



Education for Sustainable Development and Academic Quality: Principles and Processes for Higher Education Providers

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Contents

[List of Figures](#) (2)

[List of Tables](#) (2)

[Project Partners](#) (3)

[Glossary of Acronyms Used](#) (3)

1. [Introduction](#) (4)

2. [Summary of Findings](#) (5-6)

3. [Context and Principles for addressing ESD](#) (7-9)

4. [Processes to address ESD](#) (10-14)

5. [Qualities of an Enabling Environment](#) (15-16)

6. [Conclusions](#) (17)

7. [References](#) (18)

8. [Acknowledgements](#) (18)

9. [Appendices](#) (19-26)

List of Figures

[Figure 1: Diagnosis and Choices for ESD engagement](#)

List of Tables

[Table 1: 10 Key Issues to Consider for ESD adoption via AQ and SV](#)

[Table 2: SUCCEED principles for ESD adoption via AQ and SV](#)

[Table 3: Two scenarios for ESD strategic commitment](#)

[Table 4: Approaches linked to academic quality processes](#)

[Table 5: Approaches linked to one-off institution or department-wide curriculum change](#)

[Table 6: Approaches linked to student voice, feedback and co-creation processes](#)

[Table 7: Statements for student evaluation of ESD](#)

[Table 8: Working with different types of strategic commitment to ESD](#)

[Table 9: Enabling access to ESD expertise](#)

[Table 10: Exemplification and guidance materials](#)

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Glossary of Acronyms Used

AQ – Academic Quality
ESD – Education for Sustainable Development
HEI – Higher Education Institution
QAA – Quality Assurance Agency
SD – Sustainable Development
SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals
SV – Student Voice

1 Introduction

This document reports the findings and recommendations from the “ESD and Academic Quality” QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project.

Led by De Montfort University, the project aimed to identify how Academic Quality (AQ) processes could support adoption of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). AQ is concerned with the quality and enhancement of education provision in HEIs and is enacted through processes related to the initial approval and ongoing enhancement of taught courses.

Sustainable Development – “an aspirational ongoing process of addressing social, environmental and economic concerns to create a better world.”

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) – “the process of creating curriculum structures and subject-relevant content to support and enact sustainable development.”

ESD is best achieved when... “articulated within quality assurance and enhancement processes.”

From AdvanceHE and QAA (2021)

The project builds upon the [2021 Guidance on ESD](#) published jointly by AdvanceHE and QAA. Relevant quotes from this guidance are included throughout this report in green text boxes, as above, where the definitions of Sustainable Development and ESD used in the 2021 guidance are put forward.

Throughout the project, the role of Student Voice (SV) in academic quality has been a key focus. For the purposes of this report, SV refers to any engagement process involving students in the approval, review, or enhancement of academic programmes. Inclusive student engagement within AQ processes is strongly recommended in the [2018 guidance on the topic published by QAA](#). For ESD, which aims to empower learners as change-makers in society and to champion inclusivity in societal decision-making, an active role in AQ processes for students is particularly relevant.

1.1 Intended Audience and Using this Report

This document is written with a wide audience in mind, essentially any actor within a higher education setting whose remit or goals include addressing ESD in the taught curriculum. This includes academic staff, academic developers, quality teams, student union staff, student union sabbatical officers, heads of departments, sustainability teams, senior leaders and student course representatives.

The report is intended to be used to provide specific ideas, processes and examples to aid development of an institutional or departmental approach to addressing ESD through AQ and SV processes.

1.2 Collaborative Enhancement Project Approach

This QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project ran for 15 months from March 2022 to June 2023. In this period, the [11 HEI partners](#): analysed how their existing AQ and SV processes addressed ESD; developed or piloted enhancements to these processes; and discussed issues affecting enhancements in monthly project meetings. Summaries from each partner are available alongside this report as *Further Material*.

[Students Organising for Sustainability UK \(SOS-UK\)](#) were a 12th partner organisation, with their role being to contribute to collective discussions and ensure that a focus on student voice was always present.

An online survey to gauge activity and views across the wider UK higher education sector was live from 25th January until 31st March 2023, receiving 84 responses from staff and 308 from students. Results are available alongside this report as *Further Material*.

A synthesis of practices and learning from the above approaches has been used to provide evidence for this report, with the recommendations put forward agreed collectively.

2 Summary of Findings

Our project has been driven by a focus on providing insights of value to HEI practitioners, recognising the diversity of roles of staff and students with an interest in ESD, and the great range of contexts within HEIs which will shape viable and appropriate approaches.

Three aspects to this work that we agreed were highly significant are:

- 1) **Institutional and departmental context** is a key driver of what is possible in a particular HEI. This includes the nature and degree of strategic commitments to sustainable development and capacity of staff and students.
- 2) Whilst strategic commitments to sustainability or ESD are increasingly frequent, explicit inclusion of ESD in AQ and SV processes is still rare. It is therefore timely to produce a report **highlighting specific examples** of what this can look like from a range of settings.
- 3) Although addressing ESD in AQ and SV processes is an important component of its mainstreaming across an institution, it is likely to be ineffective without a wider **enabling environment**, that motivates and empowers students and staff to understand the agenda and put it into practice.

Drawing upon the points above and other relevant factors that shape implementation of ESD via AQ and SV, we developed a list of [ten key issues to consider](#). These include: the nature and extent of strategic commitment to ESD; internal staff resources and examples of practice; linkages to other cross-cutting priorities such as employability; and the extent to which staff and students in AQ and SV roles understand and support the ESD agenda. The issues are posed as [ten questions](#) for use in initial mapping or enhancement initiatives to aid development of ESD.

We noted that there are some over-arching principles that are of use in any setting to make progress on ESD through AQ and SV. Our 7 '[SUCCEED](#)' principles for ESD draw upon the discussion above and aim to be relevant in almost any setting. They call for actions to be developed to progress ESD through principles under the headings: **Strategic; Unfolding; Cross-Cutting; Clear Examples; Evidenced; Empowering; and Developmental**. These principles offer insight on "how" to go about this work, complementing suggestions on "what" to do which follow later in the report. The principles include adopting an approach aligned with institutional strategy, aiming to empower students and staff, following an incremental approach so ESD engagement unfolds over time for individuals and is increasingly embedded within formal processes.

Prior to developing a specific strategy to address ESD in specific processes, we suggest consideration of three key issues which will shape if and how this can be articulated:

- 1) **Fit with strategic priorities**. Consider if the ESD agenda aligns strongly or weakly with the institution's stated strategic goals, such as overall strategy or priorities for teaching and learning. When doing so, consider ESD holistically in terms of competency development, addressing the SDGs and pedagogical approaches (not only as 'subject knowledge').
- 2) **Approach to evidencing impact**. Consider if and how AQ and SV processes are to be used to provide evidence of take-up and change around ESD adoption, potentially aligning to institutional priorities. This might be qualitative evidence of student and staff experiences, or quantitative indicators of adoption (e.g. SDG targets being addressed).
- 3) **Approach to development**. Consider how these processes can catalyse learning for students and staff on the meaning and relevance of ESD for their subject area.

Our report then puts forward a range of potential actions to further develop ESD linked to three areas of activity: 1) Ongoing Academic Quality Processes; 2) One-off Institution or Department-wide Curriculum Change; and 3) Student Voice, Feedback and Co-Creation. In each case suggested actions are linked to the strategic fit of ESD with institutional priorities on a key dimension – whether ESD is a **high priority** or **lower priority** compared to other agendas.

Where ESD is a high priority, a strong developmental approach that incorporates evidencing of impact could involve an **explicit requirement in programme approval documentation** to state how ESD is addressed, specifying which learning outcomes do so and which SDG targets are relevant. Learning for staff involved can be supported through hyperlinks to external and internal guidance defining ESD. Links to examples from other taught courses can be included, and documentation can include signposting to ESD specialist colleagues who can advise further.

If ESD is a lower priority, explicit mention in AQ and SV documents is less likely to be achievable. However, opportunities still exist to engage colleagues on the issue. This could be through provision of mentoring to engaged staff, dialogue through AQ and SV processes linked to external drivers for ESD or optional toolkits that staff and students can use to consider how ESD relates to a taught course.

