

Assessment Task: Sustainable Tourism Action Plan

Overview

In this assessment, students work in small teams as junior sustainable tourism consultants. They will develop a Sustainable Tourism Action Plan for one real tourism or hospitality setting in Vietnam or Southeast Asia. Their task is to identify one focused sustainability problem, analyse why it matters, and propose practical management actions that could improve the destination, business, attraction, or tourism experience.

The aim is not to solve every issue facing a destination. Instead, students should show that they can use academic concepts, SDG thinking, stakeholder analysis, evidence, and practical sustainability principles to analyse one problem clearly, compare possible responses, and prioritise management decisions under real-world constraints.

The analysis should draw on the four themes covered in the modules:

- destination management, destination health, indicators, and stakeholder trade-offs
- local community benefit, socioeconomic impact, equity, power, and inclusive participation
- cultural heritage, living heritage, sense of place, community authority, and visitor responsibility
- resource stewardship, climate adaptation, environmental conservation, monitoring, and management accountability

Student Role

Students should approach the task as a junior advisory team preparing recommendations for a realistic client or stakeholder group. This might be a destination management organisation, tourism board, hotel or resort operator, cultural attraction, NGO, local authority, community tourism group, or sustainability team.

In this role, students are expected to:

- analyse the sustainability problem from more than one stakeholder perspective
- use academic concepts to explain the issue rather than relying only on opinion
- consider community wellbeing, cultural integrity, environmental limits, and business viability together
- recommend actions that are realistic for the setting and actor involved
- prioritise one action for implementation in the next year and justify why it should come first
- identify what evidence, data, or stakeholder input would still be needed before implementation

Students should not present themselves as speaking on behalf of a community unless they have direct evidence from that community. Where evidence is limited, they should clearly state what further consultation or data would be needed.

Driving Question

How can tourism or hospitality be managed more effectively to improve destination health, community wellbeing, cultural integrity, and environmental sustainability?

Case Selection

Choose one specific tourism or hospitality setting. Examples include:

- Hoi An ancient town
- Ha Long Bay tourism
- Sa Pa trekking or homestay tourism
- Phu Quoc island tourism
- Da Nang beach tourism
- Hue heritage tourism
- Mekong Delta river tourism
- Lo Lo Chai community-based tourism
- a hotel, resort, cruise, food tour, cultural attraction, national park, event venue, or local tourism experience

The case must be focused. For example, “tourism in Vietnam” is too broad, but “visitor pressure in Hoi An ancient town”, “waste management in Phu Quoc tourism”, “local benefit in Sa Pa homestay tourism”, or “living heritage and visitor behaviour in Lo Lo Chai” would work well. Students must justify why the case is significant from a sustainability perspective. This means explaining:

- why the setting matters as a tourism or hospitality case
- what sustainability problem is visible or emerging
- who is affected by the problem
- why the problem matters now
- which module themes are most relevant to the case
- what evidence suggests the issue deserves attention

Required Sources

Each group must use at least three academic sources from the course readings or other scholarly sources.

Students may also use industry reports, government documents, destination websites, NGO materials, news articles, sustainability standards, or tourism certification frameworks. These are useful for context and evidence, but they do not replace the academic sources.

Sources should be used to explain and evaluate the issue, not simply summarised. Strong reports will connect academic ideas to concrete tourism management decisions.

Final Report Structure

The group report should include the following sections.

1. Case Introduction and Sustainability Significance

Recommended length: 500-700 words

Briefly introduce the tourism or hospitality setting and explain why it is important as a sustainability case. Include:

- where the case is located
- why it matters as a tourism or hospitality setting
- who visits it
- who benefits from it
- who may be negatively affected or overlooked
- why sustainability is important in this case
- why this case is significant enough to require management attention

2. Sustainability Problem

Recommended length: 600-800 words

Identify one main sustainability problem. The problem may relate to overcrowding, weak destination management, unequal community benefit, economic leakage, poor working conditions, cultural commodification, visitor behaviour, pressure on heritage sites, waste, water, energy, emissions, biodiversity loss, climate vulnerability, weak stakeholder coordination, or greenwashing. Include:

- the main sustainability problem
- why the problem is specific and manageable
- which module theme or themes the problem connects to
- what evidence or indicators suggest the problem exists
- why the problem cannot be solved by visitors alone
- which management level is most relevant: business, site, destination, community, or government

3. Academic Concept Application

Recommended length: 700-900 words

Apply two academic concepts from the course readings to explain the problem. At least one concept should come from the module most relevant to the case. Strong reports may connect concepts across two modules. Possible concepts include destination health, stakeholder coordination, community empowerment, pro-poor tourism, leakage, commodification, staged authenticity, living heritage, sense of place, visitor responsibility, tourism footprint, resource stewardship, environmental indicators, climate adaptation, or governance. For each concept, explain:

