Date: Monday 21st November 2022
Time: 9.30am - 12noon
Venue: Online via Zoom
Resources: [Available here](#)

Strengthening and Supporting Approaches to ESD in Universities and Colleges
ESD TSN minutes

Attendees:

Ana Carla Madeira	ACM	University of Porto
Angela Spence	AS	Inverness College UHI
Betsy King	BK	Learning for Sustainability Scotland
Carol Langston	CL	SRUC (Scotland's Rural College)
Catrin Darsley	CD	University of Cambridge
Christine Calder	CC	Dundee and Angus College
Eirini Gallou	EG	University of Strathclyde
Fiona Craig	FC	Scottish Qualifications Authority
John Thorne	JT	Glasgow School of Art
Jonathan Buglass	JB	Edinburgh College
Kirsten Leask	KL	Learning for Sustainability Scotland
Lisa Mcgovern	LM	City of Glasgow College
Louise Logan	LL	University of Strathclyde
Lucy Patterson	LP	The University of Edinburgh
Martin Webb	MW	Edinburgh College
Natasha Wilkinson	NW	Shipley College
Rehema White	RW	University of St Andrews
Roslyn Taplin	RT	SOAS University of London
Sarah Shea	SSh	Glasgow Kelvin College
Scott Strachan	SSt	University of Strathclyde
Severine Monvoisin	SM	Edinburgh College
Thom Cooper	TC	University of Leeds

Apologies:
Yvonne Sanderson

Video time	SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS
0.00	**Welcome** *Rehema While, Academic, University of St Andrews*

	Everyone was welcomed to our third COP26 legacy series event- Strengthening and Supporting ESD, building on the first event, Getting Started with ESD, and the second event, Implementing ESD across Institutions. Rehema walked attendees through the agenda and stated the **aims of this TSN**: - **Knowing what statutory support is out there**, so we can use it as levers in our institutions, but also to identify gaps and lobby for better support - **Knowing what institutional support can strengthen ESD** and what are agendas that institutions are particularly keen on and that can be delivered through ESD - **Knowing how we and our surrounding communities can strengthen ESD** Rehema also briefly addressed the different definitions of ESD, with the main one being the UNESCO's definition: "ESD empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity", but also acknowledging that definitions vary in practice and that there is room for discussion.
3.50	**Macrolevel support for ESD in HE** *Rehema While, Academic, University of St Andrews* Rehema began her presentation speaking about the context of universities, which is shaped by climate change, biodiversity loss, and other environmental issues, as well as widening inequalities of wealth, health and wellbeing. She then introduced various organisations and frameworks that provide sources of Macrolevel support for ESD in HE, from global to local: - **Sustainable Development Goals:** potential of illustrating the scope and interconnectedness of sustainable development; opportunity to critically reflect and engage with the SDGs and ESD in general. - **UNESCO roadmap on ESD:** framework that can support ESD journey. UNESCO's work and reporting can spark collaborations. - **UN University Regional Centres of Expertise:** supporting ESD practice, with a variety of RCEs in England and Learning for Sustainability in Scotland. - **QAA:** sustainability is now written into all QAA subject benchmark statements, meaning all subjects are required to address sustainability in different ways. There is a UK Quality code for Higher Education as well as the QAA Scotland quality enhancement framework with a variety of themes. - **Guidance by QAA (2021):** can influence our practice most immediately and Rehema highly recommends practitioners to have a look at the guidance. - **Advance HE:** influences and publishes policy work, such as the Professional Standards Framework. They also support reflection on teaching and HE Fellowships.

