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Design for Sustainability



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First steps for Organising
an Ecovillage Design Education Course



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Gaia Education
Ecovillage
Design Education
Programme



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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to help you understand the process for applying for Gaia Education Certification of your EDE course. Certification assures that the courses use the EDE curriculum correctly and adhere to the highest possible standards of quality, professionalism, and participation. The fact that you are reading this guide means that your site and organisation are considering running the Gaia Education Ecovillage Design Education course. This guide will help achieve just that!

Hopefully, the design of your EDE will have already begun and most likely have seen a number of evolutions in scheduling and flow plan. The purpose of this document is to help you understand important elements integral to the ongoing planning, implementation and evaluation of your course, as well as provide you and your team with important information regarding the application process for certification.

These guidelines, suggestions and recommendations come to you from experienced EDE organisers and faculty around the globe. We hope it is useful and at the same time, encourage you to add what is appropriate to your context and discard that which is not. Enjoy the journey!

There are two other documents that we encourage you to read before the start of your program, which are:

- **Organising an EDE:** include information about staff, equipment & infrastructure, marketing, participants and a 12 month planning count down.
- **Additional information for organisers:** enrolment questionnaire, selection process, certificates, evaluation and reports.

If after reading this document you happen to have more questions please contact certification@gaiaeducation.org.

Gaia Education, Sustainability Education

Gaia Education promotes a holistic approach to education for sustainable development. It develops curricula for sustainable community design drawing from good practices within ecovillages worldwide. It works in partnership with urban and rural communities, universities, ecovillages, government and non-government agencies and the United Nations.

Gaia Education has been, and continues to be, supported financially by Gaia Trust, Denmark. The original project was a pilot program under the auspices of GEN, the Global Ecovillage Network. Since 2009, Gaia Education has been legally incorporated in Scotland as a Company Limited by Guarantee with charitable purposes.



Gaia Education was created over a series of meetings among international ecovillage educators. The group decided to call itself the GEESE - Global Ecovillage Educators for Sustainable Earth - to acknowledge the importance of collaboration and roving leadership as it is exhibited by the migration behaviour of a flock of geese.

The GEESE have been meeting over a series of workshops in order to formulate their trans-disciplinary approach to education for sustainability. The below timeline highlights these meetings.



The members of GEESE have designed the Ecovillage Design Curriculum and compose of the Board and various working groups focused on areas such as product development, outreach, certification, strategy and finance and publishing.

Major achievement and milestones of Gaia Education to date have been:

- **First**, the development of the groundbreaking **Ecovillage Design Education (EDE)** curriculum, which draws from the experience and expertise of a network of some of the most successful ecovillages and community projects across the Earth. The EDE was officially launched in October 2005.
- **Second**, the development of the **Gaia Education Design for Sustainability- GEDS** e-learning programme in partnership with UOC - Open University of Catalonia- in October 2008. The GEDS programme is now available in English and Portuguese.
- **Third**, the launch of the 2-year Online Masters programme: **Integrated Systems Design for Sustainability - Master en Diseño de Sistemas Integrados para la Sostenibilidad** in Spanish, also in partnership with UOC.



What is the Ecovillage Design Education, EDE?

The EDE - Ecovillage Design Education programme, is a 125 hour course, which has been carried out over 190 times in more than 34 countries on six continents since 2005.

The EDE often takes place in sustainable communities where local citizens live what they learn. We call this concept “Living and Learning” - teaching theoretical material illustrated by local fieldwork, exercises, games and a concrete projects. What is special is the ecovillage culture, which has developed over many decades and includes a creative lifestyle full of art, music, celebrations and rituals.

The EDE Programme curriculum has also been developed to be able to be taught to many and varied participants, including:

- **People who want to build and live** in sustainable communities or ecovillages.
- **Urban people in big cities** such as Sao Paulo, Mexico City and Los Angeles
- **City planners and local authorities** wanting to create positive local change
- **University faculty** who want to teach holistic thinking to their students
- **University students** searching for ways to change global destructive trends
- **Indigenous people** and people in the South wanting to circumvent Western-style “development” and fast forward into a localised future.

The EDE Programme curriculum is a free resource for anyone wishing to learn about sustainability principles, and especially for those who might like to teach the EDE in their local area. The curriculum is available for free in 7 languages [here](#).

