature of Gen X's profile and this generation's consumption habits. Degrowth strategies were less familiar.

Most of the students (68%) stated it is 'Very Important' to learn about sustainability in their curriculum, and while 55% stated that these topics are 'well integrated' in their curriculum, 77% feel they need to learn more. Students mentioned the need to learn more about sustainable fabrics and more industry connections. Given Portugal's strong textile industry, this could be actioned easily and effectively. They showed a strong commitment, as well as a real concern about the unsustainable practices of the fashion industry. Acknowledging their role, one participant stated:

“As fashion designers taking into account the pressing issues regarding the industry's impact on the environment and society, it is necessary to understand how we can contribute positively to solving these problems”.

The curriculum, although addressing sustainability holistically, currently does not address specific subjects in the bachelor's degree. The new MA curriculum has a specialized sustainability track in the second year. Surprisingly, from the 13 students enrolled, none has chosen this track in 2024. Yet, in 2025, from a cohort of 30 students, 6 enrolled in this track, which shows a growing interest about the topic, students are building an understanding of their role and changes are being implemented in regards to their own concerns and personal views of the world.

At RMIT Melbourne, multiple cohorts in the School of Fashion and Textiles, provided insights, 78 responses were collected: 5% responses from students in the Bachelor of Textiles (Design), 13% in Bachelor of Fashion and Textiles (Sustainable Innovation), 32% in the Bachelor of Fashion (Enterprise), and 50% in the Bachelor of Fashion (Design). Like others in this study, data showed that students felt more familiar with material-led design strategies such as Upcycling (3.38 average score), sustainable fabrics (3.19) and Zero waste approaches to material usage (3.06). None of these however exceeds 4 on the scale, so overall the confidence level remains low. The least familiar design strategies were the use of mono-materials (1.55) and modular design (1.71). Upcycling, repair, and rental services were the most known sustainable fashion business practices. The least known were degrowth and NFT's. 90% of the participants responded that it is important (29%) or very important (61%) to integrate sustainability in their education and it is highlighted through these participant's comments:

“We need to learn that capitalism isn't set up for sustainability, we can't just do our bit, we need radical change”

“I believe sustainability shouldn't just be an “add on” in any type of business or practice but an inherent requirement”

It is important to highlight that 64% of students believe that sustainability has been integrated well or very well into the curriculum, with 58% of participants believing they need to learn

more, 31% were unsure about it and 10% believing that sustainability has not been integrated into the curriculum enough.

The individual institutional findings and discussions were further explored during a subsequent educators' discussion session, where academic leads from each participating institution analysed the survey findings collaboratively leading to shared reflections. The conversation illuminated common challenges and opportunities across institutions while revealing how regional, cultural, and institutional contexts shape sustainability pedagogy.

Key themes emerging from the discussion included student agency and empowerment, particularly the need to move beyond "guilt-based" sustainability narratives towards approaches that position students as active change agents; cultural and institutional context, acknowledging how local economic conditions and educational traditions influence both student priorities and pedagogical design; and curriculum reform, with participants emphasising the importance of embedding regenerative futures across existing programmes rather than treating sustainability as a separate or optional strand.

The results of the research have highlighted differences between RMIT Melbourne and Vietnam, institutions which have a shared curriculum, this was a key example of how cultural context shapes student engagement with sustainability and agency.

We found we share concerns about institutional limitations, there are changes we as educators may wish to make to curriculum following on from the survey results which must go through modification or revalidation processes making change slow. Secondly we shared concerns around the co-opting of Indigenous knowledge, and the need for authentic agency and criticality in both teaching and curriculum for both educators and students.

In terms of opportunities we identified the potential for more collaboration with high schools, to ensure sustainable fashion education is established prior to undergraduate studies. One member of the team has worked on a project in this area in Lisbon, 'Oficinas do Vestir', with primary school children (aged 6 - 10 years old), which is funded by the city council and builds up on a partnership between the University and the school, this project is also involving fashion design students, who volunteered to tutor workshops. Another example is the 'Amanhã' project, from Lisboa Fashion Week, which is targeted at teenagers, both projects use a social innovation framework, driving interest around sustainable fashion and the fashion industry's importance.

