



# Leeds University Network for Sustainability in Higher Education (LUNSHE)

## SDG focus

- ☑ Goal 4 - Quality education
- ☑ Goal 13 - Climate action
- ☑ Goal 17 - Partnerships for the goals

## What did you do?

The University of Leeds is recognised for its world-leading research in Climate Change and Sustainability. Whilst this echoes across our education portfolio this is rarely seen collectively and often isolated within specific disciplines, and programmes. As part of our Climate Plan we commit to give all students the opportunity to engage in sustainability through their course, community, now, and into the future. This ignited the ambition to establish a cross- and transdisciplinary sustainability Community of Practice. In May 2023, our Leeds University Network for Sustainability in Higher Education (LUNSHE) was launched. This is delivered as hybrid monthly meet-ups, workshops and an online community. It is open to all staff, ranging from experts to those new to considering sustainability within their roles and practice. LUNSHE explicitly demonstrates sustainability as a cross-disciplinary concern. It provides a space for inspiration, nurturing sustainability education talent, exploring challenges, showcasing innovation and catalysing new collaborations.

## What were the benefits and outcomes?

### 1. Convening cross- and transdisciplinary connectivity

Over two years LUNSHE has grown to a membership of over 180, with members representing the diversity of our education portfolio. We have welcomed 44 staff contributors (professional services and academic), 23 student contributors and external guest speakers. Our talks and discussions focus on sustainability education topics, challenges and opportunities with cross- disciplinary relevance and reach, including sustainability skills, social justice, decolonisation, biodiversity, entrepreneurship, eco-hope and the role of GenAIs as a tool for curriculum mapping.

*'Sustainability concerns everyone, but is often treated as a siloed, expert topic. In the endeavour to mainstream the topic of sustainability, the LUNSHE Community of*

*Practice is a crucial player in enacting the Sustainable Curriculum principle. LUNSHE meetings give University staff - from professional services to academic - the time, space and support to consider sustainability in a contextualised way whilst sharing knowledge and practice with others in a cross-disciplinary setting. The key is that the LUNSHE community is informal with a low barrier to participation and provides peer support for people to propel them on their sustainability journey.'*

DR PIERRE-PHILIPPE DECHANT, LECTURER, SCHOOL OF MATHS, UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

CO-ACADEMIC LEAD FOR LUNSHE

## 2. A space for individual and collective development

LUNSHE creates a safe space for professionals to reflect on their individual professional practice alongside likeminded people across different career stages and levels of specialism. Our approach is about listening to needs, building on good practice and nurturing iterative change that demonstrates relevance to varied disciplines and inspires transdisciplinary thinking and connections. The sharing of case studies, learning designs, student projects, international collaborations and frameworks has laid the foundations for pedagogical research projects and innovations from new modules to student opportunities.

*'When we first thought about spaces for sharing learning and insights on sustainable curriculum, we never imaged how LUNSHE would have developed to be the self-sustaining and inspiring community it has become. Convened by enthusiasts who don't claim to have all the answers, it has proved to be a welcoming place that supports those who are keen to try new things.'*

PROFESSOR ANNE TALLONTIRE, PROFESSOR OF SUSTAINABILITY & BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

MEMBER OF THE SUSTAINABLE CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP TEAM

## 3. Celebrating innovation in education

Whether showcasing the collective work of a School or department or an individual pioneering a response to Education for Sustainable Development within their local area, LUNSHE creates the platform for recognising and profiling sustainability education talent. Blogs and case studies are produced to distribute this learning broadly. Connections made through LUNSHE have catalysed joint conference submissions and inspired a range of successful research grants.

*'LUNSHE has been a fantastic opportunity to meet a wide range of colleagues and students with a shared passion for sustainability. This has been invaluable to me as I've introduced a module where sustainability features heavily. I've learned so much and had a lot of enjoyment in the process.'*

PROFESSOR SAMANTHA PUGH, PROFESSOR OF STEM HIGHER EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

LUNSHE GROUP MEMBER

## **What barriers or challenges did you encounter in embedding sustainability into your learning and teaching practice and how did you overcome them?**

1. Outwardly presenting sustainability as cross-disciplinary and mainstreaming sustainability as a topic. We actively encourage our community to see how this connects with their own roles and practice. This has been overcome through the variety of topics explored, and the range of disciplines that our contributors represent (from Maths and Music to Environment and Ecology) and the way we listen and respond to our membership.

*'LUNSHE has offered an opportunity to meet with colleagues with diverse interests, develop interdisciplinary collaborations around sustainability issues, and share research ideas for feedback. Through my link with LUNSHE, I have contributed data from my research to the University Research Data Repository to support student education around sustainability.'*

DR CHRISTOPHER HASSALL, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ANIMAL BIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

LUNSHE GROUP MEMBER

2. Measuring impact – Further work is needed to systematically collect insight on how LUNSHE is influencing the way in which sustainability is being embedded into programmes, creating student opportunities, and yielding student education benefits. To date feedback has been gathered from our membership using interactive digital tools, and through discussion, with successful approaches to embedding sustainability shared via presentations, case studies, and blogs. We know that connections made through LUNSHE have inspired and catalysed further cross-disciplinary conversations, sharing of student education materials (such as student projects), joint conference submissions and successful research grant proposals.

3. Creating time to engage – We recognise that as an optional activity amongst many other pressures and events, it can be challenging for staff to find the time to engage. We have deliberately kept our sessions short (typically capped at one hour) and held over a lunchtime period, which keeps the commitment manageable, and they combine time for learning, reflection, networking and sharing of practice. We ensure that they are regular and can be accessed in person or online, and use a variety of venues and days of the week for inclusivity.

## **What are your conclusions and recommendations for others?**

Creating a Community of Practice around sustainability has enabled expertise and insight to flow across disciplinary and hierarchical institutional boundaries. We recognise that there are differing levels of comfort, familiarity, knowledge and competence in engaging with sustainability themes. For some in our community attending LUNSHE is their first step in considering sustainability in relation to their professional practice, discipline and/or specialism. Creating a welcoming, informal and accessible space is vital. We have also formatted the sessions to offer a good balance of inspiration, reflection, discussion and networking. Periodically, we have delivered extended sessions to share practical tools and to facilitate collective problem solving and ideation. We have also capitalised on collaborative opportunities with other internal networks, local players and global partners to further extend our reach and membership. This has included collaborations with the University's

Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence, our internal Student Success team and community engaged learning network. Student contributions have showcased outputs from external and internal programmes including the Laidlaw scholarship programme and our internal Student Sustainability Architect scheme.

*'LUNSHE has grown significantly, providing the University community with a platform for nurturing sustainability education. It not only facilitates the sharing of best practices and the generation of innovative ideas but also fosters the building of strong, impactful networks.'*

DR JONAS CROMWELL, LECTURER, SCHOOL OF FOOD SCIENCE AND NUTRITION

CO-ACADEMIC LEAD FOR LUNSHE

**Web link to further information:**

Our Sustainable Curriculum programme:

<https://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/our-work/leeds-sustainable-curriculum/>

Example LUNSHE blog:

<https://sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/november-lunshe-doughnut-economics/>