Skills for Planet Blueprint: Learning Outcomes

July 2025

Skills for Planet

Design Council

This document provides a set of example Learning Outcomes to help design educators in Higher Education (HE) contexts embed the Skills for Planet Blueprint.

Context

Skills for Planet Mission

In 2024, Design Council announced its mission to upskill 1 million designers in green design skills by 2030. The impetus behind this mission was the publication of our Green Design Skills Gap Report, which highlights that **66% of designers have designed for planet in the last 12-months, but only 43% of designers feel that they have the capabilities required to design in this way**. This suggests a troubling gap between the demand for green design skills, and the supply of designers who have this skillset.

71% of designers believe that the demand for design for planet is going to grow, meaning that this concerning gap between supply and demand is set to widen further.

Closing this skills gap is essential if design is going to play a role in decarbonising industries, embedding a circular economy and protecting vital biodiversity. As the National Champion of Design, the Design Council sees it as our imperative to close this skills gap.

Skills for Planet Blueprint

The Skills for Planet Blueprint is our first step towards achieving this mission. It is a landmark resource that outlines the critical green skills that all designers need, providing a shared language that will make cross-sector conversations and skills-building possible.

The Blueprint defines eighteen Green Design Skills, organised into six interconnected areas:

1. Regenerating Nature
2. Embedding Circularity
3. Eliminating Emissions
4. Empowering Green Communities
5. Influencing Green Behaviour
6. Evaluating Green Impact

The Blueprint was developed with 100+ design experts across education, industry and government including from the Council for Higher Education in Art & Design, Arts and Humanities Research Council, Design Business Association, Design & Technology Association, National Society for Education in Art & Design, RSA and RCA.

Embedding the Blueprint in Higher Education

Embedding the Blueprint in HE is a key lever for change. The translation of the Blueprint into Learning Outcomes (LOs) acts as the first step in a journey to gather institutional commitments from several universities, who together can shift design education to embed the Blueprint and its Green Design Skills as a default.

Learning outcomes

These LOs have been developed collaboratively with members of CHEAD and Design Experts from within Higher Education Institutions. We workshopped core concepts to be included in the LOs together, before synthesising the outputs into this document.

Purpose

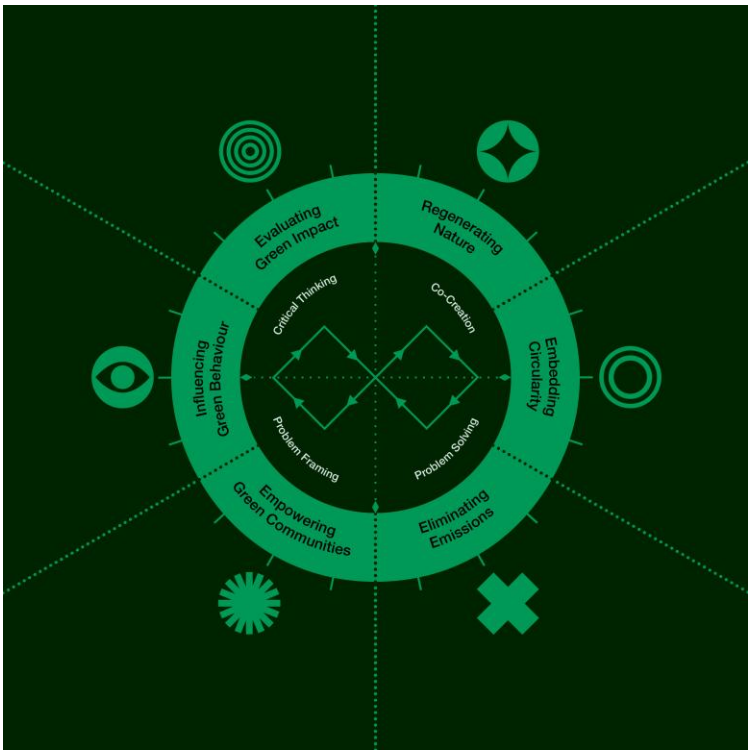
The LOs are intended as a jumping off point for educators to embed the Blueprint within their courses. They are not intended to be prescriptive, but rather to serve as inspiration that educators can apply and adapt to their specific contexts.

How to use

The table below sets out the LOs against the Blueprint structure: Green Design Mindset, Foundational Design Skills and Green Design Skills. The Green Design Mindset provides a systems-oriented mentality that underpins all design action and is crucial for planet-centred designers. The Foundational Design Skills provide four core skills that are key enablers of the Green Design Skills, and in this sense, the Green Design Mindset and the Foundational Design Skills act as prerequisites for holistically embedding the Blueprint and further developing the eighteen Green Design Skills.

The eighteen Green Design Skills span six interconnected focus areas, and the associated LOs operate like a 'menu', where different LOs from across the skill areas can come together within the context of a single project brief. This intends to mitigate against the skills being seen or understood in isolation from one another, and ensures briefs can be designed to help students develop complex sets of cross-cutting skills.

