

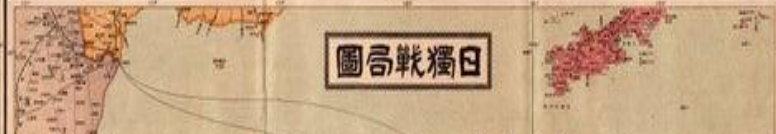
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WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH



SDD WAGENINGEN

**Selective Master Track 'Sustainable
Development Diplomacy' (SDD)**

2026-2028

Selective Master Track

‘Sustainable Development Diplomacy’ (SDD) 2026-2028

- MCL: MSc Climate Studies
(Specialization Climate, Society and Economics)
- MES: MSc Environmental Sciences
(Major Environmental Policy)
- MFN: MSc Forest and Nature Conservation
(Specialization Policy and Society)
- MID: MSc International Development Studies
(Specialization Politics and Governance of
Development)

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brochure*



Introduction

Sustainable Development Diplomacy (SDD) is a special, selective track within the master programs Climate Studies (MCL, Specialization Climate, Society and Economics), Environmental Sciences (MES, Major Environmental Policy), Forest and Nature Conservation (MFN, Specialization Policy & Society) and International Development Studies (MID, Specialization Politics & Governance of Development) of Wageningen University & Research (WUR), the Netherlands. The purpose of the track is to provide students – who will be future academics, practitioners, and leaders in the public and private sector – a combination of theory and practice of (inter)national diplomacy in the field of sustainable development. This track should thus allow SDD students to better understand, analyse and tackle the world's most challenging sustainability problems.

Background

Rationales for this SDD master track are threefold: pragmatic, normative and academic. First, many alumni of Wageningen University & Research continue their careers at international organisations, like the EU or the UN, or international organisations such as IUCN or WWF. Others become involved – for example as mediators – with sustainability initiatives or conflicts at local levels all over the world. Yet they are neither educated in theories of diplomacy and negotiations nor trained in related skills such as leadership so far. This master track aims at filling this gap (pragmatic rationale).

Second, current global challenges – climate change, deforestation, desertification, food security, biodiversity loss, health, and inequality, among others– are challenging the world's organizational and institutional capacity to address them. In fact, we appear to be confronted today not with a single crisis, but with multiple ones. The international community has agreed, since the Rio Summit in 1992, that sustainable development should be the road to navigate out of these crises. This approach implies both intra- and intergenerational equity as well as the maintenance of the carrying capacity of the earth. Yet governments alone are not capable of engaging in appropriate action and creating the institutions of governance that are required to move towards these objectives. New ways of diplomacy and governance seem therefore needed to attain these goals. Such diplomacy and governance should, according to some scholars, be much more inclusive of stakeholders, more evidence-based, more cross-sectoral, integrative rather than distributive, and addressing the 'real' root causes of sustainability issues (normative rationale).

Third, new types of diplomacy that emerge are referred to in multiple terms, including the ‘new’ diplomacy, ‘inclusive’ diplomacy, ‘informal’ diplomacy or ‘guerrilla’ diplomacy. These terms refer to other ways of doing (inter)national negotiations than through the traditional, nation state, foreign affairs and international security-oriented diplomacy. Some authors claim that this ‘new’ diplomacy is very different from the traditional one. It is multi-actor (including non-state actors in negotiations), multi-level (local issues and actors do appear at international negotiation tables, just as global issues and actors do), multi- rule (soft law is currently considered as relevant as hard law) and multi-sector (going beyond security issues and single issues, an example being sustainable development). Indeed, non-state actors today play relevant roles in international diplomacy (think about environmental NGOs and their impact on international environmental treaties), whereas private or public-private instruments to address sustainability issues are increasingly mainstream (e.g. certification schemes for sustainable products, payment for ecosystem services, REDD+, etc.). However, the nature of this ‘new’ diplomacy is neither well understood nor are its claims rigorously tested. Academic research and teaching are therefore needed (academic rationale).