The EDE Programme is organised as a mandala that we call the sustainability wheel, encompassing what we perceive to be the four primary dimensions of human experience - **Worldview, Ecological, Social, and Economic** aspects. Each of these four dimensions contains five modules - twenty subject areas in total. We expect that the four dimensions will remain constant, while the actual titles and contents of the individual modules may evolve over time. The curriculum is thus a roadmap, designed to be inherently flexible and adaptable to unique local needs and circumstances.

Each dimension has five learning outcomes based on feedback from EDE participants up to date. These are framed in terms of learner’s awareness of the issues, knowledge and understanding of the concepts presented, and performance skills related to the module under each dimension. Course organisers are encouraged to start at any point in the curriculum, and to mix the course schedule so that it is presented as an integral concept of sustainability, instead of separate components disassociated from each other.

The time frame of four weeks is a recommended minimum but not fixed. The material can be condensed into smaller workshops, spread out over a longer period, or distributed in blocks at different times and locations. This inherent flexibility makes the EDE applicable in intentional communities, both rural and urban, as well as in traditional villages, academia, professional circles, and beyond. Please refer to [this page](#) for more information on past programmes.



A certified course indicates that the organisers will follow the spirit of this curriculum by formulating similar learning outcomes, linking them with the core content of the curriculum, and designing experiential activities and evaluation methods that lead to similar goals and certification standards set by the board of Gaia Education. Organisers are free to use the curriculum as it is, or to adjust its contents to local and specific cultural realities of the site where the course is taking place.



Benefits of Gaia's Education EDE certification

While the EDE materials are available for anyone to use non-commercially, most EDE courses are certified by Gaia Education's Certification Committee, which evaluates the quality of the site, the content of the courses, and the proposed faculty.

We believe this process provides numerous benefits:

- **Gaia Education certification** endorsement adds institutional value to courses
- **A certification provides** a forum in which to evolve and improve the curriculum
- **New courses can receive mentoring** by experienced EDE providers in their region
- **It provides opportunities** to collectively reach out to media, organisations & funders

Gaia Education cooperates, as well with the Transition Network in creating joint educational offerings using the EDE curriculum and the Transition Training. Transition Towns represent a new citizen-based social movement in cities and towns aiming to reduce the local ecological footprint and pre-prepare for energy descent.

The Ecovillage Design Education wishes to help restore broken communities, create new communities that are working models of sustainable viability, regenerate damaged ecosystems, rejuvenate cities, renew a sense of optimistic purpose, and, generally, revitalize Life on Earth for ours and the many generations to come.

Besides, the EDE has been an official contribution to the [UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development- UNDESD](#) 2005-2014. It was introduced to the world to complement, correspond with, and assist in setting a standard for the United Nations.

Gaia Education is now a contributor to the [UNESCO Roadmap](#) for implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development. The [UNESCO GAP on ESD](#) is a global effort to generate and scale up action in all levels and areas of education and learning to accelerate progress towards sustainable development.



Two ways to offer the EDE curriculum

There are two ways to be associated with Gaia Education:



“Certified by” Gaia Education: join the worldwide network of sustainability designers by offering a certified EDE.



“Inspired by” Gaia Education: create your own education for sustainability programme and get inspired by the EDE. You can also offer an abridged version of the EDE programme to test the material in your region and country. Communicate your program to certification@gaiaeducation.org and request the **“Inspired by”** Gaia Education logo.

If the choice is to be **“Certified by”** Gaia Education the EDE must meet the following criteria:

- A minimum of 125 contact hours (e.g. 20 course days; 6.25 hours/day)
- A strong intention to cover all 20 modules within each of the four dimensions
- A minimum of 15 hours devoted to holistic and detailed design processes
- A skilled team of educators with sufficient knowledge and experience and at least one who has completed an EDE
- An appropriate venue (ideally an ecovillage or a sustainability research or demonstration center)
- A commitment to complete and submit course evaluations and reports



Applying for EDE Course Certification

Please download and carefully read the documents “**Organising a EDE programme**” and “**EDE curriculum**”, available in [our web page](#), for further information on the requirements for an EDE program.

These are the periods for certification application, therefore the applications received:

- Between January 1st and April 30th will be reviewed by June 30th.
- Between May 1st and August 31st will be reviewed by October 31st.
- Between September 1st and December 31st will be reviewed by February 28th.