In all cases above, our specific proposals for addressing ESD are supported by signposting **specific verbatim examples** in the Appendices of this report.

A key conclusion of the project was that an **enabling environment** is vital for any AQ and SV processes to be effective. In the report we elaborate on three key aspects of this which influence implementation of ESD: strategic commitment; available ESD expertise; and exemplification and guidance. As above, we offer proposals on how to enhance an enabling environment, drawing on specific examples from partner institutions and describing these in the context of either high or lower strategic prioritisation of ESD. These proposals include how to leverage or increase strategic commitment where this is currently weak, the creation of dedicated responsibilities for ESD to provide expertise to support colleagues, and ideas on how to create internal documents and toolkits for staff and students to refer to.

The above points highlight the headline contributions from the project and our collective conclusions. The coming sections explore these in more depth, through specific recommendations and thinking tools. Wherever possible, recommendations are supported by real-world examples of practice from the project partner institutions.

3 Context and Principles for addressing ESD

3.1 Policy and Sector Context

The broad and complex challenges we face as a society in relation to sustainable development have led to increasing focus on the role of higher education in sustainable development. In recent years this has been strongly influenced by the 2015 launch of the [United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) for 2030, addressing key issues such as poverty, gender equality, climate change and economic development.

As a result, many HEIs globally are strategically prioritising the sustainable development agenda. In the UK, most UK universities have made some sort of [public commitment to sustainability](#), such as declaration of a climate emergency, reporting on sustainability impacts or signing the [SDG Accord](#).

Education is seen by the UN as a key enabler of all the SDGs. [UNESCO defines ESD](#) as providing “*knowledge, skills, values and agency... to make informed decisions and take individual and collective action to change society and care for the planet.*” Therefore, ESD seeks to not only connect students cognitively with sustainable development, but also emotionally and practically (i.e. by a “head, heart and hands” approach).

Drivers for action on ESD by HEIs include:

- [SDG Target 4.7](#), which calls for mainstreaming of ESD across all education settings.
- The 2022 [UK Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy](#) from the Department for Education, which aims to put “climate change at the heart of education”.
- Student demand for inclusion of ESD. Recently published results from the annual [Sustainability Skills Survey](#) of UK students distributed by SOS-UK found that 79% of students surveyed “*would like to see sustainable development actively incorporated and promoted through all courses*”.
- Employers will [increasingly require graduates](#) with [cross-cutting skills and attributes](#) to navigate the complex global challenges that will shape the economy in future years. This is frequently reflected in the requirements of professional accrediting bodies for university qualifications.

As the [2021 AdvanceHE / QAA ESD guidance](#) highlights, ESD can also harmonise with other cross-cutting institutional objectives such as “*internationalisation and developing global perspectives; decolonising learning; promoting interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning; promoting employability and enterprise, and civic engagement; and championing equality, diversity and inclusion*”. Following on from the joint ESD guidance, the QAA is driving the mainstreaming of ESD across HEIs through ongoing revisions to the [Subject Benchmark Statements](#).

3.2 Current State of Adoption

To identify the current state of adoption of AQ and SV processes supporting delivery of ESD, two approaches were combined: 1) Data collection and sharing experiences amongst the project team of 11 participating HEIs; 2) Conducting a national online survey over two months from January to March 2023.

Within the 11 HEI project partners, all could highlight strategic commitments that aligned in some way to the sustainable development agenda but **only 5 of 11 had AQ processes where ESD was made explicit**. SV processes explicitly addressing ESD were developed for the first time by **two partner HEIs** only during the project. Thus, strategic commitments were commonplace, but the inclusion of ESD in AQ and SV processes was scarce.

The survey received 84 responses from university staff, drawn from 34 UK HEIs in total. Most staff (47) were from project partner universities and most respondents (54) were in academic roles.

- Of these, 75 (89%) reported an institutional strategic commitment to sustainable development to some degree; 53 (63%) stated that their institution was making positive progress in this area.

- Of the 34 respondents that commented on AQ processes, only 4 reported that they were effective in supporting the adoption of ESD.
- The AQ approaches described as in-use predominantly mentioned ESD as an issue to consider or signposted guidance, with only 8 of 34 responses reporting a requirement to incorporate ESD.

“Commitment is there, but most, if not all, staff lack understanding of what this means and how to deliver this.” Staff survey respondent

“It seems to suggest there is a commitment - but provides no real support for this, nor does it really check - it all seems to be a paper exercise.” Staff survey respondent

The quotes from survey respondents above highlight the situation we identified most often, with a frequent **misalignment between strategic commitments to ESD and effective AQ processes** to address it.

37 staff and 109 students commented on student voice processes in their survey responses.

- Of staff respondents, 9 (24%) reported that, to some degree, course representatives are guided on how to evaluate the inclusion of ESD.
- 15 staff respondents (41%) reported students being actively involved in supporting the inclusion of ESD in new modules. Free text comments suggest such processes are frequently at an early stage of adoption.
- Student comments on how to enhance their involvement in addressing ESD in taught courses mostly focussed on opportunities **outside of courses** (volunteering, participation in committees) or reported that ESD is not addressed in their programme. Only a small proportion suggested that processes such as module feedback or taught course committees could play a part. This pattern of response perhaps indicates a lack of understanding for many students of the relevance of ESD to their taught course, or on the influence of AQ and SV processes.

“As a course leader, I had to do these things independently.” Staff survey respondent

“Module feedback from student representatives could ask for feedback on sustainability... I am not convinced the awareness is high enough to enable... proper feedback.” Staff survey respondent

“I’ve only had one mention of sustainable development I think, and that was in an exam question.” Student survey respondent

“We are piloting a number of approaches to student engagement so too early to comment on effectiveness.” Staff survey respondent

Based upon the evidence above, ESD adoption frequently appears to be an **‘Emerging Agenda’** within HEIs, meaning a coupling of strategic *commitment* but a gap in terms of *capacity* to support meaningful implementation ([see EUA, 2021](#)), particularly in relation to formal processes addressing taught courses.

3.3 Institutional Context: 10 Key Issues to Consider

From the outset, our project has been mindful of the diversity of institutional contexts, meaning that no one-size fits-all approach to addressing ESD through AQ and SV will be appropriate or viable. Here we highlight some key context-specific issues to reflect on when developing an institutional approach. These issues are drawn from discussions in project team meetings and feedback from the sector survey.

The issues are posed below as questions which can be used to frame reflection or discussion amongst institutional stakeholders, either towards initial mapping or to consider enhancement opportunities. Brief commentary is included highlighting why each issue is put forward (Table 1).

Table 1: 10 Key Issues to Consider for ESD adoption via AQ and SV

Question	Rationale
1: Is there sufficient strategic commitment to ESD to mention this explicitly within AQ and SV processes?	<i>These processes can be time-consuming, so there is pressure to minimise prompts and questions.</i>
2: What is the best strategic fit in terms of the language used to articulate ESD at institution/department level?	<i>Other concepts related to ESD might fit more strongly with an institutional identity or stated strategic goals.</i>
3: Is there a requirement or desire to measure how ESD is being addressed via AQ and SV processes? If so, how?	<i>Quantitative measures are frequently used by senior management to review progress.</i>
4: Is there internal guidance such as how-to guides and examples to support staff to address ESD?	<i>Staff frequently request subject- or institution-specific examples of what ESD looks like in practice.</i>
5: Does the institution have staff members with ESD expertise with available time to mentor colleagues?	<i>Dialogue with an expert colleague can be highly effective in securing understanding and support.</i>
6: Do staff have dedicated time to consider ESD enhancements? How can this be made possible?	<i>Heavy workloads can hinder engagement. Including ESD planning in activities happening anyway may help.</i>
7: Do staff and students in AQ and SV roles support and understand the ESD agenda?	<i>The understanding and support of people ‘in the room’ for AQ and SV processes is key for engagement.</i>
8: Do course documents explain clearly to students how ESD is being addressed? Can students articulate this?	<i>Students are often unable to report if and how their programme addresses ESD.</i>
9. How can processes to address ESD link to external drivers such as subject benchmark statements?	<i>Many programmes’ engagement with ESD will be triggered and framed by external requirements.</i>
10. How can ESD be considered alongside other cross-cutting priorities such as employability and equality?	<i>Different teams tend to work on these issues, creating a risk of un-coordinated approaches within AQ and SV.</i>

3.4 Recommendations – ‘SUCCEED’ Principles on how to address ESD via AQ and SV

Here we put forward seven principles for addressing ESD through AQ and SV, with the acronym “SUCCEED” drawing upon the discussion above and aiming to be relevant in almost any setting. They offer insight on “how” to go about this work, complementing suggestions on “what” to do which follow in the coming sections (Table 2).

