Date: Wednesday 16th September 2020
Time: 14:00–15:30
Venue: Virtual

MINUTES:
Education for Sustainable Development Topic Support Network Meeting

Attendees:

Eilidh Macphail	Lews Castle College (UHI)
Christine Calder	Dundee and Angus College
Besty King	Learning for Sustainability Scotland
Elena Rivilla-Lutterkort	London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)
Louise Logan	University of Strathclyde
Suzanne Marshall	College Development Network
Severine Monvoisin	Edinburgh College
Scott Thomson	EAUC Scotland
Gwenith Elias	Bangor University
Bethan Wood	University of Glasgow
Rehema White	University of St Andrews

	SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS	ACTIONS
1	**Welcome and Introductions** *Rehema White, Co-Convener, University of St Andrews* Welcome from the chair and a roundup of who everyone was and where they were from.	
2	**What do you feel is the most important thing when teaching ESD this semester?** *Rehema White, University of St Andrews/ESD Co-Convenor* Participants were asked to go onto Mentimeter and write down words or phrases which they felt answered the question. Answers are attached to the minutes email but most popular answer was flexibility/adaptability as everyone is reacting to a changing situation around them. This is relevant for both staff and students as no one is sure of restrictions from one week to the next and all are getting used to a new style of	

	teaching and learning. Some issues will no doubt arise and will need to be overcome as everyone learns new skills.	
3	**Virtual Teaching and Learning** *Eilidh Macphail, Lews Castle College (UHI)* Programme lead for BSc in Sustainable Development which is one of UHI's longest running courses. Has run by distance learning or online learning for 25 years now. Online teaching and learning is broadly split in 3 areas: Pedagogy, Practicalities and Personalities **Pedagogy** We should not expect online teaching to be the same as face to face or try to replicate the same experience. It is a different experience with different issues. At UHI the focus is not on online lectures. Resources are given in advance and students come the online sessions where we talk to students and go through the subject and support their learning. Students have already prepared in advance. This is a flipped classroom approach where students are guided rather than given all the information in a lecture. Really promote collaborative learning, students learn from each other as much as they do from the lecturers. We use both synchronous and asynchronous activities. For example, will have live sessions with polls, breakouts rooms, discussions etc and will have discussion boards, quizzes, surveys, blogs that can be done at another time. There is a timeframe on these and they are linked to assessments as students like to feel they are learning towards something, or learning something with a real purpose. There are great tools however don't get too focused on using tools just for the sake of it. If someone is on a tablet or mobile device these tools can be awkward and make things more difficult. The key thing they are looking for is some engagement and interaction. Making connections and sharing information is the most important. Do encourage more continual assessment in order to ensure that people are keeping up with the content. Don't want people to disengage and continual engagement is one way of minimizing this. Done in quite a	

light touch way such as debates, blogs, student led seminars, timed multiple choice questions etc. No exams are used, everything is based on continual assessment.

Practicalities:
Important to be organised, things are a bit new and different from what students are used to so being clear on when things come out and what to do is important. Try to encourage all staff to make the layout of the learning environment the same and lay things out in the same way.

Managing expectations, important that the students understand the role of the lecturers as it is different to in person. Also need to adjust what you the think the students can and should do. Be very flexible in the learning as it is important to remember that students have time commitments as well. UHI has many mature students so are very aware that not everyone can sit down and work for a set number of hours or always at the same times. Also, don't expect to have as many virtual sessions as you would face to face, it's a different style altogether.

Online behaviour, be very clear on "netiquette" or how to behave online. Just simple things like how jokes can be taken the wrong way, not using capitals or sarcasm etc. Just be conscious of how you communicate and how students are expected to communicate.

Personalities:
Danger of forgetting that people behind the screen and the assessments are real people. Good to encourage people to share their personal experiences, motivations etc.

Also, know the people you are working with. Many people prefer text chat to audio, also good for those with poor internet connections. Or some like audio over video. Get to know your group and ask them how they would like to be taught.

Keep up the social side! Group work is still possible and it is good to encourage interaction. Student societies can carry on online as well to keep people engaged, important for younger students as well to have an informal space to meet each other, learn and have fun.

