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# Finalist's case study

## Keele University Learning & Skills

### The Trojan Mouse of Sustainability: 'Dropping' sustainability into education

#### About the project

##### Summary

At Keele our goal is that all our graduates will have looked at issues through a sustainability lens during their time at Keele, being able to take that 'lens' with them into their lives beyond Keele. Keele's is not a single 'ESD project'

- a Trojan Horse to be wheeled in through the walls of the academy, but rather a 'Trojan Mouse' that tries to infiltrate the student and staff experience through multiple mouse holes, leaving droppings behind that fertilise further sustainability activity. The 'droppings' occur at all levels, including high level strategy; specific sustainability degree programmes for undergraduate and postgraduate students; sustainability elective modules open to all students in the university; bespoke workshops for individual programmes developed in collaboration with a central curriculum support unit; multiple co-curriculum opportunities; and multiple droppings through the staff development mousehole including an ESD consultancy service, integration into compulsory training for new lecturers, workshops delivered for individual programme teams, and online training modules, amongst others. These droppings have provided fertile ground, from which have sprung many new developments driven by programme teams across the Faculties and Schools of the University, helping us move towards our goal.

##### The approach

Keele's ESD activity does not just focus on one flagship project, but tries to infiltrate the student experience through the curriculum and co-curriculum in many different ways. Rather than a single 'Trojan horse', rather a 'trojan mouse' that enters through many different mouseholes, and leaves multiple droppings to fertilise change. Below the different 'mouse holes' and 'droppings' are outlined to show the network of activity covered by this approach to sustainability in Learning and Teaching.

#### Sustainability-specific degree programmes

- Development of a sustainability-focused undergraduate programme (BSc Environment & Sustainability), and MSc programme (Environmental Sustainability and Green Technology) both running since 2009 (~240 students in total). Bringing motivated students together has been instrumental in catalysing student-led change on campus.

#### Sustainability specific-elective modules

- Development of sustainability electives in 'Greening Business: Employability and Sustainability' and 'Global Warming' open to all Level 4 students in the University running since ~2007 (~1100 students in total);



#### Profile

- Higher Education
- 10,000 students (includes full and part time students)
- 2,000 staff
- Rural



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- Development of an elective 'The third sector: making a difference' - in which students gain understanding and experience of the importance that the third sector contributes to communities, locally, nationally and internationally.

## Staff development

- An ESD 'consultancy service' run by the Director of Education for Sustainability (an academic member of staff) and Sustainability Project Officers, allowing one-to-one meetings with staff interested in embedding sustainability, supporting staff by discussing discipline links, accessing relevant resources, and highlighting sustainability work elsewhere (~20 individual meetings);
- A sustainability session as part of the PGCert (Teaching and Learning in Higher Education) undertaken by all new lecturers since ~2011 (~120 staff);
- Development of two online learning modules as part of Keele's online continuing professional development activities aimed at staff ('Introduction to Sustainability' and 'New to ESD');
- Optional sustainability workshops through the Learning and Professional Development Centre since ~2013 (~40 staff);
- Bespoke workshops for programme teams or programme groupings (~75 staff);
- Externally-funded ESD workshops at Keele attended by Keele staff.

## ESD consultancy and curriculum embedding

- The development of bespoke programme workshops with discipline-sustainability links providing the 'content' as part of bespoke skills-development half-day workshops (ie Chemistry and Medicinal Chemistry students learning about the principles of Green Chemistry at first year while developing negotiation skills, and at second year considering sustainability issues with Eco-labelling of products while developing presentation skills; Physiotherapy students practicing their note-taking skills at a mock NHS Sustainable Development Unit conference; Media, Communications and Culture students developing blogging skills through looking at media representations of climate change; Physics, Astrophysics and Politics students have also taken part in similar sustainability-themed skills workshops delivered in collaboration with a central Curriculum Support Unit (~500 students);
- Integration of sustainability as a key theme in two new flagship interdisciplinary degree programmes in Liberal Arts and Natural Sciences (commence September 2016);
- Sustainability sessions delivered to students registered to Study Abroad to critically consider environmental and social impacts of travel (since 2015; ~40 students);
- Integration of sustainability sessions into a pre-session English language course since 2013 (~240 students; ~24 staff) leading to sustainability-focussed work being set by the English language team as part of English language training;
- Sustainability session for Nursing students co-delivered between Nursing and ESD team, plus development of related sustainability resources for future use;
- Midwifery - sustainability-related sessions as part of a professional practice course;
- Development of core 'Sustainable Chemistry' module for single honours chemistry students;



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- University Sustainability 'clients' providing dissertation project ideas for Computer Science students (ie the creation of sustainability-related apps);
- Development of Sustainability-focused discipline electives for example 'Nature, Society and the Past: An Environmental History of the Western World 1800-2000' (History), 'Environmental Ethics' (Politics/Philosophy); 'Sustainable Pharmacy' module
- Since ~2013, sustainability-focused essay assessment for all students undertaking the Social Science Foundation Year (~180 students).

## Partnership with the Students' Union

- Sustainability 'training' of sabbatical officers since 2014;
- Since 2014 the development of Green Student Academic Representatives, trained to consider sustainability issues within their programmes and liaise between staff and students.

## Co-curriculum

- Sustainability-related workshops as part of a university-wide personal development fortnight including a sustainability-themed evening murder mystery;
- Sustainability-related theme as part of annual 'World Festival';
- Engagement with student faith groups around sustainability issues.

The above 'droppings' are in addition to engagement with other sector initiatives (such as Responsible Futures), curriculum development that has occurred independently without specific 'fertilisation', and high-level strategy supporting Education for Sustainability work for instance:

- Since 2012 Sustainability has been one of three key themes running through our 'Distinctive Keele Curriculum' meaning all programmes must engage with sustainability issues. Sustainability has been part of Keele's Graduate Attributes since 2010, now part of the approval process for individual modules.
- 'Embedding environmental sustainability in all that we do' is one of the university's six strategic aims and explicitly includes:

***"Educate our students on environmental issues and provide opportunities for them to put strategies into practice:***

-Provide opportunities for all our students to learn about environmental sustainability and support University initiatives in this area

-In partnership with the Keele Students' Unions, co-ordinate student activities that articulate, demonstrate and implement strategies around sustainability."

## Performance and results

It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of staff and students involved as these figures are not always collected and recorded. Indicative numbers of students and staff engaged in some of the different activities are given above. However, it is often the evaluation from individuals which emphasises the real benefits and impacts of these activities. Evidence of the impact of some of the activities where staff and student evaluations have been collected are given below:

*"The extra-curricular sustainability opportunities are incredible and have given me insight, skills and experience I wouldn't otherwise [have] had"*



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*"I don't feel I can go into a standard job...I feel I have to make a difference somehow and go and do something that's going to benefit someone, somewhere, somehow. Before, I think I would have been happy bumming around and not doing much with my life, but now..."* BSc Environment & Sustainability student

*"Greening Business inspires students to think outside the box and...prepares you to put these ideas into action and gives you the belief that it is possible."* Greening Business student

*"The workshops on sustainability that Zoe has been delivering to key staff in programmes across the university have been truly inspirational"* Learning and Teaching Developer

*"I wasn't interested in sustainability at all before starting and suddenly, now I love it. It's a case of I can see myself doing sustainability within a job and see myself going into a company and suddenly being able to put all my skills into practice and then implementing sustainability within that business"* Greening Business student

*"I didn't believe as an individual I could make a difference but now I know that I can"* Greening Business student

## Further information

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