Table 2: SUCCEED principles for ESD adoption via AQ and SV

Principle	Summary
Strategic	Framing of ESD in AQ and SV processes to align with the strategic priorities of the institution . For departments, alignment of ESD with discipline-specific identities and framing(s) of sustainable development.
Unfolding	ESD engagement unfolds incrementally over time , building on increasing levels of practice and understanding of the ESD agenda. Aim to engage staff and students through multiple touch-points (e.g. programme approvals, standing meeting agendas) working towards inclusion in all relevant AQ & SV processes .
Cross-Cutting	Develop formal and informal collaborative relationships to continually progress ESD across key teams involved in AQ and SV, harnessing co-benefits with other initiatives and priorities. Maintain regular dialogue and vigilance to ensure opportunities for change or enhancement are noted and taken.
Clear Examples	Provide clear examples to stakeholders on what it looks like to address ESD in their role. Use consistent terminology to define ESD across an institution or departments.
Evidenced	Consider quantitative indicators of ESD adoption for reporting. Produce engaging examples from students and staff on ESD adoption , drawing on data from SV and AQ processes.
Empowering	Support staff through learning opportunities and professional recognition to develop their understanding and adoption of ESD approaches. All students and those with representative roles are supported to provide input and feedback to enhance ESD adoption and to articulate how learning through their course addresses ESD.
Developmental	AQ and SV processes catalyse deeper engagement with ESD by signposting to guidance, resources, mentoring etc. Processes create feedback loops , such as information submitted being used to enhance practice as shared exemplars.

4 Processes to Address ESD

4.1 Introduction

“ESD is best achieved when...the framing of ESD within the curriculum is **included in the validation of new courses and ongoing review of existing courses.**”

“Ensure that **curriculum validation and review templates**, and **other appropriate teaching and learning templates**, drive a focus on authentically evidencing ESD engagement at course and module level.”

From AdvanceHE and QAA (2021)

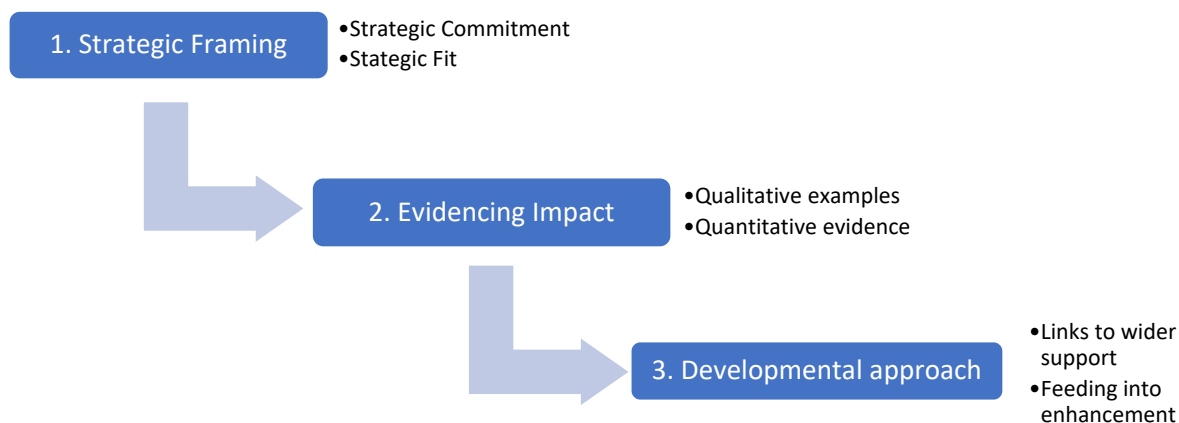
The above extracts from the [AdvanceHE/QAA 2021 guidance](#) highlight the goal of addressing ESD via Academic Quality (AQ) processes, but what does this look like in practice? This section aims to answer this question through specific examples developed at project partner institutions, covering the following: *1: Ongoing Academic Quality Processes; 2: Institution or department-wide curriculum change; 3: Student voice, feedback and co-creation.* In each case we put forward and discuss ideas for processes and signpost [verbatim text from example processes in appendices](#).

Contexts for implementation vary significantly between institutions, so in this section we distinguish [two key contextual dimensions](#) that can be used to develop an approach. Prior to putting forward examples, we also clarify key choices to be made which inform the specific implementation of these processes.

4.2 Diagnosis and Choice of Approach(es)

Here we introduce three key issues to consider which can inform plans on how ESD is addressed (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Diagnosis and Choices for ESD engagement



4.2.1 Strategic Framing: Commitment and Fit

“ESD is best achieved when... ESD objectives, targets and KPIs are **part of the institution’s strategic priorities** and subsequent strategies and policies.”

From AdvanceHE and QAA (2021)

The [2021 AdvanceHE/QAA guidance](#) highlights the value of ESD being part of an institution’s strategic priorities. Our evidence on strategic commitment suggests that this situation is increasingly common, but not universal nor certain to persist once secured. We therefore put forward two broad scenarios for institutional ESD commitment and fit to contextualise our recommendations (Table 3).

Table 3: Two scenarios for ESD strategic commitment

A: High Priority Explicit strong reference to ‘Sustainable Development’, ‘Sustainable Development Goals’, ‘Sustainability’, ‘Education for Sustainable Development’ or similar in strategic documents.	B: Lower Priority Strategic documents highlight other priorities or prioritisation of ESD-related issues appears to be relatively low (even if explicitly mentioned).
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Our findings suggest that the scope to explicitly address ESD in AQ and SV processes at any given time **strongly depends upon which of the scenarios above applies**. Furthermore, the rationale used to promote ESD will differ according to the terms used in strategic documents. Although characterising two scenarios, we do not intend for these to be viewed as static (see [EUA, 2021](#) for further exploration of this) – institutions may move *between scenarios*, prioritisation may differ *within an institution* (varying between departments) and the recommendations presented here offer [ideas towards increasing prioritisation of ESD](#).

Building upon these points on overall context, it is also worth thinking of ESD holistically in terms of three key aspects of ESD practice, which are highlighted in the [AdvanceHE/QAA guidance](#):

1. Engagement with issues raised by the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
2. Development of cross-cutting **ESD Competencies** such as systems thinking and collaboration.
3. **Pedagogic approaches** associated with ESD such as enquiry-based learning and playful learning.

Institutional strategic fit might be stronger or weaker with each of these aspects, so they are worth considering in turn. Applying a traffic light rating (Red/Amber/Green to indicate No/Some/Strong strategic linkages) to the three issues above can help reflection on this. This might indicate strong links to ESD from the perspectives of competencies or pedagogy, even if the ‘SDGs’ or ‘Sustainability’ are rarely mentioned.

Diagnosis in the terms above can help shape a stance on how ESD is expressed towards staff and students and the extent to which explicit mention in AQ and SV documents is feasible. A key aspect of this stance is if or how it is intended that students can articulate how their learning addresses sustainable development.

4.2.2 Evidencing Impact: Designing from the Outset

“Develop mechanisms for **evaluating the impact and efficacy** of ESD to demonstrate outcomes and drive continuous enhancement.”

From AdvanceHE and QAA (2021)

Our principles in section 2 suggest that AQ and SV processes can be used to evidence the impact of ESD in two ways: 1) providing **qualitative examples** of *how* this is done and its *impacts* (both from students and staff); 2) providing **quantitative evidence** of adoption or effectiveness. Year-on-year reporting can be established through the creation of a process designed for use over many years.

For qualitative example-generation, some issues to consider include:

- How will students’ experiences of ESD (both the learning processes and outcomes) be captured, disseminated and used as evidence of impact?
- How will staff practices be captured and good practices shared more widely as exemplars?

