

TEAM PROJECT – VIRTUALLY SUSTAINABLE?

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call to action in the face of global poverty and the impact of climate change on our planet. Seventeen goals were agreed by all member states in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We have nine years left to achieve success and secure the future of humanity on Earth.

The United Nations call follows a Warning to Humanity issued by the Union of Concerned Scientists as long ago as 1992. They 'feared that humanity was pushing Earth's ecosystems beyond their capacities to support the web of life'. Five years ago the warning was updated as 15,000 scientists from around the world published World Scientists' Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice.

Virtual reality (VR) has been in development since the last century but the coronavirus pandemic with its attendant public lockdowns and social distancing has resulted in a rapid growth in virtual engagement as reported in Forbes Magazine and on MSN recently. This, in turn, has led to significant development in the supporting technology.

Second Life was one of the first and remains one of the most successful platforms in the social and community development arena that also has significant educational and academic engagement. As an immersive environment with a functioning economy, creative building tools and a large active population it appears to be a self-sustaining world. According to the online magazine, Mic, residents have 'full Second Life lives, filled with many of the same hobbies and activities one might enjoy in their first life'.

The platform is particularly relevant for online collaboration because it supports persistent chat, offline email, text chat, voice chat, group versus subgroup chat isolation, virtual to real world currency exchange (a precursor to bitcoin), inworld collaborative three dimensional build, three dimensional avatar self-representation and interaction, and three dimensional environment immersion.

Second Life can be seen as a mirror to the real world, or an extension of the world. Does this virtual environment have a responsibility to also mirror the demand for sustainable development?

Assuming the answer is a resounding 'Yes!' the question then becomes: how does Second Life measure up in terms of sustainability and responsible practices?

THE BRIEF

Your task is to examine this question in the context of the UN Goals and report on the platform itself, the communities that it supports and the activities of the residents. Identify good practices and shortcomings; recommend possible improvements in operation; and present your conclusions. In researching this project draw on examples from your own culture, or the culture in which you are now residing. Compare this to what you observe in Second Life.

In short, your presentation should answer the question:

How does Second Life measure up in terms of sustainability and responsible practices?

You will be assigned to a team to work on the project. Each team will be assigned one of the following three key topics: Economy, Society, or Environment and you will attempt to answer the question in the context of the sub topics listed for each theme below.

During the final class, at the end of the semester, each team will make a presentation in an entertaining, informative and lively manner, live in Second Life. The presentation should be no shorter than five minutes and no longer than ten minutes. You are encouraged to use visual, audio or any other aids to support the presentation during which each member of the team must take part.

Here are the three key topics, with the sub themes for each:

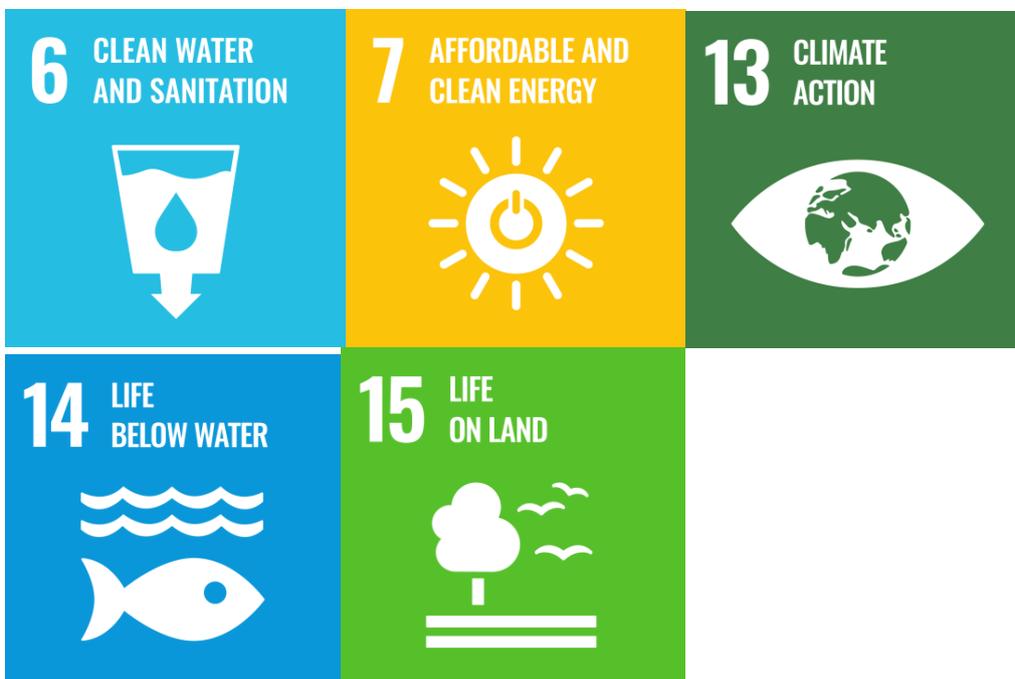
Economy



Society



Environment



All teams will also address the following sub topics:



DELIVERABLES

1. Following the dress rehearsal of presentations write a post to your blog describing your contribution to the project with particular reference to the assessment criteria.
2. Participation in the presentation of your Team Project.
3. Following the Team Project presentations write a post to your blog reflecting on your contribution to the presentation, the reaction from the audience and the overall success (or otherwise) of your group work.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

It is important that you read and understand the Assessment Rubric (you will receive a copy from your lecturer in class) given for this assignment so that you understand the basis on which the assessment will be made. There are 6 assessment criteria in total. Each member of your group will receive

the same mark for the first 2 criteria, For the other 4 criteria you will receive an individual mark.

Group Mark:

1. Communication with the audience: establishing a connection with the audience to deliver a coherent presentation.
2. Content: addressing the theme of the brief coherently.

Individual mark

3. Tools for Collaboration: selection of appropriate tools for group planning and effective use of the tools.
4. Teamwork: contribution to the team and demonstration of understanding of team dynamics.
5. Blog Reports: ability to describe activity coherently, reflect on experience and present a critical evaluation of the process of developing the project, citing appropriate references.
6. Quality of Presentation: individual contribution to the presentation of the project.

SCHEDULE

19 Oct: Briefing and introduction to team work by academic staff.

23 Nov: Full dress rehearsal of presentations by student groups.

07 Dec: Team Project presentations by student groups.

14 Dec: Final date for submission of blog posts describing your contribution to the project.

READING LIST

UN Sustainable Development Agenda: 17 Goals for People, for Planet
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>

The Seventeen UN Goals

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

World Scientists' Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice

<https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/67/12/1026/4605229>

COVID-19 Has Brought the World 50 Years into the Future - Where We all Live Virtually (Forbes Magazine article)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/raufarif/2020/05/11/covid-19-has-brought-the-world-50-years-into-the-future-where-we-all-live-virtually/>

'Metaverse' Being Fuelled by COVID-19 Pandemic as Players Embrace Virtual Worlds (Newsweek Magazine article)

<https://www.newsweek.com/min-liang-tan-razer-metaverse-covid19-coronavirus-pandemic-gaming-fortnite-1528278>

Top Ten Virtual Reality Worlds for Adults

<https://www.streamscheme.com/top-ten-virtual-worlds-for-adults/>

Who's Still on 'Second Life' in 2020 (Mic article)

<https://www.mic.com/impact/second-life-still-has-dedicated-users-in-2020-heres-what-keeps-them-sticking-around-18693758>

