

UCU Guidance Leaflet No. 1 'Education for Sustainable Development' May 2010

This leaflet is one of a series designed to help UCU members engage with their institution on the 'green agenda'. This is an area that is becoming increasingly important and we urge you to make sure that the views and interests of staff are addressed.

What do we mean by Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)?

Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising those of future generations (Bruntland Report,1997).

It is a vision of development that encompasses populations, animal and plant species, ecosystems, natural resources and that integrates concerns such as the fight against poverty, gender equality, human rights, education for all, health, human security, intercultural dialogue, etc.

We have to learn our way out of current social and environmental problems and learn to live sustainably. ESD aims to help people to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and in the future, and to act upon these decisions.

Environmental action is a key part of the concept of sustainability.

Why is it an important issue for UCU?

UCU has established ESD as a key component of its environmental work. It is important to us because:

- our members are the people who have to deliver the curriculum so it is crucial that they have an opportunity to influence it..
- incorporating ESD effectively will help to ensure that courses are relevant to the development of a low carbon economy
- it provides an opportunity for the union to be pro-active on an issue which many members consider to be a priority
- it can be an important organising tool to attract non-members and involve existing members
- in a period of FHE job cuts it offers the potential for job creation

What support is there for UCU involvement on ESD?

There are a large number of initiatives and resources that UCU can call upon to push this up the agenda within FHE institutions:

UNESCO – The United Nations has identified ESD as a priority issue.



The **United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)**, for which UNESCO is the lead agency, seeks to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning, in order to address the social, economic, cultural and environmental problems we face in the 21st century. <http://www.unesco.org/en/esd/>

Government policy - The last 5 years have seen a number of policy initiatives which highlight the importance of ESD. These range from '*Securing the Future UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy* (Defra 2005) to the *Low Carbon Transition Plan* (DECC 2009). There is a recognition that a low carbon economy will require low carbon skills, which in turn will require the delivery of low carbon training and education. However, the UK does not currently have the right skills to deliver this. Many Sector Skills Councils have been slow to address this skills gap and recent reports have highlighted this. *Mind the gap: Skills for the transition to a low carbon economy* – Aldersgate Group <http://www.aldersgategroup.org.uk/reports>

Higher Education – The national sector bodies like Universities UK, GuildHE, and HE Funding Council for England (HEFCE) all recognise the importance of ESD.

HEFCE set out a vision in 2004 that “*within the next 10 years, the HE sector in England will be recognised as a major contributor to society’s efforts to achieve sustainability through the skills and knowledge that its graduates learn and put into practice, its research and exchange of knowledge through business, community and public policy engagement, and through its own strategies and operations*”.

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) has an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Project (<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/esd>). This helps institutions and subject communities develop curricula and pedagogy that will give students the skills and knowledge to live and work sustainably. In 2005 the Dawe Report conducted a review of provision. http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/sustainability/dawe_report_2005

Case Study – Higher Education

Concentrating the campaign on the Business School, UCU and Middlesex University used the run up to the Copenhagen summit to stimulate a campaign to green both the curriculum and the Hendon campus. Under the slogan "Be the change you want to see in the world", we asked lecturers to introduce the issue of climate change into their teaching for one day, and took over the quad with stalls and online information about the environment. A key part of the campaign was to stimulate interest in setting up an allotment, based on the St James Park model, by handing out over 1000 packets of seeds to staff and students with information about sustainable growing. This campaign has now turned into two voluntary groups, Greening the Curriculum and Greening the Campus, linking academics across the Business School, Occupational Health and Health & Social Science departments, staff, contractors and students. Voluntary and open involvement of people working and studying at Middlesex is seen as an important way of stimulating engagement and change, both on an individual and institutional level. To do this we believe we need to keep our work on a practical and positive level, using trade union principles and practices.

Further Education

Ofsted - In the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2009*, Ofsted inspectors are advised to take into account the provider's commitment to sustainability. Revisions to the framework on evaluating outcomes for learners now includes whether learners are involved in community based development activities and projects; and how well they develop skills, knowledge and understanding relevant to community cohesion and sustainable development.

In OFSTED's *Taxonomy of Issues*, a list of all issues in the learning and skills sector, arranged under the steps of the learner's journey and leadership and management, sustainable development comes under category 18, Leadership.

The OFSTED Good Practice Database on the Excellence Gateway (<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=167934>) features sub sections on leadership and management. Within this is information on building better practice with regard to sustainable development. The information sets out what FE needs to do to meet the government's wish for the sector to be a leading exponent of sustainable development through its management of resources, the learning opportunities it delivers and its engagement with communities. The website lists examples of best practice already identified in inspections, and offers a "health check" as well as suggestions of what institutions could be doing to improve.

Examples of questions from the Health Check are:

How do you ensure that staff understand their role in promoting sustainability through the curriculum?

What examples are there of embedding sustainability into the curriculum?