	- **The Scottish Funding Council** and sustainability being included into the outcome agreements they base their funding on can also support ESD on a macro level. - **Other agendas** that can support and strengthen ESD on a macro level are employability, entrepreneurship, transitions, quality education, and more, as there are often links between these agendas and ESD - **students and employers:** actively asking for and requiring sustainability skills can help to support our ESD work and showcase its importance and benefits. - **This TSN:** source of support and exchange To embed ESD across your institution, it is important to build on this macrolevel support in your arguments and make sure that ESD becomes part of your institution's KPIs and strategic priorities.
15.28	**Macrolevel support for ESD in FE in Scotland** *Betsy King, Development Manager, Learning for Sustainability Scotland* Betsy explains that her presentation will be specifically on policy and statutory support in Scotland. Some of this support includes: - **Scotland's national performance framework** underpinned by the SDGs - **Professional standards** for Lecturers in Scotland's colleges. - **The general teaching council**'s current standards for lecturers state sustainability in learning and teaching should "permeate teaching practice, inform it, and be made explicit to learners" - **SQA:** committed to incorporating the knowledge and skills of LfS in all new and revised national courses and Skills for Work Curses and learning pathways - **further policy updates:** National Discussion on Scottish Education (closed 5th December); Review on Qualifications and Assessment; Muir report that has been published in 2022 - **Climate Change Scotland Act** specifically addresses the role of educators, skills trainers and researchers! - **Scottish Colleges' Statement of Commitment on the climate emergency** (2019) (signed by all Scottish colleges), with a key point being the education of staff, students, employers and communities on the climate emergency and generally climate change. - **Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan** Education subgroup aims to push forward action in relation to the role of education in this plan. - **Scottish Funding Council** Outcome agreements also influence what goes on in colleges*.
31:15	**Institutional level support for ESD** *Jon Buglass, Vice Principal Innovation, Planning and Performance, Edinburgh College*

Jon starts out by describing how institutions have found it difficult to know how to get everyone in their institution properly and meaningfully engaged in ESD, and not just because of the pressure to report. The education part tended to be dwarfed by estates & facilities and net zero.

He then presents how Edinburgh college has addressed this on a strategic level and how they have overcome a variety of difficulties and barriers.

Strategic level

Education subgroup of the main sustainability steering group: Engagement went up and down at the start; attendance and capacity were built over time. Everyone in the college could join, there was an understanding that everyone needed to be educated – staff and students.

In 2018/19 they put a new sustainability strategy in place which included learning and teaching.

Addressing difficulties

One of the difficulties was how would educators able to share resources, how could they get better engaged, how can we get an institution based approach. They addressed this through events and a resource collection:

Sustainable Education week: that engaged lecturers and students in a variety of creative ways. Projects within all areas of the curriculum that could be set up with a sustainability or SDG theme (see video). In 2022 timed it together with other institutions (including Borders and West Lothian.

Learning for Sustainability padlet: Part of EC's strategy was also to support people in their ESD journey, which included a repository of resources on padlet that everyone could contribute to by posting on MS Teams

What now?
There are efforts to keep the strategy going and ensure that sustainability is not a "once a year" thing. This is evident through a variety of other projects regarding sustainable food, collaboration with SMEs, and sustainability microcredentials.

Questions:
Rehema White: There was great linking between different departments and between personal action and institutional operations and learning in the classroom, I will take a lesson from that as we sometimes separate these things out a bit more.

Jon: We see ourselves as a learning institution and that includes staff; there are many CPD opportunities and courses around the college they can do. If you take EDI, there are a lot of parallels to sustainability, it's a whole-institution approach to this. An example is how one of the teams is going out to tree planning as response to the sustainability challenge, but also as a teambuilding event and to learn from each other.

Fiona Craig: For the documentary, are you linking in with the waste industry for that and will the video be available on YouTube?

	Jon: Yes, most likely. It is taking some time to complete it as it takes quite a big effort to create it. We are working with the waste industry, with Viridor and a local waste facility involved.
57.30	**Discussion: What broader institutional context either positively or negatively affects your capacity to engage with ESD?** *All* Some points that were shared with the wider group: **Enabling/Driving ESD:** - ESD as increasing employability on the one hand, and also seeing it from the other perspective: If we don't equip students with sustainability skills we might make them unemployable - Sustainability connecting to a variety of issues and departments that can be connected - Seeing ESD as part of evaluation criteria for the institution: better ESD makes us a better college/university - Mapping is time consuming, but positive: can help people understand they are already teaching about sustainability and where they can improve **Barriers to ESD:** - Not prioritized on management level - Lack of staff capacity as a major issue (addressed by colleges) - Lack of understanding sustainability goes beyond green skills and issues or net zero
1.02.00	**Engaging staff with ESD through "ESD, Me and a Cup of Tea" at the University of Strathclyde** *Dr Louise Logan, Learning Enhancement Officer, University of Strathclyde* Louise showcased a fantastic example of how staff can be engaged and support each other through the set up of informal support structures. "ESD, Me, and a Cup of Tea" is an informal lunchtime monthly meetup of 30-45 minutes at the University of Strathclyde (currently still online but potential to try out in person) Each month another staff member speaks about their approach (but without a formal presentation). This is aimed to vary between faculties and can also include graduate students speaking. **Aims include:** - **Emphasise interdisciplinary aspect of ESD**: Staff comes from all across the institution; the aim is to show that ESD can be applied across all subjects, and that ESD includes social, environmental and economic issues - **Demystify ESD**: show how accessible it is