For generating quantitative evidence, some issues to consider include:

- What measures of success are a priority for the institution (linking to strategic priorities and fit) and can AQ and SV processes capture these?
- If data are collated based on ‘tick-box’ responses or checklists, will these ask for:

- Confirmation of **consideration** of ESD inclusion, such as via consultation with colleagues specialising in ESD, use of a toolkit or similar?
- Confirmation of **incorporation** of ESD into assessment, learning outcomes or otherwise?
- **Cross-referencing** against one or more relevant frameworks (e.g. the SDGs addressed, SDG targets addressed or ESD competencies)?

Note that these issues can also be considered outside of AQ and SV processes, such as through student surveys, keyword audits of programme documents, or via internal knowledge sharing events. These latter approaches may be all that is feasible in a “Lower Priority” scenario of limited strategic support for ESD.

4.2.3 Developmental Approach: Catalysing Learning and Engagement

Our findings suggest that AQ and SV processes are an essential part of mainstreaming ESD, and yet their value is dependent upon the extent to which they trigger meaningful and active engagement with the issue by educators and learners.

Thus, a key issue to focus on explicitly is how any AQ and SV processes serve a **developmental role**, aiding all concerned (including staff supporting these processes) to learn more about ESD and its implementation, and to be motivated and supported to do so.

A key strategy for this is to **signpost documents** offering further insight on ESD through web links within the process forms. Also, writing documents in **accessible language** for the target audience is important to aid clarity. Section 4 on [developing an enabling environment](#) addresses some specific approaches for this, including available expertise on ESD and supporting documents, case studies, resources and training.

4.3 Specific Examples

In this section, ideas are put forward for three different situations: 1) [Ongoing Academic Quality Processes](#); 2) [One-off Institution or Department-wide Curriculum Change](#); and 3) [Student Voice, Feedback and Co-Creation](#). These are linked to the two scenarios of strategic commitment introduced above and, wherever possible, they signpost **specific text in [Appendices of this report](#)** (e.g. “App 1.1.1”).

4.3.1 Ongoing Academic Quality Processes

Where ESD is a high priority, there are strong opportunities to make this explicit in AQ documents across all taught course activities of the institution. A summary of suggested approaches is in Table 4.

Table 4: Approaches linked to Academic Quality Processes

A: High Priority	B: Lower Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specify which Learning Outcomes address ESD (App 1.1.1, App 1.1.2) • Specify which SDGs and/or associated SDG targets their course engages with (App 1.1.1) • Request confirmation that ESD has been addressed or considered (App 1.1.3, App 1.1.4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer optional development guidance to trigger reflection on how to address ESD (App 1.1.5) • Request as one of several areas of good practice to optionally comment on (App 1.1.6)

A comprehensive and explicit approach is that taken by the University of Leicester with new programme approvals ([App 1.1.1](#)). This approach requests details regarding which learning outcomes address ESD, and which SDGs and specific SDG targets are addressed. Documentation provides links to relevant strategic commitments, further information on ESD and signposts colleagues who can provide further support.

Coventry University Group uses a Graduate Attributes framework, which is heavily informed by ESD competencies but articulates this to staff and learners using more accessible language, not mentioning ‘sustainable development’ ([App 1.1.2](#)). Learning outcomes and assessments across all programmes must address these attributes, enabling comprehensive integration. This approach illustrates a contrasting approach to articulation, where ESD terminology is directed to staff (via signposted guidance), but not to students. The University of Worcester also uses [a Graduate Attributes framework](#), with ESD knowledge and

competencies captured within the ‘Social Responsibility’ attribute and AQ processes being used to embed the Attributes.

A further contrast comes from De Montfort University ([App 1.1.3](#)) where approval of new apprenticeships requires some commentary on how ESD is addressed, supported by signposted developmental support via mentoring and toolkits. However, measurable actions in terms of learning outcomes, SDG linkages or similar are not demanded. Similarly, programme approvals at Manchester Metropolitan University also require some narrative on how ESD is addressed ([App 1.1.4](#)).

Regardless of the approach, it would typically entail mention of ESD in **each of the relevant documents associated with a process**: the form(s) to complete; guidance on the forms; and guidance for AQ staff reviewing submissions, such as prompts to use in validation meetings (see e.g. [App 1.1.1](#), [App 1.1.3](#)).

Where ESD is a ‘lower priority’, explicit mention in AQ processes as a cross-cutting requirement appears unlikely, but there is still often scope for engaged staff and students to raise this, using external drivers, such as subject benchmark statements and the AdvanceHE/QAA guidance, to highlight this as potential good practice (e.g. [App 1.1.5](#)). Optional resources highlighting how ESD could be considered could also be shared to provoke engagement by programme teams (e.g. [App 1.1.6](#)).

4.3.2 One-off Institution or Department-wide Curriculum Change

One-off processes could include an institution-wide curriculum renewal initiative, creation of a new overseas campus or partnership, or changes to teaching and learning triggered at a departmental/faculty level. They can offer a powerful, collaborative opportunity for widespread engagement with ESD. A summary of suggested approaches is in Table 5.

Table 5: Approaches linked to one-off institution or department-wide curriculum change.

A: High Priority	B: Lower Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request engagement with ESD in guidance for staff and AQ teams on programme approval within curriculum change (App 1.2.1) • Prompt consideration of strategic priorities related to ESD within curriculum change processes (App 1.2.2 and App 1.2.3) • Support faculties/departments/schools to articulate how they will engage with ESD via learning outcomes and assessment (App 1.2.4) • For new external partnerships, require comment upon linkages to ESD. (App 1.2.5) • Identify quantitative data (such as keyword usage) to enable a pre-post comparison of ESD engagement before/after curriculum change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support faculties/departments/schools to articulate the relevance of ESD (as noted left, but without linkage to learning outcomes or assessment) • Support non-teaching groups (e.g. research institutes, civic engagement projects) to articulate links to sustainable development and encourage to address through teaching. • As for section 3.3.1, highlight as a theme of best practice to optionally comment on.

As with [ongoing AQ processes](#), addressing ESD can be stated as a requirement and the same principles about a comprehensive approach, provision of background information and inclusion of ESD in all relevant documents, would still apply (e.g. De Montfort’s Education 2030 curriculum renewal process in [App 1.2.1](#)).

High prioritisation of ESD creates opportunities to specify the relevant strategic commitments in documentation ([App 1.2.2](#) and [App 1.2.3](#)). It also offers a chance for departmental units, at various scales, to articulate what sustainable development, ESD or otherwise mean to them, or to specify a commitment to subject-specific concepts (e.g. “Responsible Design”). With strong commitment, this articulation can be linked to learning outcomes as in [App 1.2.4](#); with weaker commitment, this may be an over-arching statement with no formal mechanism to link to course design.

Where ESD is a high priority, there are also opportunities to apply the same ethos in documentation of programmes delivered through external partnerships ([App 1.2.5](#)).

4.3.3 Student Voice, Feedback and Co-creation

A range of processes drawing upon students' input and collaboration are listed in Table 6:

Table 6: Approaches linked to student voice, feedback and co-creation processes

A: High Priority	B: Lower Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train and support Course Reps to address ESD adoption through their roles • Support students to articulate their ESD experience by stating in programme/module documents how this is addressed (App 1.3.1) • Survey students on their ESD experience (App 1.3.2) • Make ESD or Sustainable Development a standing agenda item in meetings. (App 1.3.3) • Run co-creation projects to design or enhance courses incorporating ESD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take part in SOS-UK Sustainability Skills survey • Support engaged students to have dialogue on their ESD experience and highlight success stories

Within our project team, two partners (De Montfort and Leicester Universities) developed and ran engagement for Course Reps. Where ESD is a high priority, this can include mention of ESD in their induction, dedicated workshops on how to address this in their role, and guidance documents and a process to follow on how to map strengths and weaknesses of ESD coverage and raise this with programme teams.

Being able to articulate how learning addresses ESD is an important aspect of that learning. Offering an account of this to students can help – at De Montfort, Programme Templates now have a space where this is specifically requested from staff ([App 1.3.1](#)).