Target group, application and selection

The track is selective and eligible for a limited number of MCL, MES, MFN and MID students, who express their interest in, motivation for, and commitment to the topic of SDD, and already exhibit some basic knowledge and skills in this field. All students of these master programs are invited to apply, but their motivation and background are checked during a selection procedure for which they have to write a motivation letter, submit an extended CV and – if possible – submit one (max) recommendation letter (see Annex I of this brochure for the details of the selection procedure). The most promising candidates will be invited for a short interview after which the final group of students for the SDD track will be selected.

This year, the dates in the selection procedure are:

- Wednesday September 2, 12:50, Information meeting at Orion B4044-4045
- **Friday September 18, 23.59 pm: Application deadline. Send application to jelle.behagel@wur.nl**
- Thursday 24 and Friday 25 September: interviews
- Friday September 25: final selection

Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes of the SDD track fit in the regular master programs (see Study Handbook Wageningen University & Research, 2025-2026). Within this context, we distinguish specific learning outcomes for the SDD track, divided in three sections: content, skills and competencies.

SDD graduates are expected to be able to:

Content:

1. Understand (inter)national political, policy and governance processes by appropriate knowledge of social science theories.
2. Demonstrate thorough knowledge and understanding of sustainable development, both from developmental and environmental perspectives.
3. Demonstrate in-depth insights into the nature of (inter)national diplomacy and negotiation processes.



Skills:

4. Demonstrate negotiation skills and diplomatic attitudes.
5. Formulate a research proposal at master level to analyse (inter)national or local SDD processes scientifically, and report on that.

Competencies:

6. Handle intercultural aspects of negotiations and diplomacy.
7. Clearly present, both orally and in writing, policy advice, mutual gains options, and (intermediate) agreements in negotiations and diplomacy.
8. Reflect on ethical aspects of sustainability, diplomacy and negotiation processes.

SDD track elements

As said, the track is embedded in four master programs (MCL, MES, MFN, MID). For each one, a specific SDD trajectory is developed, sharing a number of elements. The specific master trajectories are presented in Annex II at the end of this brochure, whereas the common SDD elements are:

1. International Environmental Policy Consultancy (ENP-60312; 12 ECTS; Master year M1, Period P2; substitutes regular Academic Consultancy Training and Modular Skills Trainings; selective course, eligible for SDD students only, unless the number of SDD students allow others to be selected).
2. Introduction to Sustainable Development Diplomacy (FNP-40802; 2 ECTS, M1, P4-5; selective course)
3. Advanced International Environmental Policy and Diplomacy (ENP-39306; 6 ECTS; M1, P6).
4. Internships (to be self-organized by SDD students but facilitated by SDD-network; 24 ECTS; M2, P1-2 or Summer Period between M1 and M2 + M2, P 1.).
5. SDD Major Thesis at WUR on a topic that is approved by the SDD-coordinator (for MFN with the chair group Forest and Nature Conservation Policy, FNP, 36 ECTS; for MCL and MES with the chair group Environmental Policy, ENP, 36 ECTS; and for MID with the chair group Environmental Policy, ENP, or with the chair group Public Administration and Policy, PAP, or with the chair group Sociology of Development and Change, SDC, 36 ECTS; M2, P 3-6). Doing your thesis with another chair group than the groups listed here is possible if your MSc programme allows it and the thesis fits the topic of SDD.

Planning

The track is announced in the Study handbook. The first specific SDD elements in the master programs start in Period 2 (International Environmental Policy Consultancy). Therefore, in Period 1, an information meeting is organised in week 1, after which the application procedure immediately starts. If you consider participating in SDD, you can best contact the study advisor of your MSc program at the earliest possible moment. Students who will pass the final MSc examination will receive a specific SDD master track certificate, besides their regular master program diploma.

Costs

No extra fees for SDD are charged. As with the ‘regular’ MSc programs, the SDD master track program does come with additional costs for students, for example if one conducts an internship at the United Nations in New York and a master thesis research project in South Africa. Moreover, the Fletcher school in Boston does sometimes offer one or two internships for Wageningen SDD students in the first semester of each academic year. However, no specific

SDD scholarships are available. Students should be willing and able to finance the track or find scholarships themselves.

SDD community

A special feature of the track is that it is connected to the ‘SDD Community’, a network of SDD students and alumni. This community organizes events (master classes, drinks & bites, etc.), builds and maintains networks (among students, alumni and staff), publishes events and a website, and monitors and discusses the quality of the SDD track with relevant staff at WUR. The SDD community provides students with a network of people in the field of SDD and gives them the opportunity to already contribute to this network during their studies.

