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“Supporting research and education stakeholders in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals: practical advice from the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative SDG Publishers Compact Fellows”

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Abstract

There is significant support for the SDGs amongst global stakeholders within higher education, covering important areas of research and scholarly communication. Housing a group of volunteers across the academic publishing sector, the *Higher Education Sustainability Initiative [HESI] SDG Publishers Compact Fellows* group aims to address key policy issues and help stakeholders across research and publishing to better support the aims and objectives of SDGs. In this policy brief, we provide details about work being done by *fellows*, focusing on top tips for researchers, authors and publishers. The top action tips give practical advice to key stakeholders on sustainable development, with ideas and suggestions for translating research into practice.



Higher Education Sustainability Initiative: SDG Publishers Compact Fellows

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Acronyms

HESI = Higher Education Sustainability Initiative

IPA = International Publishers Association

SDG = United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Key insights

- *HESI SDG Publishers Compact Fellows* include representatives from academia, research organisations, libraries, practitioners, and publishers, all working in partnership to support SDGs
- Fellows are working on four key topics during 2022 and beyond: integration of SDGs into Educational Materials and Research; putting SDGs into practice; redefining impact; and changing the culture in Higher Education
- To help students, researchers, editors, publishers and academic libraries meet the SDGs, *HESI Compact Fellows* collaborated on a series of top action lists, targeted at specific stakeholders. These lists include actionable and practical ideas that can easily be implemented, helping key stakeholders direct their energies towards supporting SDGs

Policy brief

Introduction

Arguably, research and education are core elements needed for society to make progress towards achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) by the deadline of 2030. The [SDG Publishers Compact](#) was launched by the International Publishers Association and the United Nations in 2020. The Compact has received wide ranging support from across the globe. Academic publishers were among the first to sign up to the Publishers Compact, joining over 150 organisations committed to the SDGs, including academic publishing industry associations, such as [STM](#) and the [Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers](#).

The signatories committed to ten broad actions, but without explicit steps, few publishers could immediately match their resolve and convert it into practical change and policy implementation. To help address this deficit, the [Higher Education Sustainability Initiative \(HESI\)](#) established the *SDG Publishers Compact Fellows* initiative to act on the goals and further the intentions of the Compact.

Housing a group of pro-bono fellows across research, academia, academic publishing, and industry sectors, HESI facilitated the formation of working groups to address key issues to better align these sectors with SDGs and provide practical solutions in support of the Compact signatories.

Working groups

Working groups presently cover the following four topics:

- **Integration of SDG Educational Materials:** The Academic Societies and Textbooks group is developing ways for publishers to recognize and address the lack of SDG-related content in their educational materials. This includes creation of a rubric to help tag SDG-relevant content, as well as presentation materials for conferences and other relevant stakeholder meetings to build awareness around the SDGs. The expected outcome is for instructors, traditional-aged students, and lifelong learners to have a greater wealth of quality knowledge and resources with clear links signposted to the SDGs.
- **Putting SDGs into practice:** The Connecting Academic Researchers and Practitioners group is focused on developing best practices that will foster communication and build stronger relationships between research and those who use research - the practitioners. The group is working on encouraging authors, editors, and publishers to create synopsis content and alternate formats that are useful and appealing to practitioners.
- **Redefining impact:** The Impact and Reach group is focused on changing the traditional ways research impact is viewed, specifically looking at academic rankings and incentives. The group is preparing a resource to highlight seminal SDG research articles and their impact on policy, education, society and beyond. In addition, to ease the identification, collection, and labelling of SDG-aligned content (that can help with rankings), the group is considering development of a standardised SDG taxonomy to be used by researchers, publishers and policymakers alike.
- **Changing the culture in Higher Education:** A final, broad-focused sub-group is taking steps to affect culture change throughout the academic and publishing ecosystem. This group is evaluating the various stakeholders and what their needs are to move the

focus toward the SDGs. While initial focus will be on connecting with and elevating those already doing the work with SDGs, eventually the group will transition to highlighting additional institutions and the spaces where they could immediately incorporate the SDGs.

As part of this activity, *SDG Publishers Compact Fellows* have created a series of [top action lists](#) to assist publishers, editors, and authors (among others). These short documents provide straightforward, practical tips to help stakeholders support the implementation and achievement of SDGs more effectively.

Top action lists

The action tips can be found [here](#). Why not take a look and see which tips you can start to apply in your daily work?

By way of inspiration, here is a sample of some of the group's top tips:

- [As an author](#) – when you're writing your work, consider which of the SDGs your research relates to, and ensure that you use keywords and terminology that will help to link your work to the SDGs.
- [As a publisher or editor](#) – make an explicit commitment to the SDGs in the journal's vision or purpose statement, highlighting which of the 17 SDG-related themes that the journal is uniquely well suited to serve. This will help to attract research to your journal and also help foster greater impact for that research.
- [As an editor working to translate research into practice](#) – why not work with your publisher or society to create an award or similar recognition for outstanding effort in translating research? This is a good incentive to encourage your authors and communities to be thinking about the relevance of research in practice when writing, reviewing, and evaluating papers.

The HESI SDG Publishing Compact Fellows welcome your feedback and input. To ask about joining the group or to share your ideas please contact: CompactFellows@gmail.com

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