A key potential mechanism for student feedback is surveying students (see Table 7). At Manchester Metropolitan University, where ESD is a high strategic priority, a dedicated annual survey is used ([App 1.3.2](#)); strong prioritisation might also translate into usage of optional National Student Survey (NSS) questions addressing environmental aspects of ESD. Within this project, two statements were developed for use within student engagement processes. Where ESD is a lower priority, staff could still promote student participation in the annual SOS-UK Sustainability Skills Survey.

Table 7: Statements for student evaluation of ESD

Source	Statement(s) – for use with rating scales (agree/disagree/etc.)
This Project	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My course has addressed how sustainable development is relevant to my subject area and discipline 2. My course has empowered me to make a difference to real-world social and environmental challenges
SOS-UK Skills Survey	Several relevant questions, including: Being a student at my university/college encourages me to think and act to help the environment and other people
NSS Optional Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My institution encourages good environmental practice. 2. My course has encouraged me to think about environmental sustainability. 3. I have had opportunities to take part in activities supporting environmental sustainability

Where regular meetings take place with students on taught courses, with strategic support, ESD or similar can be a standing agenda item ([App 1.3.3](#)). Many universities run co-creation initiatives, and these can be used to shape how ESD is addressed through students' input. Examples include 'Student Learning and Teaching Consultant' roles, in use at both De Montfort and Leicester Universities and employed to enable student engagement to co-design new courses or co-curricular activities.

Where co-creation is not feasible through formal routes or if there is low strategic support for ESD, identifying engaged students and staff and documenting success stories of ESD engagement from their programmes can have value. This approach both captures feedback from stakeholders and provides evidence of successful implementation which could lead to increased strategic support.

5 Qualities of an Enabling Environment

A key joint conclusion of the project team was that whilst AQ and SV processes might encourage engagement or provide a setting for exploration of ESD, success was in large part reliant on a wider **enabling environment**.

Many aspects of this are stressed in the [2021 AdvanceHE/QAA guidance](#). Other frameworks such as SOS-UK's "[Responsible Futures](#)" or the EAUC [Sustainability Leadership Scorecard](#) also capture key dimensions. Our aim in this section is to offer a supplement to this by highlighting aspects of particular relevance to AQ and SV Processes and sharing insights which are not explored in depth in the 2021 guidance. We address three key issues here: [strategic commitment](#); [ESD expertise](#); and [exemplification and guidance](#).

5.1 Strategic Commitment

"Think about how SD is considered **holistically across the institution**, not just at curriculum level."

From AdvanceHE and QAA (2021)

In section 3 we explored developing an approach to addressing ESD in the light of various [levels or qualities of strategic commitment](#). Here, we offer some specific examples of what such commitments look like and how to make progress in these contexts (Table 8).

Table 8: Working with different types of strategic commitment to ESD

A: High Priority (reflected by):	B: Lower Priority (actions to secure commitments)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An explicit commitment to Sustainable Development, ESD or the SDGs• Top-level strategy with a clear mapping to ESD (App 2.1.1)• Strong priority in cross-cutting strategies (App 2.1.2, App 2.1.3, App 2.1.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Secure lower-profile or department/topic-level strategic commitments to build upon (App 2.1.5)• Try other routes to securing strategic commitment outside of institutional strategy (e.g. 'SDG Accord')• Align work to other external drivers (e.g. Subject Benchmark Statements, QAA/AdvanceHE Guidance)

The scenario most amenable to explicit engagement with ESD is where Sustainable Development, the SDGs or similar are named as key strategic goals in the institution's strategic plan. At De Montfort University, 'Sustainability and the SDGs' is one of four cross-cutting themes [in the university strategy](#). At University of Leicester, there is a clear mapping to two of the three headline strategic priorities ([App 2.1.1](#)), as seen in ESD guidance highlighted above ([App 1.1.1](#)).

Explicit mention of ESD in other strategic documents, such as for Learning and Teaching or Sustainability can enable good support via AQ and SV processes, if these issues are prioritised ([App 2.1.2](#), [App 2.1.3](#) and [App 2.1.4](#) from Manchester Met, Worcester and Derby respectively). With lower strategic support, even some mention in these documents, even if not as a priority theme, can help build a strategic case for future commitment and articulate what ESD looks like at that institution. This was done at De Montfort in its 2018 Learning Teaching and Assessment strategy, despite weaker top-level sustainability commitments at the time ([App 2.1.5](#)).

5.2 ESD expertise available

"Ensure that staff driving quality assurance and enhancement **have knowledge and understanding of ESD** and how they can enable its positioning across curricula."

From AdvanceHE and QAA (2021)

Our collective experience is that dialogue with colleagues with a strong grounding in how and why to address ESD is a key ingredient of successful incorporation. Table 9 offers ideas on how to enable this.

Table 9: Enabling access to ESD expertise

A: High Priority	B: Lower Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create dedicated staff roles and responsibilities for ESD (App 2.2.1)• Trigger dialogue with ESD experts via signposting or requirements in AQ and SV processes (App 2.2.2)• Deepen expertise across institution by supporting staff with conference attendance and training fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create temporary roles enabling access to expertise through short-term teaching enhancement projects.• Take part in external training or peer-support and learning programmes such as SOS-UK’s Responsible Futures.

An ideal situation is to have staff in permanent roles with specific responsibility for ESD. These might be strategically oriented (e.g. fractional roles for academic staff), ESD responsibilities in specific teams, or delivery-oriented roles (e.g. ‘Officer’ roles to deliver student engagement and sustainability-related courses). [App 2.2.1](#) illustrates a role description for a 0.1FTE Faculty ESD lead role.

AQ and SV processes can then link the available in-house ESD expertise and time to staff and students seeking support. At University of Leicester ([App 2.2.2](#)) this is via outreach to programme teams triggered by the release of each revised QAA Subject Benchmark Statement. This incremental approach was chosen to spread the workload of deeper ESD engagement with colleagues over several years. At De Montfort, consultation with an ESD representative was made a requirement of programme approval within the Education 2030 curriculum renewal process. With strong prioritisation, this expertise can be broadened across multiple staff and teams, such as through funding conference attendance or training courses.

With lower prioritisation, temporary capacity to offer in-house expert help can be created via one-off teaching enhancement projects, potentially building the case for permanent roles. Access to external expertise has value in all scenarios, but particularly where in-house expertise is lacking – schemes such as [Responsible Futures](#) enable this on both a peer-to-peer basis and via attending knowledge sharing events.

5.3 Exemplification and Guidance

“Enable opportunities for the sharing of SD ideas, **knowledge exchange and experiences** across the institution.”
From AdvanceHE and QAA (2021)

Across our partner institutions, a frequent request from those involved in AQ and SV processes was to provide examples of ESD in practice and what their engagement with it could look like. These supporting resources and documents can play a key role in making these processes effective (see Table 10).

Table 10: Exemplification and guidance materials

A: High Priority	B: Lower Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce short guidance documents on ESD for key roles (e.g. Course Reps, AQ Officers) (App 2.3.1)• Document diverse case studies of ESD practice• Document diverse examples of strong engagement with AQ and SV processes linked to ESD (App 2.3.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signpost key national level documents• Invite guest speakers from other institutions• Signpost examples, support and training and documents that go into more depth on ESD

If ESD is a high priority, dedicated staff time can enable the production of targeted materials – this can include accessible and short guidance for those with key roles in AQ and SV. At De Montfort, both Course Reps and AQ staff have 2-page guides introducing ESD for their role and signposting actions ([App 2.3.1](#)). Case studies of local practice, whether in writing, video or within events, offer another route (e.g. see De Montfort’s ESD [Case Study webpage](#)). Similarly, examples of strong engagement with the requested AQ and SV processes related to ESD enable all parties to better understand how to engage with them ([App 2.3.2](#)).

If ESD is a ‘Lower Priority’, there is a likely need to rely on external sources. This can include signposting national-level guidance and case studies, or inviting in guest speakers to provide practice examples.

6 Conclusions

Comparison and discussion of experiences for the 11 HEI project partners has highlighted that the context for progressing ESD varies significantly across institutions and over time. One-size-fits-all recommendations would therefore not be appropriate and whilst we offer 7 broad [‘SUCCEED’ principles of relevance for any institution](#), we also recommend internal dialogue on a range of [issues which are institution-specific](#).