The Association of Colleges (AoC) has urged FE colleges to sign up to a Sustainable Development Declaration that includes a commitment to "Realising opportunities to incorporate sustainability into the curriculum where possible". Launched in 2008 so far about a third of FE colleges have signed up.

http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/Policy_and_Advisory_Work/Public_Affairs/campaigns/green_colleges/green-colleges-declaration.cfm

The Learning Skills Council (LSC) produced a Sustainable Development Action Plan in 2008 which called on organisations by 2010 to "have strategies, policies and plans in place to integrate and implement sustainable development and these will be understood and acted upon"

Case Study – Further Education

In South Thames College a 'Greening the Curriculum' Working Group was set up in 2010 following a proposal from the local UCU branch. It meets once a term and consists of senior management and union representation. It is currently conducting an audit of current Sustainable Development provision in all programme areas. Staff training has been put in place to support the adaptation of existing courses and planning of new courses in 2010-11.

How can ESD be embedded into the curriculum?

Incorporate environmental awareness into teaching and learning practices on mainstream provision and as part of enrichment activities (such as tutorial programmes). There is no shortage of examples of embedding sustainability into the curriculum:

- Learners on courses, such as technology and construction, can study for additional qualifications in sustainable development or developing environmental awareness.
- Motor vehicle students can learn about alternative technologies such as electric and hybrid vehicles.
- Engineering tutors can introduce energy-related topics into students' projects.
- The computing team can teach learners about communication and control systems which save energy.
- Art teachers can use recyclable materials.

Every part of the curriculum can be modified to incorporate either 'hard skills' like eco-building design through to 'behaviour' skills like influencing attitudes.

Have a look at the resources at the end of this leaflet to get ideas for your programme area. This should not be a top-down process. In many cases staff

will have the skills and experience to adapt existing programmes or develop new ones.

In order to meet the 'green skills gap' institutions will need to be pro-active on this. In some cases it may mean adding a module to an existing course. In others it may require the piloting of brand new courses. That is why UCU want to stress the potential for this to be a way of saving jobs and creating new ones.

How can staff and students be involved?

Climate Action Groups (CAGs) can also be used as a forum to identify ESD opportunities. CAGs are a UCU initiative which encourage staff to work on agreed SD projects, including the curriculum.

www.climatesolidarity.org.uk

Student enrichment activities can be focused on specific dates in the academic year, for example 'Green Week' in February. UCU Green Reps and CAGs are advised to work with organisations like NUS and People and Planet to assist with resources and workshops.

<http://peopleandplanet.org/>

How can Continuing Professional Development (CPD) be used to promote ESD?

CPD or staff development days provide an opportunity to embed ESD. If the branch has appointed a Union Learning Rep then liaise with them to promote this. Try and get an agreement that there will a regular ESD option on all training days.

What are the next steps?

It is important that you establish the current state of play in your institution on ESD. Ask for copies of any relevant policies or minutes of meetings. Check with the branch whether it has previously been raised by either the union or by management. Think about talking directly to staff who may have experience of any initiatives. For example, the Sustainability / Environment Manager or CPD staff. When you have done this you may be ready to carry out a more detailed assessment using the checklist below.

Checklist – Current practice on ESD

1. Is ESD referenced in your institution's Environment / Sustainable Development policy?
2. Is your management team familiar with ESD?
3. Is there a joint forum for discussing ESD issues?
4. Is SD training provided for staff as part of CPD?
5. Are staff encouraged to build sustainability into personal and professional development plans?
6. Has an audit been carried out of the SD content of all curriculum areas?
7. Is SD included as part of tutorials?
8. Are sustainability issues within your community explored?

9. Have learning opportunities related to how the institution is managed been explored? E.g. Estates management
10. Have opportunities for curriculum development been assessed in line with potential low carbon skills growth areas?

Get in touch

UCU wants to hear about what you are doing to promote ESD. Check our bi-monthly newsletter for ESD updates. We have set up an ESD Working Group at Head Office to monitor developments and provide guidance to our members. If you want to get in touch contact Graham Petersen at gpetersen@ucu.org.uk

Join the UCU Facebook group "Greening the Education Workplace". To see more details and confirm this group invitation, follow the link below: <http://www.facebook.com/p.php?i=581684185&k=5WDZQZVSPT6G6BDAPB43WPPST6BAX5ZL4QAY&oid=121143634572765>

Other Resources

- **Environment Association for Universities and Colleges** – The EAUC has produced a lot of useful resources on ESD. These can be found in the SORTED (Sustainable Online Resource Toolkit for Education) part of their site http://www.eauc.org.uk/education_for_sustainable_development
- **Sustainability and Environmental Education** -SEEd is a registered UK charity with the primary objective of enabling more of the education sector to engage with ESD and environmental education. <http://www.se-ed.org.uk/index.html>
- **National Institute for Adult Continuing Education** – NIACE runs a number of events to support the development of ESD. <http://www.niace.org.uk/>
- **LSC / ESD Consulting** - Have produced 2 very useful guides: 'Creating the conditions for embedding SD in the curriculum' http://www.eauc.org.uk/sorted/files/esd-conditions_1.pdf 'Embedding SD in the curriculum' http://www.eauc.org.uk/sorted/files/esd-embedding_1.pdf
- **Teacher Training Resource Bank** – This site contains a number of resources in a range of programme areas <http://www.ttrb.ac.uk/viewArticle.aspx?contentId=11695>
- **The Handbook of Sustainability Literacy** ISBN987-1-000322-60-7 Price: £14.95 www.greenbooks.co.uk