Each LO is expressed at a high-level, before being broken down into four learning outcomes that sit across a student journey from first year to postgrad.



Learning outcomes

Year 1: Build	Year 2: Activate	Year 3: Demonstrate	Postgrad: Deepen
1. GREEN DESIGN MINDSET: Apply systems thinking, relational thinking and futures thinking to inform a systemic and planet-centred approach to design that navigates complexity and permits a nimble responsiveness to a system's dynamics.			
1.1 Build awareness of the Green Design Mindset as comprised of relational, systems, ecological, and futures thinking. Learn core systems concepts (including living systems) and demonstrate an understanding of system framing and of the self as part of the systems being observed.	1.2 Activate the Green Design Mindset through engagement with a system, using relational, systems, ecological, and futures thinking to underpin an expanded understanding of a system's dynamics.	1.3 Demonstrate the Green Design Mindset through self-directed design experiments that navigate complexity and work collaboratively to respond to a system's dynamics in practical and speculative ways.	1.4 Deepen the Green Design Mindset through systemic and planet-centred design approaches that collaboratively respond to system dynamics, engaging with relationships across a system and co-creating interventions to complex problems that respect planetary boundaries and embrace uncertain futures.
2. FOUNDATIONAL DESIGN SKILL: Critical thinking - Engage critically with a range of knowledge sources and frameworks related to justice and environmental impact and reflect critically on the designer's privilege and positionality, considering how this might affect biases and limitations as a designer.			
2.1 Build criticality through awareness of how to access and work with multiple knowledge sources (e.g. frameworks such as SDGs, planetary boundaries and LCAs, principles, theory, literature, Indigenous knowledge, lived experiences) that focus on regenerative and decolonial thinking, planet-centred and systems-oriented design and position yourself (and your biases) in relation to this body of knowledge.	2.2 Activate your critical engagement with multiple knowledge sources and critical reflection on your own position, by challenging the assumptions in your green design approach.	2.3 Demonstrate the application of multiple knowledge sources into practice and evidence how your approach has been shaped by critical reflection on this knowledge and by your positionality and its limitations.	2.4 Deepen your approach by blending relevant and context-specific knowledge sources, evidencing how critical engagement with these and your positionality underpins and situates design outcomes in relevant eco-social contexts.

3. FOUNDATIONAL DESIGN SKILL: Co-creation– Engage collaboratively with partners and rightsholders within and beyond design for co-creating processes and realising design outcomes.			
3.1 Build awareness of the foundations of effective collaboration, including open communication, active listening, working across difference, building shared understandings, and navigating tension and conflict.	3.2 Activate effective collaboration through critical engagement with peer designers to realise a co-created design outcome.	3.3 Demonstrate effective collaboration through critical engagement with an external partner and/or rightsholder to realise a co-created design outcome.	3.4 Deepen collaboration through co-creation with partners and rightsholders from beyond design by engaging in co-creative processes to realise a collaborative design outcome.
4. FOUNDATIONAL DESIGN SKILL: Problem framing – Frame design problems with a complexity-led approach that demonstrates an ability to map a system and consider its boundaries, relationships, levers and influences.			
4.1 Build awareness of complex problem framing using systems concepts informed by the Green Design Mindset. Learn how to map a system – including its relationships, impact on nature and feedback loops – to inform a nuanced understanding of a problem.	4.2 Activate problem framing skills by mapping a complex problem and then work with this map to articulate the scale and complexity of the problem, identifying relevant parties and establishing meaningful systems boundaries.	4.3 Demonstrate how systems mapping practices have been used to frame a complex problem, and how systemic thinking underpins your articulation of the problem (exploring its root causes and interconnectedness, rather than its surface-level symptoms), its boundary, and the actors affected by/benefiting from the problem.	4.4 Deepen systems mapping practices by articulating a complex problem as a set of interdependent challenges and evidence how this framing can inform a strategic 'action ecosystem' approach to the problem.
5. FOUNDATIONAL DESIGN SKILL: Problem solving – Adopt a complexity-informed approach to design problems that enables designers to act as agents for change through the strategic coordination of actions (their own and others) across a system.			
5.1 Build awareness of how to approach a complex problem through the design of strategically aligned systemic interventions that anticipate short-, medium- and long-term impact through activity at relevant leverage points.	5.2 Activate the ability to identify and intervene at relevant leverage points and strategically align your intervention with the work of others as part of an 'action ecosystem'.	5.3 Demonstrate engagement with leverage points and strategic alignment in an 'action ecosystem' that is considerate of the future impact of your design and responds to changing conditions over time by positioning your work in a transition pathway.	5.4 Deepen your practice of intervening at strategic leverage points and aligning your work in an 'action ecosystem', by phasing your work in ways that are observant of, and responsive to, a system's changing conditions over time.