Our experiences have shown that whilst addressing ESD across formal and informal processes is likely to be necessary for mainstreaming, it is not in itself sufficient – the wider [‘enabling environment’](#) across an institution and sector is crucial for motivating action, supporting implementation and clarifying the scope and purpose of ESD.

Evidence from our staff and student survey on how ESD is supported by AQ and SV processes demonstrated a mixed picture to date of adoption and perceived effectiveness of these processes. In many cases they are absent and where present, they are often viewed as a ‘tick-box exercise’, not leveraging meaningful engagement. Strategic commitments to ESD and sustainable development were commonplace, but explicit inclusion in AQ and SV processes appears to be scarce across UK HEIs.

We found that the extent and nature of strategic support for ESD adoption has a key influence on if and how AQ and SV processes can address ESD. Our recommendations are therefore contextualised in terms of whether ESD adoption is a [“High Priority” or a relatively “Lower Priority”](#). There are also choices to be made at institution or department level on [how progress on ESD is evidenced](#) and how AQ and SV processes are [used to catalyse learning and engagement](#) with ESD amongst staff and students.

Responding to feedback from colleagues at partner institutions, specific examples of AQ and SV processes are greatly valued, and these are included in the [Appendices](#) in this report.

This project has taken place during a period of change for ESD in a UK setting, as HEIs increasingly see it as within their scope to address sustainable development issues through research, external impact and teaching and learning. In relation to Academic Quality, revisions to Subject Benchmark Statements and many professional accreditation frameworks are also driving ESD engagement across many subjects.

As a result of these external influences, the mainstreaming of ESD is currently unfolding through HEI policies, processes, and practices. Our findings and recommendations reflect this context, which will likely evolve towards further widespread integration of ESD across many institutions in the coming years, though degrees of strategic commitment will still vary. By positioning recommendations in relation to a range of HEI operating environments, we have aimed to offer something of value to any reader engaged with this agenda in a range of roles. As noted in our discussion of principles, mainstreaming of ESD via AQ and SV is in any case an incremental process – evolving as processes are renewed and, crucially, as staff deepen their experience and engagement with the ESD agenda over time.

Finally, it is worth noting that even in those cases where AQ and SV processes were strongest of all, there is still much to do for ESD practice in higher education settings to live up to its purpose of transforming learners and society. The ideas and recommendations presented here offer a further step in that direction.

7 References

AdvanceHE and QAA (2021) [Education for Sustainable Development Guidance](#)

EAUC (2023) [Sustainability Leadership Scorecard](#)

EAUC (2023) [SDG Accord](#)

EUA (2021) [Environmental Sustainability of Learning and Teaching \(European Universities Association\)](#)

QAA (2018) [UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Student Engagement](#)

QAA (2022) [Subject Benchmark Statements](#)

SOS-UK (2023). [Responsible Futures](#)

8 Acknowledgements

The project team is grateful for the opportunity to develop this work over the past fifteen months. We have found that our regular meetings and correspondence have been mutually supportive, insightful, and highly collegiate.

QAA have offered a well-structured mentoring approach to support us to produce an output of value to the wider sector. We commend the Collaborative Enhancement Project approach and encourage other institutions to engage in these in future to address issues of mutual interest and sector-wide relevance.

We are grateful to the contributions from colleagues from across partner institutions, including: Sophia Goddard, Dana Miles, Graeme Stuart, Tom Harrison, Laura Sanderson, Rebecca Thirlby, Manjeet Ridon (De Montfort University); Alice Jackson, Kathryn Brennan, Katherine Taylor (University of Leicester); Loretta Newman-Ford (Cardiff University); Ali Bakhit, Lizann Bonnar (University of Strathclyde); Hannah Beck, Selina Fletcher, Stacey Jones (Coventry University Group); Steve Cayzer (University of Bath); Justin Hinshelwood, Catherine Taylor, Helen Cameron (University of Exeter); Elaine Owen (University of Derby); Sarah Mottram (Manchester Metropolitan University).

9 Appendices

The appendices include specific examples of text from partner institutions relating to the sections of the report. Wherever possible verbatim text is used – in a small number of instances, institution-specific acronyms are written in full to aid clarity. Hyperlinks to sub-sections are below.

1. [Examples of Processes to Address ESD](#)

1.1 [Ongoing Academic Quality Processes](#)

1.2 [One-off Institution or department-wide Curriculum Change](#)

1.3 [Student Voice, Feedback and Co-Creation Processes](#)

2. [Enabling Environment Examples](#)

2.1 [Strategy](#)

2.2 [ESD Expertise Available](#)

2.3 [Guidance and Resources](#)

1. Examples of Processes to Address ESD

1.1 Ongoing Academic Quality Processes

1.1.1 Programme Approval Form (University of Leicester)

An extract of the form below which specifically relates to ESD:

Citizens of Change

Education for Sustainable Development

[Education for Sustainable Development](#) (ESD) is a vision of education which provides students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to shape a sustainable future and become socially responsible global citizens. In the 2022 NUS Sustainability Skills Survey, 88% of Leicester student respondents believed that universities should actively incorporate and promote sustainable development and 81% believed that it should be incorporated within courses.

As part of the [Research Inspired Education Strategy](#) and [Climate Change Strategy](#), we aim to embed sustainability into all our programmes by providing all students with access to teaching aligned to the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). This means that they have teaching relating to one or more UN SDGs in a core or optional module(s). The data provided in this section is used for recruitment purposes, such as the prospectus and course webpages.

Please indicate how the programme incorporates Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), through **module-level intended learning outcomes** that engage with one or more of the UN SDGs. For each, please identify:

- the ILO evidencing ESD
- the related UN SDG(s)
- the Code of the Module in which the ILO appears
- is the Module Core or Optional

Please fill in the table below to answer this section. Please add any other comments underneath the table. Targets and Indicators can be found by clicking into each goal and switching from the 'overview' section to 'targets and indicators'.

Module (including module code)	Core or optional?	Specific ILO(s) relating to the UN SDGs	Related UN SDGS	Specific SDG Target or Indicator
<i>Example:</i> CH1207 Chemistry of the Real World	Core	"Identify and describe how chemistry impacts on everyday life in such areas as the environment, sustainability & materials."	SDG 12, 13, 14 and 15	12.2, 13.3, 14.3, 15.5
add/delete additional rows as required				
add/delete additional rows as required				

Please add below any other comments you have about how the programme incorporates Education for Sustainable Development (ESD):

Click or tap here to enter text.

Guidance for panel members at Programme Approval Panels:

Has the programme clearly evidenced alignment of module ILOs with a target for one or more of the UN Sustainable Development Goals
(https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Global%20Indicator%20Framework%20after%202022%20refinement_Eng.pdf).
Note alignment with the goal is not sufficient, it must be clearly aligned to a target within a goal.
For more information on Education for Sustainable Development or the Sustainable Development Goals, please contact esd@le.ac.uk

1.1.2 Graduate Attributes (Coventry University Group)

Institution-wide Graduate Attributes (GAs) are specified and [available online here](#), on a webpage including links to guidance on ESD. Process to translate GAs into course design is summarised below.

Within new course specifications: Course teams are asked to contextualise what generic “Graduate Attributes” (GAs) would mean for their students over the 3 years of UG study. In this case the GA is “Act with Integrity” which includes “Taking responsibilityand recognising impact on others and the environment”. These outcomes are then embedded within modules.

Within modules: All GAs are taught (students develop these alongside discipline specific knowledge/skills) and assessed every year in the context of the course discipline. Assignment brief templates, pre-moderation templates and feedback pro-formas have all been amended to highlight the requirements to develop, assess and feedback on GAs for students.

1.1.3 Validation of Apprenticeship Programmes (De Montfort University)

Guidance for programme teams towards validation states:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

DMU is committed to all of its academic programmes considering issues associated with EDI and ESD, reflecting the university’s strategic commitments to creating a fairer and more sustainable society. This is essential at the course development stage, as these issues may affect recruitment priorities, the purpose of the curriculum and the pedagogic approach taken. Guidance is available from DMU teams leading on EDI and ESD and these colleagues should be consulted for formative feedback as programmes are developed.