Summary list of criteria for Certification

- **Include a minimum of 125 contact hours** (e.g. 20 course days; 6.25 hours/day average). Hours can be distributed over time.
- **A strong intention to cover all 5 modules** within each of the four dimensions for a total of 16 to 20 modules. Applications will be scrutinized closely for maximum hands-on skills learning, and design components.
- **A minimum of 15 hours devoted to holistic and detailed design**, ending in a small-group project presentation (3-5 participants per group).
- **Demonstrate having a skilled team of educators** with sufficient knowledge and experience, and at least one who has completed an EDE. If possible, at least one expert in each dimension, one person with actual EV design experience, and one person who has lived and/or contributed in the everyday functions of a sustainable community project for an extended time.
- **A reasonable gender balance** among primary instructors (not less than 3:1).
- **A site, location, or offsite field excursions** that provide opportunity for significant hands-on observation and holistic experience of real-life solutions, activities and working demonstrations of all four dimensions.
- **Adequate accommodations.** Ideally no more than 3 students per room if staying longer than 1 week at a time.



- **Dedicated meeting/instruction spaces** with adequate room and presentation materials.
- **Ideally, consistent and reliable Internet** access within reasonable distance for everyone.
- **No significant risks** for students' health and safety.
- **Agreement to ALL course commitments**, including evaluations and final report for web posting within 90 days of completion.

Required Materials for First Time Certification

- **Complete and submit the [online certification](#) application** or download the paper application, [found here](#), and send it to certification@gaiaeducation.org
- **Send the following supporting materials to certification@gaiaeducation.org.** Certification applications will only be accepted if ALL the following materials are received by the application deadline:
- **Anticipated daily schedule of course** including a breakdown of hours within each of the 4 dimensions and for design work; and time allocated for orientation, regular reflections and evaluation.
- **One-page resumes** for each primary instructor with completed EDEs highlighted.
- **A draft of the final program** evaluation form.
- **Other materials** (e.g. brochures, posters, institutional leaflets of the host site) you have available about this course.
- **One high-resolution digital image** and brief description (60 words max) of the host site.
- **A receipt of payment of the £ 200 GBP application fee [via PayPal](#)** with the name of your organisation and date of the EDE in the "Instructions from Buyer" field.

The certification process will go a lot smoother if all these documents are submitted before the **certification-round deadline**. This should be done six months before your scheduled starting date.



Required Materials for Re-Certification

Note: Re-Certification is granted only to sites that have submitted a previous course report in good standing, demonstrating the learned lessons by the organizers, and the strengths of the program.

- Complete and submit the [online re-certification](#) application or download the paper application, [found here](#), and send it to certification@gaiaeducation.org
- Report of last EDE course within the past three years.
- Any instructors' bios updates.
- Daily schedule of your EDE program.
- A receipt of payment of the £100 GBP application [fee via PayPal](#) with the name of your organisation and date of the EDE in the "Instructions from Buyer" field.
- Pdf documents of brochures, posters, institutional leaflets of the host site, etc.

Once your program has been certified

Once you have applied and obtained the certification you will be receiving the "certification letter pack" that includes: logo's, certification letter, certificate and the documents: "Additional information for organizers" and the EDE curriculum. Please be sure to read these last two documents as they contain vital information for your program.



First Steps: Organising and Planning Your EDE

With the preliminary planning of your EDE underway and certification obtained, it is now time to turn your team's dreams and visioning into reality! Initially, this may involve identifying a project co-ordinator and members of the host team, putting together a project plan and then planning and organising the road ahead.

It is very important that the host team is well prepared in advance in order to ensure a greater success of the programme. The below list of tasks and responsibilities will serve as a guideline to this process.

Logistics

- Project co-ordination and management
- Communications
- Integrating learnings from previous courses
- Food, accommodation, travel
- Venues, equipment, stationary, supplies

Staff

- Organising team, facilitators, faculty
- Staff arrangements, agendas, sessions
- Supervision and meetings

Marketing and Promotion

- Brochures, marketing e/mails, networking

Curriculum and Schedule

- Programme, complementary topics
- High level schedule, day to day schedule

Finances

- Budgets, bursaries/scholarships
- Funding and fund raising

Participants

- Enrolment and selections process
- Certification and evaluation



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