Further insights addressed skills gaps and the education pipeline, with educators observing the decline of hands-on learning at pre-university levels and proposing collaborations with schools to reintroduce repair, material literacy, and fibre knowledge at earlier stages. Industry engagement and employability were also identified as dual pressures, as students in both

consumer and producer countries navigate the tension between sustainable ideals and market realities.

The meeting also surfaced critical discussions around terminology, questioning the limitations of the increasingly co-opted term “sustainability” and advocating for more context-specific and actionable frameworks. Despite institutional constraints, there was strong consensus on the need for flexibility in assessment and project briefs, to better accommodate student-driven inquiry and foster authentic agency within the curriculum.

Finally, the educators collectively agreed on a series of forward-looking actions, including sharing exemplary student projects, developing early education outreach initiatives, exploring collaborative publications and funding opportunities, and continuing dialogue to advance a global, student-centred framework for sustainability in fashion education.

These insights from the educators’ reflection discussions consolidate the comparative findings across institutions, reinforcing the collective call for curriculum models that embed sustainability as both a pedagogical principle and a lived educational practice.

CONCLUSION

Across all the universities, students expressed a desire for sustainability to be integrated into their curricula, in both fashion consumer and producer locations. Another notable insight was the need for both practical knowledge and industry connections. Students expressed a desire to learn more about sustainable materials, supply chains and applied creative business practices. This highlights the importance of having connections with industry partners and indicates a growing recognition among students of the importance of bridging theory with real-world industry innovation.

Our findings emphasise the need for innovative teaching methods that will inspire students to become advocates for change within the fashion system. This could involve teaching beyond the classroom by integrating real-world industry challenges, enacting industry and cultural change through hands-on workshops or fostering a comprehensive approach to fashion pedagogy that responds to the environmental and social impacts of the industry. Going further, getting students to understand the full lifecycle of fashion items is increasingly important, best practice examples include field trips to see fibres growing and landfill sites, bringing the classroom content to life. Projects directly linked to local makers and

craftspeople also support moves towards cultural sustainability. At RMIT Vietnam for example, experiential learning courses are developed to facilitate direct engagement between students and communities of traditional textile artisans. Through immersive learning experiences, students gain tacit knowledge by directly learning with craftspeople, understanding not only technical skills but also the cultural significance embedded in textile practices.

Reflecting on this project, the implications of integrating sustainability into curricula extends to students, academics, and industry professionals. For students, this equips them with the knowledge and skills to pursue specialist graduate roles in an evolving industry, enhances their employability and prepares them to be proactive in the advancement of sustainable fashion. For academics, adopting a structured approach to sustainability-led curricula allows for the integration of innovative practices and methodologies. Enabling academics to establish and strengthen industry networks, thereby enriching the academic experience with real-world applications and insights related to sustainability. For industry, the study highlights the importance of collaboration with academia to stay ahead of sustainability compliance and leverage new talent. Through this project we hope to keep the momentum and focus on sustainability in fashion education despite the challenges faced internationally by institutions grappling with mergers and redundancies.

Future plans include strengthening the curriculum through Industry-Partnered Learning (IPL) projects that immerse students in real-world practice while cultivating critical systems thinking. This integration ensures that learners can engage meaningfully with the complexities of a changing climate and develop the agency necessary to initiate positive, future-focused action within the fashion sector. Further, universities must invest in staff training on sustainability and industry innovation. This could evolve into co-designing curricula with students (Fletcher and Tham, 2019). To advance student-centred education, we must establish clear sustainability-linked objectives not only in the learning outcomes, but in learning and teaching strategies. A future expansion of the project may involve alumni as well as more teaching staff to further understand how to holistically integrate sustainability and enable all stakeholders to close the circle of integration. Fostering international collaborations and

ongoing research initiatives can empower educators and students to envision and create sustainable fashion futures together.

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