Think about mental health. Not just of students but of staff too. It is very easy for work to creep into home life when you are working from home. There is a UHI Mental Health toolkit available here which raises awareness of conditions. It can be hard to gauge how students are doing and the toolkit covers these issues.

	Questions BW: What do you do about taking attendance? EM: Currently it is not something we do. We are able to monitor when students login to the virtual environment and so we can see if someone is not engaging but we don't take attendance for sessions. Usually sessions are recorded and put online afterwards for anyone who missed to catch up on. Appreciate it is very difficult if people are in receipt of bursaries and don't really have an answer for how to get around that. RW: Can you give advice on group work? EM: Some people love it and some hate it so it is a difficult area! If we know the students will try and group similar ones together to ensure they get along. Peer reviewing each others work can be a good way of doing it as each student comments on the work of the others to ensure fairness. Done lots of different groupwork exercises, from presentations to blogs, posters etc. Key things are making sure students are compatible and making sure the marking is fair. Students are very flexible and good at communicating online so don't tend to struggle too much.	
4	**Learning from Covid for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** *Rehema White, University of St Andrews* ESD is about holistic and transformational education. Danger of going online and focusing too much on information and not on the whole learning process which we are trying to encourage. Important to remember what caused Covid 19, it was to do with our wildlife markets and our food markets. Important that we don't view Covid 19 as a problem that someone else made. ESD really ties these concepts together and connects the issues. Important that we realise that inequalities exist and Covid really highlighted what these were. Everyone's experiences of Covid is different, some people just paused and stayed with family. Others have really suffered and so it is a very sensitive issue and we need to remember that everyone has a different home life and experience of this which can be hard to gauge when teaching online. Covid 19 has a potential to cause large, long term societal changes. We have seen the return of some wildlife, the ability of society to pause, communities coming together and the prospect of a Green Recovery. Students can now clearly see that change is possible.	

	The causes of Covid 19 allows us to open up the discussion in a different way, the problems are complicated and span multiple disciplines. The interrelatedness of aspects is crucial in understanding this.	
	The only certainty we have with teaching is that we don't know the future. Very hard to plan around teaching, fieldwork and research. For society and politics there are lots of discussions around moving to a Green Deal or a back to normal approach so there are still lots of questions. For us it is crucial we give learners the competencies to deal with these questions and issues. Strategic thinking, communication and future planning are all key skills. Also need to think about employment opportunities and the future for our students. What will they go on to do after studying?	
	Thinking about competencies and new modes of learning is crucial along with teaching how things are interconnected and how issues are complicated. Need to emphasise systems thinking and allow people to think critically and debate issues.	
	Online and blended learning is a great opportunity to try new things and make change. There are challenges but it can be a very positive thing as well. Do need to be aware of anxiety and isolation of students and staff.	
	In terms of future topics for this group, the current plan was to meet more regularly online and the ideas we have are below: • Practice what you preach in ESD: supporting mental health and addressing anxiety in staff and students • New QAA guidelines in ESD for HE: how can we use them in our institutions? • Student Voices in ESD • Integrating ESD into colleges: a beginner's guide! • Monitoring and Evaluating ESD	
5	At this point the group split into breakout rooms to discuss:	

	"How will you integrate Covid-19 into your teaching to enhance ESD? Consider curricular aspects eg systems thinking and also pedagogical aspects eg flipped classroom and permission to trial new things" Discussions were varied but key points were: • May already being doing ESD without realising it • Opportunity now to utilise outdoor learning • Currently very difficult practically, one way systems, masks, distancing etc. • Need to prepare students for a future world which may have other pandemics • Blended learning presents opportunities to teach in different ways and reach new audiences • People are open to ESD but have often just not ever thought about it or defined it, often people only see sustainability in their own field and don't realise how broad that is. Group were also asked how they felt about teaching ESD this semester. Mentimeter results are attached to the minutes but responses broadly were: • Slightly apprehensive • Hopeful • Inspired • Nervous • Intrigued • Excited	
6	**Thanks and close**	

Minutes prepared by Scott Thomson, EAUC-Scotland, 18/9/20