

Institution

Coventry University Group

What we did

Institutional Context

Coventry University Group's (CUG) 2030 Strategy, launched in 2022, sets out four key strategic themes; namely Education/Student experience, Research/Impact, Enterprise/Innovation and Global University. These themes are underpinned by the implementing of value-adding activities via key strategic enablers, one of which is "Sustainable Development". The strategy sets out that:

"Our activities will be at the forefront of advancements in addressing sustainability issues, and we will embed research and knowledge around sustainable development and social responsibility into our courses"

There have been a number of initiatives developed before the new strategy, including the Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) becoming a signatory to Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). FBL have used their Faculty Strategy and quality monitoring processes to embed PRME requirements into all their activity including teaching, research and community projects. The work has been led under the stewardship of Dr Jaliyyah Ahmadu-Bello who is the Sustainability Champion in FBL. More information on how FBL have embedded PRME in their quality processes is available in their *Sharing Information of Progress Report* (SIP) for 2020-2022 available [here](#). At an institutional level in 2022 Coventry University and Your Students' Union were awarded "Responsible Futures" accreditation by SOS-UK. The award reflects the institution's and Students' Union's shared commitment to embedding sustainability and social responsibility across the formal and informal curriculum.

Key to embedding sustainable development and social responsibility into all courses, to achieve the 2030 Group Strategy, was the development of the Coventry University Group Graduate Attributes. These Graduate Attributes were developed through engagement with employers, students and staff and have gone through a number of iterations as part of development process.

The five Graduate Attributes set out the key characteristics and underpinning skills/activities expected of CUG students who complete their studies whatever their discipline or level. Embedded through the descriptions of the Graduate Attributes are aspects of both sustainable development and social responsibility. Examples include under the attribute of "**Acting with Integrity**" to "*take responsibility for my actions and behaviour and have the self-awareness to recognise the impact it has on others and the environment*". Additionally, under the "**Think creatively**" attribute the ability to "*think dynamically to find creative solutions to ever-changing challenges of the modern world*" and "*....to lead and drive positive impact and change in both my career and community*". Students will be expected to demonstrate, through assessment, how they have achieved the Graduate Attributes at the end of their studies.

The Curriculum Transformation Project (CTP) at Coventry University, for September 2023 start, provided the ideal opportunity to embed the Graduate Attributes (and therefore aspects of sustainable development and social responsibility) in all new courses that were being designed, starting in January 2022.

Initial engagements with staff

Engagement with teaching staff, regarding the embedding of Graduate Attributes in their new courses content, was planned from January 2022 as part of the CTP. Briefings were planned with teaching staff to re-enforce the key principles of the Graduate Attributes which included;

- The aim of the Graduate Attributes Framework is to specify for students and employers, the Graduate Attributes, characteristics, skills and abilities of Coventry University Group graduates on completion of their course.
- Students will demonstrate all these Graduate Attributes through the formal curriculum and will have the opportunity to further enhance, develop and through extra-curricular activities.
- Courses will be designed to enable students to demonstrate these Graduate Attributes, in addition to course specific learning outcomes, at the level appropriate to the course.

- The Graduate Attributes will be contextualised and articulated at each level and will be assessed within the modules.

A model was developed for staff to embed the Graduate Attributes in their courses which outlined the required process including;

- Contextualising, at course level, what the Graduate Attribute outcomes mean for each level of learning
- Determining what evidence will be required to demonstrate the Graduate Attributes
- Planning learning experiences to develop the Graduate Attributes
- Undertaking a detailed mapping of how the Graduate Attributes are embedded across the course in their course specifications and assessments

Between January and March 2022 staff involved in developing new courses attended briefings, at School level, to understand the Graduate Attributes Framework and how Graduate Attributes were expected to be embedded in teaching, learning and assessment practices.

To supplement and ensure the embeddedness of Graduate Attributes the CTP team were also tasked with developing Quality Assurance (QA) processes further as the project matured.

Enhancements carried out

The Curriculum Transformation Project started in earnest in January 2022. Training was undertaken via colleagues in Academic Development and internal Skills Consultants. Course Specification templates were altered and approved to specifically include embedding Graduate Attributes into the teaching, learning and assessment sections. Course teams began defining their courses, modules and assessments as part of the course approval process. Course teams completed the process with support from internal Skills Consultants who helped define how Graduate Attributes would be developed, assessed and mapped across the course.

Additional QA checks and balances that were developed to ensure that the Graduate Attributes were being developed and assessed in courses including:

- Building a section into the standardised student Assignment Brief template asking staff to complete for students which Graduate Attributes have been developed and assessed in the module and assessment task(s).
- Altering the Pre-moderation of assessment template to include a check on whether staff had completed the relevant section on the Assignment Brief outlining which Graduate Attributes were being developed and assessed.

Enhancement	Summary	Status
Revision of course specification template	To include how and where Graduate Attributes will be contextualised, taught and assessed across modules	Done Dec 2021
Development of resources to support implementation	Resources/training materials were developed included some exemplars of course design to include embedding Graduate Attributes. Train the trainer events were undertaken to ensure resource coverage was sufficient from a training perspective.	Done Dec 2021 –Jan 2022
Briefing/Training	Training and briefing to all staff on Graduate Attributes Framework, including examples and links to SDGs	Done Jan-March 2022
Graduate Attributes defined by course teams at all levels and embedded in course documentation	Course teams embedded Graduate Attributes into course designs which were centrally approved.	March – June 2022
Changes to further QA processes	CTP team, working with Faculty members updated processes/documentation to ensure adherence to new requirements.	Feb - Present

Learnings and Conclusions for addressing ESD through Graduate Attributes Framework

Sustainable development and social responsibility being taught within Coventry University Group courses is central to the achievement of the new Corporate Strategy. However, turning strategy into action is often where strategies fail. The development of the Graduate Attributes Framework for Coventry University Group has provided a vehicle to bring these concepts to life for both staff and students. The five attributes have aspects of ESD woven throughout and students' curricular and co-curricular activities are being designed to support development of these attributes.

Work to date has embedded in the curriculum attributes and skills focussed on aspects of ESD that will give students the confidence to discuss these as part of their holistic development as useful members of society. Course teams have worked hard to define what concepts such as social responsibility, sustainability, ethically behaviour etc. mean for students in their discipline and how they can demonstrate this through their personal development and assessments. Newly adopted, centrally designed, QA documentation is providing checks and balances to ensure course teams are effectively embedding Graduate Attributes into teaching, learning and assessment practices.

When developing the new courses, time to contextualise and consider aspects of ESD (as part of the Graduate Attributes Framework) alongside discipline skills and knowledge was short and limited some staff's opportunities to fully engage. More guidance could certainly have been developed and a variety of case studies, where courses have used the focus of SDGs as assessments focus, may have helped bring ideas to life for some course teams.

Outcomes and Next Steps for internal activities

New courses with Graduate Attributes embedded are finalised for September 2023 start. Assessments are still being written but, where practical, have been mapped to appropriate Graduate Attributes. There is still opportunity to influence the focus of these assessments through staff training and development, much of which will happen before the start of the semester. Using the SDG's and case studies relating to them offers a simple route into sustainability discussions for all disciplines and will be highlighted moving forward. Evaluation of impact relating to the development of skills around ESD is an ongoing process. The co-curricular student experience is being revised and developed based around achievement of the Graduate Attributes and students recording how and where they have developed the skills and knowledge associated with ESD will form an important part of this.