Further information

1. Master programs’ study advisors (see WUR Study Handbook for the names of the advisors, or consult the websites indicated below).
2. Thesis and internship coordinators of the respective chair groups (ENP for MCL and MES students; FNP for MFN students; and ENP or PAP or SDC for MID students; see WUR Study Handbook for the names of the coordinators).
3. SDD Track coordinator: Dr Jelle Behagel, Associate Professor at the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group, Wageningen University & Research, the Netherlands, jelle.behagel@wur.nl.
4. Website of SDD at WUR ([Education of Forest and Nature Conservation Policy | WUR](#) – scroll down to bottom of the page)

Important notice

The SDD coordinator - Dr Behagel - does not substitute for any of the study advisors, thesis/internship coordinators or master program directors of the four MSc programmes. He only coordinates the overall track. For specific issues concerning master program, internship, thesis, etc., students have to consult the correct study advisors of master programs or the correct coordinators within chair groups. Every SDD student (like any WUR student) should ensure that he/she talks with the coordinator of the correct chair group ample time before he/she starts with either an internship or a thesis project.

Annex I: SDD selection procedure

Target group

All students of master programs Climate Studies (MCL, Specialization Climate, Society and Economics), Environmental Sciences (MES, Major Environmental Policy), Forest and Nature Conservation (MFN, Specialization Policy & Society) and International Development Studies (MID, Specialization Politics & Governance of Development) are invited to apply. Do note that the aim is to be a selective, high-quality track, with the best students and with small-scale intensive teaching modes, where possible. The track is meant for motivated and engaged students with strong academic and analytical skills, who have an interest in diplomacy and sustainable development.

Application requirements

Each student that wants to apply needs to send in the following documents:

- Motivation letter
- Extended CV
- Transcript of BSc courses and grades
- If possible, one (max) recommendation letter

First selection: motivation and grades

A group of about sixteen to twenty-four students is allowed access to SDD, fairly divided over the four master programs. Even though diversity is important, skills and competences are the major criteria for selection. A group of applicants will be selected for an interview, based on the application documents, with special attention for motivation and the BSc thesis topic and grade.

Second selection round: interviews

The most promising applicants will be invited for a short interview, consisting of the SDD coordinator and one SDD student from previous generations.

Final selection

Based on the interviews, motivation, CV and grades, sixteen to twenty-four students (depending on number of application and quality of applications) are selected for the SDD track.

Timeline

- Wednesday September 2, 12:50, Information meeting at Orion B4044-4045
- **Friday September 18, 23.59 pm: Application deadline. Send application to jelle.behagel@wur.nl**
- Thursday 24 and Friday 25 September: interviews
- Friday September 25: final selection

Important notice about ACT projects:

If you MSc-programme requires you to do an ACT-course in period 2, you will need to register for an ACT project before you know whether you will be selected for the SDD-track or not.

Please include the scenario that you will not be selected for SDD and hence make sure you pre-register for your ACT project in time.

ANNEX II: MSc Programmes

SDD Track MCL	Period 1 (Sep-Oct)	Period 2 (Nov-Dec)	Period 3 (Jan)	Period 4 (Feb)	Period 5 (March-April)	Period 6 (May-June)						
Master year 1 / morning	Climate Change studies topics and approaches (WSG20306)	International Environmental Policy Consultancy (ENP-60312)	Interviews & Questionnaires: Design and Analysis (YRM31306). OR other course in consultation and agreement with study adviser	ENP30306 International Environmental Policy	Optional course in consultation and agreement with study adviser)	Optional course in consultation and agreement with study adviser	Advanced International Environmental Policy and Diplomacy (ENP- 39306)					
Master year 1 / afternoon	Principles of Earth and Ecosystem Science (ESS-21306) OR Principles of Climate Change Economics and Policy (ENR-22806)				Optional course in consultation and agreement with study adviser							
Introduction to Sustainable Development Diplomacy (FNP-40802) (Period 4 & 5)												
Master year 2	Internship (24 credits) at: Any relevant organization (to be approved by SDD coordination)				SDD major thesis at WU (ENP-80436)							

