

# Master’s in Sustainable Development 2024 - 2026

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR SUMMER RESIDENCY IN VERMONT

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## Welcome

Welcome to SIT's Master's degree program in Sustainable Development Practice! This document gives you a brief overview of some of the program components. Please feel free to contact program Chair, Dr. Aly Dagang at [aly.dagang@sit.edu](mailto:aly.dagang@sit.edu) for any additional information you need.

## Faculty

My name is Aly Dagang, and I have been involved in development and sustainable development research and education for twenty-five years. My work has focused on small community organizations and smallholder farmer groups as catalysts for community transformation and education. As an educator, I have spent the last 20 years preparing and guiding students in becoming field researchers of human livelihood systems as well as natural ecosystems. As a practitioner, I am committed to community-led pathways of development through education, creation, organization, and action.

Our course curriculum is diverse in its offerings, which provides us the wonderful opportunity to integrate practitioners, professors, and researchers from varied backgrounds and specialties as part of our faculty. SIT faculty live and work on every continent and specialize in a range of fields affording students a unique opportunity to build connections and expand their professional networks during their degree program. I strongly encourage students to take advantage of this unmatched opportunity found at SIT.

## Learning Philosophy & Program Goals

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Robert Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by scholars such as Dewey, Piaget, and Lewin. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that expands beyond formal curricula and that involves both content (what you learn) and process (how you learn). Upon completion of the program, students will have demonstrated the following outcomes:

### KNOWLEDGE

1. Articulate how historical social, economic, political, and colonial conditions and contexts have shaped development in diverse parts of the world;
2. Understand and identify the forces that drive community development disparities and discourse as they relate to power, inequality, and well-being;
3. Evidence a critical understanding of current and emerging development theories and their applications;
4. Distinguish and elucidate the roles played by diverse actors in development, including communities, resistance movements, organizations, governments, multinational organizations, and financial institutions and their transformations in a postcolonial context;
5. Define and articulate current challenges to sustainability and identify and apply approaches to formulate relevant solutions.

## SKILLS

1. Apply leadership and management skills to positively advance change and organizational endeavors;
2. Plan and manage productive community, sustainability, and development programs and projects (including design, planning, implementation, staffing, budgeting, troubleshooting, cohesion, and project integrity);
3. Design and lead effective policy advocacy and social change campaigns;
4. Create and implement robust monitoring and evaluation programs;
5. Write competitive grant proposals and fundraising initiatives to create community development projects, strengthen organizations, and drive similar initiatives;
6. Apply methods of scientific inquiry, evaluate research question viability, produce an ethically sound research proposal, and conduct successful field research.

## APPROACHES

1. Promote and advance community rights, social justice, sustainability, and equality;
2. Prioritize and value inclusivity and cultural sensitivity;
3. Uphold high ethical standards and equity in all aspects of one's professional work.

To achieve these outcomes, students will participate in a wide variety of learning experiences (e.g., readings, lectures, discussions with professors in classes and with local experts, research, visits to local sites of practice) and opportunities for reflection (e.g., in-class discussions, preparing projects and presentations, writing papers). Your learning also will benefit from the vast diversity of cultural backgrounds, training, and teaching styles of your faculty. Please note that as an accredited institution, all SIT courses are required to meet minimum regulations regarding the earning of graduate credit. Thus, over the course of the semester, students will spend approximately a total of 45 hours (including class time, group work, assignment preparation, readings, and other associated coursework) for each credit earned.

## Course of Study

Students will complete a degree sequence of 36 credits in six semesters of part-time study. Courses include the following:

### SEMESTER 1

SDIS-5220 Policy Advocacy and Social Change 3 credits

SDIS-5111 Human Flourishing in the Anthropocene: From Development to Regeneration 3 credits

### SEMESTER 2

SDIS-5105 Program Planning and Management 3 credits

SDIS-5350 Leadership, Community Organizing, and Coalition Building 3 credits

SDIS-5216 Community Development and Social Change (field course in Nepal) or Elective (online or field) 1 credit

### SEMESTER 3

SDIS-5510 Practitioner Inquiry 3 credits

SDIS-5106 Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning 3 credits

## **SEMESTER 4**

MGMT-5128 Grant Writing and Fundraising or Elective (online or field) 2 credits

SDIS-5416 Effective Communication for Change 2 credits

SDIS-5330 Agroecology and Food Systems (field course in Oaxaca, Mexico) 1 credit

## **SEMESTER 5**

SDIS-5530 Capstone Proposal 1 credit

SDIS-5525 Global Virtual Practicum in Sustainable Development 3 credits

SDIS-5210 Economics for Sustainable Development and Regeneration 3 credits

## **SEMESTER 6**

SDIS-5375 Special Topics in Sustainable Natural Resource Management 2 credits

SDIS-6702 Capstone Paper 2 credits

MPIM-6709 Capstone Presentation and Seminar 1 credit

## **Capstone**

Carried out during the second year of the program, the capstone is a four-part experience that includes project proposal development, research, paper preparation, and oral presentation. Upon completion of their coursework, students demonstrate, assess, and synthesize their learning through the preparation of a capstone. Preparing for, researching, and writing the capstone paper takes students deeply into a specific topic of their interest, where they integrate theory and practice in written and oral form. Students begin honing their capstone topic early in the second year when they develop their capstone proposal. At the end of the fifth semester and into the sixth semester, students conduct their research and develop their capstone paper and presentation. Throughout each phase of the process, students are guided by their capstone adviser.

## **Advising**

During the two years of the program, students work with an academic adviser. Your adviser will guide you through your academic experience, be available to you to answer your questions, and serve as a general reference. During your first year, your adviser will be assigned to you. However, during your second year, when you have honed your capstone topic, you can choose an advisor who specializes in the topic of your choice. You will learn who your first-year adviser is during orientation and will have the chance to set up a one-on-one advising session with them early in the semester.

## **SIT Library Services, SIT Writing Center & Career Services**

As an SIT student, you have access to an array of services. The SIT library and librarian services are outstanding resources for you to explore early in your graduate career and take advantage of throughout your academic experience. You have full access to the library's holdings as well as to services like inter-library-loan which allows you to request resources from other libraries at no cost. John Levin, the SIT librarian, is always glad to help students. You also have access to the SIT Writing

Center. Maria at the Writing Center supports students in improving and honing their writing skills. This is another great service to take advantage of. It behooves just about everyone to work on and improve their writing skills. In Career Services, students can find support with improving their resumes, finetuning their job searches, and can also receive guidance on appropriate career paths. Graduate students can also access SIT's mental health services through the office of Student Health, Safety, and Well-being.

## Canvas, WEBEX & SIT Email

All online courses are managed through the Canvas learning platform. If you are new to Canvas, it will be handy for you to watch a few tutorials to get ready to use the system before your classes begin. SIT synchronous classes are held on Webex (not Zoom). You may want to download the Webex phone and computer apps prior to beginning your classes as well. Both Canvas and Webex are accessed through your SIT email. After you are registered, you should receive an email from SIT's IT department with your login information. After you log into your SIT email account for the first time, you will find an email from the SIT library with information about how to log into the library and into Canvas.