Terms of Reference for (re)validation panels state:

Review the programme against university standards and initiatives such as Universal Design for Learning, anonymous marking, Education for Sustainable Development, DecolonisingDMU

This is also specified in the list of document requirements for a (re)validation panel meeting.

Information on how Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is addressed within the programme and confirmation of consultation with DMU ESD team and/or completion of ESD prompts.

1.1.4 Programme Approvals (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Guidance for programme teams states:

Outline how the programme will align to the University’s enabling strategy for [Leadership in Sustainability](#) and how education for sustainable development (ESD) and climate change education will be embedded within the programme.

These resources may provide additional information and support to complete this section: [Education for Sustainable Development](#)

1.1.5 Programme Self-Assessment Report (University of Winchester)

The questions below are used as part of a “Sustainability Needs Analysis Survey”, used to aid reflection by programme teams on how to incorporate ESD in taught course design.

1. Name of programme:
2. To what extent will the programme encourage students to explore issues related to climate justice, environmental and ecological justice? (Not at all/very little/quite often/very often)
3. If you wish to add any additional notes or ideas relating to your answer to question one above, please do so below:
4. To what extent will the programme allow students to understand the causes and origins of climate, environmental and ecological injustice and omission in this field of study, in its historical context? (Not at all/very little/quite often/very often)
5. If you wish to add any additional notes or ideas relating to your answer to question three above, please do so below:
6. How will teaching on the programme integrate a critical examination of environmental and ecological injustices and issues, and relate these to the other social justice questions studied on the programme?
7. How will the programme allow for and encourage a critical approach to texts that provide insight to environmental issues, including those from minoritized perspectives?
8. How will the programme ensure that its pedagogical approaches enable work beyond the classroom/academic space?

1.1.6 Programme Self-Assessment Report (De Montfort University)

Guidance for programme teams stated:

- In this regard you will reflect on the following as it relates to your delivery and other themes/issues as applicable:
- Areas for improvement / Good practice, for example: student voice, induction, transitions, research informed/engaged teaching, embedding internationalisation, [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) and the diverse needs arising from the diversity of your student cohort, [Decolonising DMU](#) and [Education for Sustainable Development \(ESD\)](#).

1.2 One-off Institution or department-wide Curriculum Change

1.2.1 Institution wide Curriculum Renewal Programme (De Montfort University)

The [Staff Toolkit](#) linked to DMU’s 2022 Education 2030 Curriculum renewal process emphasises engaging with sustainability and includes a one-page toolkit for considering sustainability issues.

Documentation includes: guidance for programme teams on requirements for validation of programmes:

Information on how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are linked to within the programme and how sustainability education is embedded within the curriculum.

Guidance for programme teams on requirements for submitted documents:

Report/notes from Programme Transformation Sprint event (with DMU services eg Equality Diversity Inclusion, Sustainability, Decolonising DMU, Universal Design for Learning, Employability and Students) or equivalent narrative of embedded themes

Additional summary or narrative from faculty/Head of School (with DMU services eg Equality Diversity Inclusion, Sustainability, Decolonising DMU, Universal Design for Learning, Employability and Students) or equivalent narrative of embedded themes, if applicable.

Prompt in documents for Academic Quality team to consider when evaluating documents submitted:

Have the team embedded elements of sustainable education into the curriculum?

1.2.2 Faculty Programme Enhancement Process (University of Exeter)

Exeter’s [FPEP Process](#) document offers issues to consider related to ESD:

1) Questions related to our University Strategy:

a) **Sustainable, healthy, and socially just futures**

i) How does the programme/cluster support the purpose stated in the University's 2030 strategy "To use the power of our education and research to create a sustainable, healthy and socially just future", and the related Transformative Education framework:

<https://www.exeter.ac.uk/about/vision/successforall/transformativeeducation/>

ii) How far does the programme/cluster support the University's 2030 strategy commitments to: a) transform human health and wellbeing, and b) progress towards creating a fair, socially just, and inclusive society?

b) **Cultural competence and global citizenship.**

i) Climate and environment emergency

(1) How far does the programme/cluster support the University's 2030 strategy commitments to take meaningful action against the climate emergency and ecological crisis?

(2) Please tell us which, if any, of the UN Sustainability Goals does your programme/cluster contribute to? (The 17 Sustainable Development Goals aim to end poverty, achieve prosperity, and protect the planet by 2030. Education is vital if all 17 goals are to be achieved. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>) You may also wish to consider: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/education-for-sustainable-development>

(3) To what extent have you enabled students to develop key skills and competencies related to sustainability within your programme/cluster? How did you achieve this?

ii) Cultural competencies

(1) A guiding resource has been developed which may help your review of this area:

<https://universityofexeteruk.sharepoint.com/sites/EducationToolkit/SitePages/Cultural-competence-in-education-environments.aspx> Does the programme:

(a) Deliberately create an environment in which students are empowered to respectfully address and examine different cultural situations and perspectives from multiple experiential viewpoints?

(b) Explicitly explore assumptions, biases, and 'established knowledge' that arise from various cultural affiliations and consider their impact on the learning process?

(c) Directly link the acquisition of cultural competencies, skills, and knowledge to success not only in the programme/cluster, but to life beyond the degree programme (in employment or otherwise)?

(2) To what extent has the educator demonstrated cultural competence in their creation of the curriculum and approach to teaching and learning support?

(3) How are students being supported in gaining cultural competence?

c) **Innovation, entrepreneurship, and digitalisation.**

i) How does the programme/cluster support students to acquire enterprise and entrepreneurial skills?

ii) How does the programme/cluster support students to obtain digital literacies?

1.2.3 Curriculum Transformation Principles (University of Bath)

Principle encouraging ESD engagement within Bath's Curriculum Transformation framework:

Curriculum Transformation Principles approved by Senate on 6 June 2018 should guide the design of curricula for all courses:

Principle 7. Global Citizenship and Sustainability: Recognise the challenges presented by the changes to our broader physical and social environment. Consider how our curriculum might empower students for the roles they will play during their lives as global citizens. Develop mechanisms in the curricular and/or co-curricular realms to prepare them for these challenges.

Quality Assurance Approval of Courses under Curriculum Transformation (CT):

"...high-quality taught provision is built on our 9 established [curriculum principles](#) ..."

Approval of New Courses of Study: For Full Academic Approval; *"alignment with the University's Curriculum Design Principles and appropriately engaged with any relevant Subject Benchmark Statements"*

1.2.4 Faculty and school-wide statements (De Montfort University)

The statement below was adopted as a faculty-wide programme learning outcome during De Montfort's 2022 'Education 2023' curriculum renewal process:

Develop and apply values, skills, knowledge and behaviours that will enable them to contribute to the development of a just, peaceful and sustainable world.

De Montfort's School of Fashion and Textiles made the following block curriculum change to all module templates in 2019/20:

Content: The ethos of responsible design and the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals will be reflected in this module.

Assessment notes: In these assessments, students will be expected to reflect on an ethos of responsible design and where possible the appropriate United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

1.2.5 International Partnership Agreements (De Montfort University)

The question below is used in the forms for setting up new partnerships for overseas delivery.

Do you have a sustainability strategy and/or a commitment to sustainability? How is it implemented?

The Appraisal and Enhancement form for education delivered by external partners includes:

How have issues of sustainability and the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) goals been embedded into the programme? Are there any areas of good practice or enhancement related to this?

1.3 Student Voice, Feedback and Co-Creation Processes

1.3.1 Programme Handbook Templates (De Montfort University)

Within "Key Programme Information" section of Programme Handbook template – for editing by programme teams and sharing with students. Original hyperlinks signpost respectively to DMU main web page on ESD and two-page internal toolkit for staff on how to address ESD.

DMU is committed to all programmes empowering students to [address issues of Sustainable Development](#), such as social inequalities, health and wellbeing and environmental impacts, through course-specific teaching, learning and assessment approaches. For this programme, this is done through *[add 1-2 sentences of programme-specific comments here; staff guidance [available here](#)]*

In supporting document on how to complete the Programme Template. Original hyperlinks go to internal resources for staff as above.

Include the DMU-wide text on how Sustainable Development is addressed, supported by 1-2 sentences of programme specific detail on how this is done. Guidance and support on this is [available here](#) and via the DMU [Education for Sustainable Development website](#).