Grey cells: SDD track program

SDD Track MES [1]	Period 1 (Sep-Oct)	Period 2 (Nov-Dec)	Period 3 (Jan)	Period 4 (Feb)	Period 5 (March-April)	Period 6 (May-June)	
Master year 1 / morning	Research methods in environmental sciences (YRM-20306) OR other course in consultation and agreement with study adviser	International Environmental Policy Consultancy (ENP60312) (ACT)	Interviews & Questionnaires: Design and Analysis (YRM31306). OR other course in consultation and agreement with study adviser	Restricted optional: one of the following 2 courses - ENP30306 International Environmental Policy (period 4), or - ENP33306 Environment and Development (period 5 in the morning)	Restricted optional: one of the following 2 courses - ENP30306 International Environmental Policy (period 4), or ENP33306 Environment and Development (period 5 in the morning)	Optional course in consultation and agreement with study adviser	Advanced International Environmental Policy and Diplomacy (ENP-39306)
Master year 1 / afternoon	Principles of Environmental Sciences (ESA-20806) OR other course in consultation and agreement with study adviser				Environmental Quality and Governance (ENP-35806)		
Introduction to Sustainable Development Diplomacy (FNP-40802) (Period 4 & 5)							
Master year 2	Internship (24 credits) at: Any relevant organization (to be approved by SDD coordination)		SDD major thesis at WU (ENP-80436)				

Grey cells: SDD track program

SDD Track MFN (within Spec. A)	Period 1 (Sep-Oct)	Period 2 (Nov-Dec)	Period 3 (Jan)	Period 4 (Feb)	Period 5 (March-April)	Period 6 (May-June)	
Master year 1 / morning	Research methods in environmental sciences (YRM-20306) OR other course in consultation and agreement with study adviser	International Environmental Policy Consultancy (ENP-60312)	Communities, conservation and development (FNP-31306)	Social and political theory for forest and nature conservation research (FNP- 31806)	Optional course in consultation and agreement with study adviser	Methodology for Field research in the social sciences (SDC- 33306)	Advanced International Environmental Policy and Diplomacy (ENP- 39306)
Master year 1 / afternoon	Trends in forest and nature conservation (REG-31306) OR other course in consultation and agreement with study adviser [3]				Optional course in consultation and agreement with study adviser		
Introduction to Sustainable Development Diplomacy (FNP-40802) (Period 4 & 5)							
Master year 2	Internship (FNP-70424) at: Any relevant organization (to be approved by SDD coordination)				SDD major thesis at WUR (FNP-80436)		

Grey cells: SDD track program

SDD Track MID	Period 1 (Sep-Oct)	Period 2 (Nov-Dec)	Period 3 (Jan)	Period 4 (Feb)	Period 5 (March-April)	Period 6 (May-June) (week 37-40) + (week 41-44)		July-August
Master year 1 / morning	Perspectives and Themes in International Development Studies (SDC-36306)	International Environmental Policy Consultancy (ENP-60312)	Politics, Policy Making and Accountability in International Arenas for Development (PAP-31306)	Critical Reflection on Research in International Development Practice (CPT-36806)	Optional course in consultation and agreement with study adviser (unless you need to do SDC-33306) [1]	If required by study advisor: Methodology for Field Research in the Social Sciences (SDC-33306) [1]	Advanced International Environmental Policy and Diplomacy (ENP-39306)	Internship at any relevant organization (to be facilitated and approved by SDD coordination) (ENP-70424 or PAP-70324)
Master year 1 / afternoon	Optional course in consultation and agreement with study adviser [1]				Politics of Development: State, Property and Resistance (SDC-35806)			
					Introduction to Sustainable Development Diplomacy (FNP-40802) (Period 4 & 5)			
Master year 2	Internship at any relevant organization (to be approved by SDD coordination) (ENP-70424 or PAP-70324)	Work on MSc Thesis research proposal	SDD Thesis at WUR (ENP-80436 or PAP-80336 or SDC-80436)					

Grey cells: SDD track program

[1] Dependent on your educational background, the study advisor can determine that certain courses are obligatory for a student.