- what each concept means
- which academic source it comes from
- how it helps explain the case
- how it changes the way the problem should be managed

4. Stakeholder, SDG, and Trade-off Analysis

Recommended length: 700-900 words

Identify the key stakeholders affected by the problem. These may include local residents, workers, tourism businesses, visitors, local government, NGOs, cultural practitioners, accommodation providers, tour operators, transport providers, online platforms, destination marketing organisations, women entrepreneurs, youth, ethnic minority communities, or conservation groups. Explain:

- the key stakeholders affected by the problem
- which stakeholders have the most power or influence
- which stakeholders may be overlooked or underrepresented
- where stakeholder goals may conflict
- three relevant SDGs
- how tourism could support each SDG
- how tourism may currently undermine each SDG
- which stakeholder has responsibility for improving the situation

5. Proposed Action Plan

Recommended length: 900-1,200 words or a structured table with explanation

Propose three practical actions to address the sustainability problem. These should not be vague statements such as “raise awareness” or “be more sustainable” unless the report explains exactly what this would involve. For each action, explain:

- what the action is
- which problem it addresses
- who should lead it
- who benefits from it
- which SDG it supports
- what resources or coordination it requires
- what trade-off or resistance may appear
- how success could be measured

6. Action Prioritisation Decision

Recommended length: 400-600 words

After presenting three possible actions, select the one recommendation that should be implemented first if the destination, business, or stakeholder group could only act on one recommendation in the next year. Explain:

- which one action should be implemented first
- why this action is most urgent or strategic
- why it is more feasible than the other options
- what impact it could realistically have within one year
- what trade-offs come with prioritising it
- what would need to happen before the other two actions could be implemented

7. Implementation Challenges and Governance Needs

Recommended length: 500-700 words

Discuss the main challenges the action plan may face. Students should distinguish between challenges that individual businesses can address and challenges that require destination-level collaboration, community participation, or government intervention. Possible challenges include:

- cost or resource limits
- stakeholder resistance
- visitor expectations
- lack of data
- weak regulation or enforcement
- limited infrastructure
- seasonal tourism patterns
- business pressure
- cultural sensitivity
- environmental limits or climate risk

8. Measurement, Evidence, and Learning Plan

Recommended length: 400-600 words

Explain how the destination, business, or stakeholder group would know whether the prioritised action is working. Include:

- what indicators would show whether the recommended action is working
- what data would need to be collected
- who should collect or review the data
- how stakeholder feedback would be included
- what information is still missing
- what would need to be checked before scaling the action

9. Conclusion

Recommended length: 250-350 words

Conclude by returning to the main problem and explaining how the action plan could improve the tourism or hospitality setting. The conclusion should explain how the recommendations support:

- destination health
- community benefit or wellbeing
- cultural respect or living heritage
- environmental sustainability or resource stewardship

Suggested Action Plan Table

Students may use a table like this to organise their three proposed actions.

Action	Problem addressed	Lead stakeholder	Who benefits?	SDG link	Resources/coordination needed	Trade-off or resistance	Success indicator

Suggested Prioritisation Criteria

When choosing the one action to implement first, students may compare the three actions using the following criteria.

Criterion	Action 1	Action 2	Action 3
Potential sustainability impact	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low
Feasibility within one year	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low
Cost or resource demand	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low
Stakeholder support	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low
Risk or resistance	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low

Evidence/data available	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low
Long-term value	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low	High / Medium / Low

Group Presentation

Each group will deliver a 7-10 minute presentation summarising the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan.

The presentation should include:

- the case and why it matters from a sustainability perspective
- the main sustainability problem
- two academic concepts used
- three stakeholder or SDG insights
- three proposed actions
- the one action the group would prioritise for the next year
- one major implementation challenge
- one way success could be measured
- one piece of evidence or stakeholder input still needed before implementation

Students should present as if they are speaking to a destination management organisation, tourism board, hotel operator, NGO, cultural attraction, community tourism group, or local stakeholder group.

Individual Reflection

Each student submits a 500-700 word reflection responding to the prompt:

What did this project teach you about the complexity of sustainable tourism management?

The reflection should include:

- one idea from the academic readings that shaped your thinking
- one stakeholder perspective you had not fully considered before
- one trade-off you found difficult
- one way your understanding of tourism sustainability changed
- one skill you developed through the project
- what information you would still need before feeling confident that your recommendations would work in practice