

Institution

De Montfort University (DMU)

What we did

Institutional Context

Work was led by DMU's Academic Lead for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), working with a member of the Academic Quality team.

At the time, DMU was going through a significant curriculum transformation project, transitioning to the delivery of taught programmes in 'block' mode meaning that all programmes required re-accreditation. After redesign and re-accreditation, courses would typically be delivered in four consecutive 30-credit 7-week blocks. Initial delivery for this new mode for most undergraduate programmes was in 2022/23, with curriculum changes ongoing for Masters and other undergraduate courses to commence block delivery from 2023/24.

DMU had run a three-year ESD project from 2019 to 2022, aiming to address ESD comprehensively across the taught curriculum, co-curriculum and campus operations. As an outcome of this work, ESD was one of three cross-cutting themes (alongside a) Employability and b) Equality Diversity and Inclusion and Decolonising the Curriculum) which programme teams were asked to address in taught courses during the curriculum transformation initiative.

Following on from the appointment of a new vice-chancellor, DMU launched a new institution-wide strategy in 2022, framed around DMU being the "Empowering University". One of four cross-cutting themes in the strategy was "Sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)", overseen by a Pro Vice Chancellor for Sustainability on the university's senior leadership team. The University Sustainability Committee which the PVC Sustainability chairs ensures co-ordination between ESD (one of three priority areas for the theme) and staff with other remits, such as operational sustainability, international partnerships and the students union.

Initial engagements with colleagues and students

A summary of engagements with the project lead providing data for analysis is listed below:

Date	Attendees	Focus	Supporting Documents
June 2022	1 member of AQ team	Potential scope of work related to AQ remit, 10 broad areas of work	Email 1 Notes
June 2022	3 members of AQ team	Role of AQ processes and staff	Meeting 1 Agenda; Meeting 1 Notes
June 2022	1 Student Union staff member	Role of course reps	Email 2 Notes
Nov 2022	10 members of AQ team and 4 Faculty AQ leads	Role of AQ processes and staff	Meeting 2 Notes
Dec 2022	1 Student Union staff member	Role of Course Reps	Meeting 3 Notes

Some key conclusions drawn from those discussions were:

- Our initiatives need to focus both on addressing ESD explicitly across a wide range of process-related documents and on developing capacity of staff involved in those processes to understand how to address ESD in taught courses
- There is good support from AQ colleagues to address this, aligned to DMU's strategic commitments
- There is little currently happening via Student Voice or Course Rep processes – a training and guidance may have value as an initial step.

Enhancements carried out

Building upon initial meetings, several enhancements were carried out, building upon the insights that processes ought to reflect DMU's strategic commitments more-comprehensively and that capacity building activity was required to support staff/students involved to implement any commitments to addressing ESD.

These were:

Enhancement	Summary	Status	Supporting Documents
1: Keyword search process	Using DMU's database of module and programme specifications to search for keywords (e.g. sustainability; environmental) reflecting engagement with ESD. An enhancement on prior approach only using course names. Used for pre- and post-comparison after curriculum transformation project.	Done Feb to Apr 2023. Evaluation ongoing.	DMU01
2: Revising Apprenticeship programme guidance	Including prompts to address ESD and signposting to further guidance.	Changes agreed by Feb 2023.	DMU02
3: Revising Programme Handbook template and guidance	Including text on DMU's ESD commitments and signposting to further guidance.	Changes agree by Feb 2023	DMU03a; DMU03b
4: Course Representative guidance and training	Guidance for course reps (one slide for induction training; 2-page guidance on ESD; training session pilot; process on how to feed back).	Workshop delivered in Jan 2023. Pending final release of guidance.	DMU04a; DMU04b
5: AQ team briefing sheet and training	Briefing sheet developed; training session to be run in April 2023		DMU 05
6: Revision of 'Ten ESD Ingredients' Toolkit	Amended engagement tool for staff/students to incorporate positive contributions to sustainable development of programmes	Done Jan 2023	DMU 06
7: Revision of "ESD and Taught Courses" toolkit for academic staff	Amended to incorporate prompts and updated signposting to internal documents.	Done March 2023	DMU 07
8: Guidance on Sustainability and ESD in relation to international partnerships	Prompts included to ensure ESD and sustainability are addressed for overseas campuses and international partnerships.	Done March 2023	DMU 08

This was delivered by DMU's ESD Academic Lead, working with five AQ team members (one for each of processes 1-5 above) and with feedback from the wider team of AQ staff and academic AQ leads.

- Enhancement of process 1, drew upon in-house staff-student expertise in computer programming to extract and summarise the relevant data. The results highlighted a greater number of programmes engaging with ESD than the previous keyword process (XX rather than XX). Future work will manually check the validity of keywords for a sample of programmes, leading to potential revisions and establish a process for using the findings for constructive engagement with programme teams on how ESD is addressed and/or articulated in programme documents.
- In the cases above, feedback was through agreement of text with the relevant holders of each process – for example, for 2 and 3, agreeing text through correspondence. Evaluation of impacts will follow in future years.
- For process 4, the final process was based on comments from students at the workshop and feedback from the Student Union Course Rep lead and AQ lead for Student Voice.
- For process 6, the revision was grounded in observations from consultation meetings where ESD was discussed where discussion of the positive benefits for sustainable development of a taught programme provided a valuable starting point for engagement (something omitted in the previous '10 Ingredients' form).

Learnings and Conclusions for addressing ESD through AQ and SV

The work outlined above has highlighted several issues of relevance for wider work on ESD.

- Engaging all key staff involved in these processes is vital to enable them to understand what the ESD agenda entails and how to specifically address this in taught programmes.
- Once engaged (e.g. via extended discussion in a team meeting) and if this is seen as a priority area, staff may initiate enhancements in their own area of work (e.g. specific processes which they design, oversee or implement).
- Course representatives appear to have little experience of providing constructive feedback on what is taught in their programmes or how this is done. There is therefore benefit in any process for feeding back on ESD being clearly defined and enabling any engaged students on their programme to have a channel to articulate feedback and share via reps with programme teams.
- Opportunities to revise processes come about periodically – a comprehensive set of changes to address any given issue will need to be phased in over a lengthy time period, typically of more than a year.

Outcomes and Next Steps for internal activities

Future work at DMU to build upon the above will include:

- Continual annual review of ESD adoption via keyword search of programme/module templates
- Evaluation with AQ colleagues on if and how the range of process prompts
- Annual student feedback process on how their programmes address ESD