	- **Network building**: building staff development and peer support networks.
	The Series emerged from their ESD action plan that was created by Strathclyde's ESD action group, which aims to mainstream ESD at Strathclyde through key activities in 5 areas, including staff training & development – showing the practical implementation of a strategy and how such support structures can be strategically supported and driven.
	The audience has been around 5-6 attendees consistently, with some regulars and some new faces, which has led to very productive discussions. New faces come in through "snowballing" and current attendees bringing a colleague along.
	Questions:
	Lucy Patterson: Is there an assumption all attendees have a base knowledge of ESD or is that covered at the beginning of each seminar?
	Louise: No, there is no assumption. In the promotional material, there is a quick explanation of the series and what ESD is, but it is kept very open, and speakers are briefed on the fact that they should speak to quite a large audience and not become too technical.
	Scott Strachan: Full disclosure Rehema/everyone - We nicked the title in part from EAUC's 'SDG and a Cup of Tea' series :). Very much about people sharing practice - showing lots of case study examples of how ESD is being delivered across different depts. and in doing so building a community of practice.
	Louise: Yes, it really is about sharing best practice and case studies. The main thing for me is that people can see that it can be really small interventions and it doesn't have to be a complete overhaul of the curriculum or a whole programme or module. Something we are keen to discuss more is how we can embed it in assessment as well, as that is also where we see the impact on students learning.
	Rehema White: To help get the word out, what we do [at St Andrews] is to really showcase the positives, so for example we have our golden dandelion award as a certification and a prize. So rather than "here is another thing you have to do" it's a "well done". This also gives credit to the people who come forward and validate their work.
	Louise: Yes, that is a good idea, thank you. We can maybe even summarise the discussion after each session and add it to a departmental newsletter.
01.17.25	**'What could you do to strengthen ESD in your practice?' guided reflection** *Rehema White, Academic, University of St Andrews* Rehema gave some pointers for reflective questions of the role of higher (and further) education, as well as addressing the imperative for ESD and the SDGs. She pointed out that the SDGs can be used to stimulate critical reflection, and can illustrate the interconnectedness of sustainability topics that interact with each other – rather than straight away focusing on "delivering" the SDGS. Rehema also brought up the 8 ESD competencies listed in UNESCO and QAA guidance. This can help educators not think beyond "what am I teaching" towards

"how can the students benefit from the ways in which I am reaching". This highlights the importance of pedagogy.

This was followed by an activity that encouraged participants to think about first steps or next steps for embedding ESD. Thoughts summarised in the main room included:

- Making sure that sustainability remains a key aim when we collaborate with others, e.g. when we introduce systems thinking together with another department, making sure that the goal does not become only to maximise profit.
- Staff CPD and training as a core activity to mainstream ESD
- Incorporate competencies into learning outcomes
- Connecting people who are already doing things and looking at how far we have gotten already
- Using tools such as the Sustainability Leadership Scorecard
- Creating a central resource bank that colleges can use
- For colleges, the standards of awarding bodies such as SQA are very important, so lobbying for sustainability to be included in accreditations by these bodies is an important step to take

1.33.45	**Resources to strengthen and support ESD** *Kathrin Mobius, Sustainability Project Officer, EAUC* Kathrin walked us briefly through some useful organisations, initiatives and resources that can be used to strengthen and support ESD. See an overview of resources here.
1.39.30	**Conclusions, Thanks, and Close** *Rehema White, Academic, University of St Andrews* Rehema closes the session by thanking everyone who attended and summarising conclusions of the session, which include the benefits of guidance that is out there, learn from others, join communities of practice where you can, consider your own context, and harness students' energy and ideas. A big thank you to all our speakers and facilitators.
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Minutes prepared by Kathrin Mobius, EAUC-Scotland Sustainability Project Officer