1.3.2 Student Surveys on ESD and Climate Education (Manchester Metropolitan University)

The question below is used in an internal student survey (ISS) in relation to the two institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) below:

ISS question: My course provides me with the opportunities to gain knowledge and skills relating to sustainable development.

KPIs: 1) Students satisfied that they have opportunities to gain sustainable development skills and knowledge; 2) Courses that include Education for Sustainable Development and climate change education

1.3.3 Standing Agenda Item for Programme Meetings (De Montfort University)

Standing item on Programme Management Board agenda, to amend as needed according to cross-cutting strategic issues being addressed.

Strategic directives

(This item is for any university wide or faculty initiatives for discussion, for example Education2030, Decolonising DMU, Education for Sustainable Development / SDGs, employability, widening participation - amend wording or list as separate items if required)

2 Enabling Environment Examples

2.1 Strategy

2.1.1 Institution-wide Strategy (University of Leicester)

Leicester's three strategic themes include two with strong links to ESD: 'Research-inspired Education' and 'Our Citizens':

Research inspired Education: Empower our students with the expertise and skills they need to realise their ambitions to become positive Citizens of Change.

Our Citizens: Aim 4: Maximising our impact as Citizens of Change to tackle the big issues of today and tomorrow focusing on climate change, inclusion and our wider social impact.

2.1.2 Education and Sustainability Strategies (Manchester Metropolitan University)

At Manchester Met, commitments to ESD are articulated in both the Leadership in Sustainability Strategy (text below) and the institution-wide Education strategy.

[Leadership in Sustainability Strategy](#)

In working to deliver this goal, from 2022 to 2026 we will: Embed Education for Sustainable Development and climate change education into formal and informal learning and professional development to equip all students and staff with the knowledge and skills required to help shape a more sustainable future.

Education Strategy: Future-Focused Curriculum and Delivery

Commits to: "Embedding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across our portfolio"

2.1.3 Sustainability Strategy and Learning in Teaching Strategy (University of Worcester)

University of Worcester's ESD commitments are expressed in its Sustainability Strategy (below) and its [Learning and Teaching Strategy](#), where Education for Sustainable Futures is an area of focus and impact.

The University seeks to further embed inclusion of sustainability principles in its formal curriculum and learning and teaching practice. This will enable all our students to develop a future focus and global outlook and the ability to innovate and lead change in support of sustainability.

Commitment 4: Embed inclusion of sustainability principles in our formal curriculum, learning and teaching practice

2.1.4 Curriculum Design Framework (University of Derby)

University of Derby's Curriculum Design Framework document states:

"The university is committed to putting sustainability at the heart of education. We aim to embed social responsibility and sustainability throughout our students' journey so that they are both capable and motivated to contribute actively to a more sustainable future in their professional and personal lives."

2.1.5 Teaching and Learning Strategy (De Montfort University)

This sentence featured in the preamble paragraphs of De Montfort’s 2018 Teaching and Learning Strategy:

“We will equip students and staff with an understanding of **the challenges of sustainability and sustainable development**, and will approach learning, teaching and assessment mindful of the **opportunities to contribute locally and globally** to the public good and environmental futures as well as of our impact on a resource-limited world.”

2.2 ESD Expertise Available

2.2.1 Role Description for Faculty ESD Lead (De Montfort University)

Faculty ESD Leads will

- Lead on PRME in the faculty and coordinate with academic colleagues on PRME related opportunities and activities
- Provide ESD leadership for the Faculty, raising the profile of ESD and supporting colleagues to adopt it
- Link Faculty activities to the ESD Project and support wider sustainability initiatives at DMU
- Encourage adoption of ESD through
 - The taught curriculum (e.g. through academic quality processes)
 - Faculty-specific methods for students to engage in ESD outside of formally scheduled classes, e.g. through individual and group personal tutoring, trips or volunteering
 - Engaging with, and where possible contributing to, relevant events and external opportunities to promote ESD
 - Organising faculty fora/events
 - Providing support, mentoring, and signposting to resources for colleagues
- Updating the ESD Project Board on progress in embedding sustainability in taught courses at Faculty level (either by serving as a Faculty representative on the ESD Project Board or through liaison with an existing faculty representative)

2.2.2 Support aligned to Subject Benchmark trigger points (University of Leicester)

The Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS) now all include specific references to EDI, Accessibility, Employability and ESD, which are also important elements of the University’s Research Inspired Curriculum going forwards. ...

The updated SBS now include mention of Sustainability and [Education for Sustainable Development](#), and so we have designed a workshop to support you with completing and enhancing these elements of the mapping process to your subject area(s). To get the most out of the workshop, the suggested attendees for your subject team include: Director of Education, relevant programme leads, EDI rep, Careers Tutor, and environmental action coordinator and other relevant members of your School Education Committee (we will work with the Student Union to recruit student partners for the workshop).

2.3 Guidance and Resources

2.3.1 Extracts from 2-page tipsheet for AQ Colleagues (De Montfort University)

What does ESD look like?

ESD will look different in any given subject area, so academic colleagues value **guidance and support** to understand the agenda and develop curricula that put this into practice. To give some specific examples:

- In Engineering, students could undertake [a design exercise](#) to meet a sustainable infrastructure need of a specific community (e.g. access to clean water or renewable energy)
- In Fashion and Textiles, students could learn about the [environmental and social impacts](#) of garment manufacture, debate these issues in class and use sustainability criteria in assessed design projects.
- In healthcare disciplines, students could explore how their practice could evolve to minimise environmental impacts through the [NHS's transition to 'Net Zero' carbon emission operations](#), through guest lectures and project work with colleagues from the local NHS trust.
- In business education, students could critically discuss different frameworks to evaluate [the social value of business](#) and analyse real-world businesses through this lens.

Key Asks for Programme Teams

DMU's Programme Handbook Template states: "DMU is committed to all programmes empowering students to address issues of Sustainable Development, such as social inequalities, health and wellbeing and environmental impacts, through course-specific teaching, learning and assessment approaches."

Questions to raise in relation to taught courses:

1. **How has Sustainable Development been addressed in this course?**
 - As a minimum, this should be reflected in learning outcomes and assessments of at least one compulsory module. **At commendation level, engagement is made explicit to students and is reflected strongly in the ethos, pedagogy and assessment approach of the programme.**
 - To clarify what this means in dialogue, draw on points from "What does ESD look like?" above.
2. **Has this been articulated in writing for students?**
 - As a minimum as one-two sentences for programme handbooks; or (commendation-level) in more detail specifying how this is developed over the whole programme and linked to assessments.
 - [Examples of statements by programmes/schools are available here.](#)
3. **Have you engaged with the support and resources available?**
 - This could include this document, toolkits or guidance on the <https://esdg.our.dmu.ac.uk> website, external ESD guidance or input from [colleagues specialising in ESD](#).

2.3.2 Extracts from example programme/school statements on ESD (De Montfort University)

Policing: Within DMU's Policing and Criminal Investigations team taught programmes, there is a focus on Sustainable Development issues, covering a number of areas of the United Nations Sustainability Goals (2030). This includes providing students with a level of education which makes explicit links to inclusivity, equality and continual professional development in response to a contemporary changing landscape of challenges. This involves an understanding of both internal and external cultural dimensions, along with a range of differing views and perspectives in others.

Engineering: A key strength of the school is our engagement with real-world projects and challenges. Engineering students have participated for many years in the Engineering for People design challenge, run with the NGO 'Engineers without Borders'. Through the competition, groups of students on the 2nd year Project Management module develop engineering-based solutions for specific sustainable development challenges in overseas communities. Past projects have included topics such as rainwater harvesting and access to sanitation facilities. DMU students have been finalists every year since 2014.

Computer Science and Informatics: Our curriculum is informed by the on-going excellent research carried out within the School. Of particular note the Centre for Computing and Social Responsibility are particularly influential in delivering subject material that relates to ethics and associated areas (including sustainability). As can be seen in the new Programme, there is a significant theme of ethics throughout the course, and this provides further opportunities to explore sustainability. ICT for Development for example includes consideration of the digital divide (economic, social, political, cultural, etc.) in relation to both issues and solutions, and includes consideration of the UN SDGs.