6. GREEN DESIGN SKILL AREA: Regenerating nature – Demonstrate an understanding of how to 'regenerate' nature (and how to curtail 'extraction') through methods that implement regenerative practices in design outcomes, e.g. involving nature as a rights-holder.			
6.1 Build ecological literacy through engagement with living systems principles and exploring social relations with ecology. Build awareness of the different timescales of extraction and regeneration, as well as of the need to balance biodiversity and nature conservation with competing land-use demands of agriculture (i.e. for food).	6.2 Activate your understanding of living systems principles and eco-social relations by positioning your work on a spectrum of activity from 'regeneration' to 'extraction' and evidence how this positioning is influencing your design approach.	6.3 Demonstrate how ecological literacy has informed decisions taken throughout the design process and articulate how and why the design outcome promotes regeneration.	6.4 Deepen ecological literacy through processes of co-design with nature, and demonstrate the ability to involve nature as a decision-maker and rightsholder in design outcomes.
7. GREEN DESIGN SKILL AREA: Embedding circularity – Understand the environmental, economic, social and business benefits of circularity, demonstrating how this can be implemented through circular material flows, organisational models and community participation.			
7.1 Build material and economic literacies coupled with an awareness of the social behaviours surrounding materials by mapping a product lifecycle and build awareness of lifecycle evaluation and different circular strategies that could be applied.	7.2 Activate material literacy through responsible material selection, lifecycle evaluation and assessment (LCA), and decision-making that is informed by the economic benefits of circularity, demonstrating an understanding of environmental impacts.	7.3 Demonstrate applications of material and economic literacy through the development of a methodology that demonstrates circularity and its social relations in a specific sector or geo-cultural context.	7.4 Deepen the connection between organisational models and social relations that enable applications of circularity in practice, and engage with systemic influences that act as barriers or enablers to circularity.
8. GREEN DESIGN SKILL AREA: Eliminating emissions – Understand the design factors that influence emissions and demonstrate the ability to measure, compare and reduce emissions through design decisions that decarbonise design outcomes.			
8.1 Build carbon literacy through a theoretical understanding of decarbonisation strategies (e.g. Oxford offsetting principles) and build an awareness of the design factors that affect emissions, i.e. choice of materials, manufacture, end of life.	8.2 Activate carbon literacy through the quantification of carbon dioxide and equivalent emissions (CO_2e) across a design project using relevant measurement tools (e.g. LCA, ISO, EMS).	8.3 Demonstrate the ability to compare emissions across a range of design choices and evidence how this has influenced design decisions that reduce emissions.	8.4 Deepen your carbon literacy though strategic alignment of your work with larger green and energy transitions and decarbonisation efforts.

9. GREEN DESIGN SKILL AREA: Empowering green communities – Understand ethical and decolonial research, relational principles and participatory approaches, putting these into practice with external partners and communities.			
9.1 Build collaborative literacy and an awareness of the ethical implications of working with communities through different engagement methods (e.g. decolonial research methods, relational principles and participatory and generative approaches) and position yourself in relation to different communities.	9.2 Activate a relationship with a specific community and critically reflect on different research and co-design methodologies that are relevant to this community context, including critical reflection on your own positionality in relation to this community.	9.3 Demonstrate how you are engaging with a community in ethical and responsible ways and evidence how your approach responds to their needs and motivations and applies their insights to an equitable and planet-centred, co-created design outcome.	9.4 Deepen your engagement with communities and evidence how you are co-creating the conditions for empowerment through collaborative outcomes that generate stewardship of positive environmental impact.
10. GREEN DESIGN SKILL AREA: Influencing green behaviour – Understand communication, storytelling and methods for influence, developing the skills needed to present and defend environmental design decisions with different audiences.			
10.1 Build awareness of the range of communication, storytelling and methods for influencing behaviour that can be used with different audiences, and build understandings of the skills needed to present and defend planet-centred design decisions.	10.2 Activate the ability to communicate, tell stories and influence behaviours through an accessible and compelling communication of the value of a planet-centred design.	10.3 Demonstrate the ability to present and defend design decisions, justifying why certain design strategies have been selected and how they enable positive environmental impact.	10.4 Deepen your ability to influence green behaviour by challenging and redirecting a design brief to advocate for green design in ways that also navigate systemic barriers and dynamics that push/pull in the opposite direction.
11. GREEN DESIGN SKILL AREA: Evaluating green impact – Understand impact measurement processes, demonstrating the ability to gather data, set goals and monitor impact, allowing for complexity and considering impact holistically over longer (intergenerational) time horizons.			
11.1 Build awareness of the ethical issues related to design processes and outcomes, identify frameworks and systems of measurement and learn about evaluation skills (e.g. lifecycle evaluation, gathering data, setting goals and monitoring impact).	11.2 Activate ethical evaluation skills (e.g. through a project case study) and identify markers of impact and appropriate systems for their measurement (e.g. lifecycle evaluation and assessment LCA), and critically reflect on the data you gather.	11.3 Demonstrate how environmental goals and markers of systemic change have been identified and measured, and evidence how insights generated through data analysis have informed an iterative design process.	11.4 Deepen your ability to hold complexity and think in longer time frames by stepping back from a design project to evaluate impact holistically, considering required trade-offs, unintended consequences and long-term (intergenerational) time horizons.

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