

## Institution

University of Bath (UoB)

## What we did

The aim for the University of Bath was to explore the use of student voice in the monitoring and review process.

The work for this project was led by the University's Climate Action Project Education Programme Officer.

## Rationale for the University of Bath

At the University of Bath, data indicates a discrepancy between what course descriptions say and what is taught, and what students feel they are receiving in relation to sustainability and sustainable development education. Before this project and before the start of a major curriculum transformation process, the University completed a mapping exercise of all undergraduate and postgraduate units against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which linked 85% of units explicitly or implicitly to one or more of the SDGs (Schantz et al., 2021). However, the NSS Bath Survey (2020), finds 58% of students felt their course considered environmental sustainability indicating that staff and students are not fully aware of the possible links their programmes have with sustainable development.

## Institutional Context

### *The Student Union*

At the time this project started, The Students Union (SU) proposed and approved that Sustainability should be embedded into all courses (SU Standpoint Document, April 2022) and in the 2022 SU Top 10, students are calling on the University to 'demonstrably respond with scale and urgency to the climate emergency, and to increase the use of transparent and credible sustainability impact statements in decision-making'.

### *Curriculum Transformation*

The University is coming to the end of a significant curriculum transformation (CT) project, requiring all programmes to go through a re-accreditation process. As part of the CT project, Senate approved 9 Curriculum Transformation Principles that should guide the design of curricula for all courses. Curriculum Principle 7, Global Citizenship and Sustainability is specifically related to ESD and states:

*'Global Citizenship and Sustainability recognises 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.'*

*'The aim is to embed citizenship and sustainability in curricula across the University, encouraging students to develop a lifelong sense of social responsibility, citizenship and sustainable activity which they can draw upon throughout their time in Bath and beyond.'*

There are also links to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Decolonisation and Wellbeing in the principles.

### Education Strategy

The current The University of Bath Education Strategy 2021-2026 lacks specific reference to Education for Sustainable Development, however the Education Strategic Implementation Plan Working Group are reviewing the strategy and looking at four pillars of Education Strategy with 1 of 4 pillars being 'Sustainability and Green recovery' that develops "curricula at course, subject, faculty, and University level that adopts national and international best practice" in order to "address and respond to global crises and challenges faced by societies, organisations and people around the World". For our students this will mean that their education "will be intellectually bold and academically stimulating so they will graduate with cutting-edge knowledge, skills and experience to think, work, and contribute as global citizens".

The University's Quality Assurance Code of Practice: Approval of New Courses of Study states that for full approval, new courses must demonstrate "alignment with the University's Curriculum Design Principles" and "appropriately engaged with any relevant Subject Benchmark Statements". For the past two years CT has been performing the role of validation under the *Quality Assurance Code of Practice: Approval of Courses under Curriculum Transformation (CT) which states that "...high-quality taught provision is built on our 9 established curriculum principles ..."* This is a temporary document forming a part of the curriculum transformation process and will be refined as the university moves through the next phase of transformation.

### Monitoring and Review

As Curriculum Transformation is still in progress, a review of the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) is being undertaken. In the existing documentation, there is no reference to Sustainability in the review process. Regarding student feedback, online unit evaluations (OUEs) are currently under review and currently there are no questions on sustainability or sustainable development and student feedback is reliant on end of programme NSS questions.

## Initial engagements with colleagues and students

Date	Attendees	Focus
2022	PVC Education, 4 Associate Deans Teaching and Learning, Project Manager (Education)	Present the QA project, aims and objectives
2022	1 member of the OUE review group, 1 member of the Strategic Projects office, 2 members of the CAP Education team	Discuss the inclusion of an ESD question into the OUE optional set of questions
January 2023	1 member of Academic Registry, 4 Associate Deans Teaching and Learning, Curriculum Manager, Centre for Teaching and Learning, 2 Directors of Teaching, 1 Director of Studies, 1 Student Engagement Manager. Apologies from: SU Engagement Officer, Chief Executive SU, CAP Education Liaison, Assistant Registrar	To demonstrate a sustainability tool to monitor sustainability in the curriculum and discuss the feasibility of trialling it out in different situations.
January 2023	Curriculum Manager, Centre for Teaching and Learning	Discussion of language used in questions from a staff understanding point of view
February 2023	4 students representing each faculty and the school of management	Role of student voice and course reps in ESD AQ processes and the views of language used in ESD questions

## Enhancements carried out

Reviews are on-going with QA documentation and monitoring and review processes and enhancement has yet to be adopted. However, this project has contributed to the discussions around the next phase of the CT process, in particular how monitoring can be carried out, the requirement of training and the need for the development of resources.

- Training is being carried out in programmes in Education, Mechanical Engineering to demonstrate strategies to embed ESD with further training planned with further programmes planned.
- Sustainability competency resource development has begun in the explanation and relevance of sustainability competencies for use by staff and students.

## Reflections on addressing ESD through AQ and SV

Based on informal discussions throughout the duration of this project, the following considerations have been highlighted:

- There is a need by staff to communicate to students where they are getting sustainability education across programmes because of what SDG research and NSS data say.
- There is a need to clarify the language that we use across the institution and what questions are most beneficial. For example, NSS questions are framed around environmental practice and environmental sustainability, and when students and staff are asked how they would describe sustainability, 'protecting the environment' is the predominant response. However, that is only one aspect of what the UN would describe as sustainability and that needs to be reflected in monitoring processes.
- Sustainability competencies are increasingly important as employability graduate attributes but resources are needed to improve staff and student understanding
- There is a need to have a baseline in order to monitor progress. Therefore, we need to be mapping all of the places across all of our curriculums where we currently deliver sustainability content, so we can measure change overtime.
- There is a move to doing program level evaluation rather than unit level evaluation. But does this present issues?
  - There could be three or four years where we're only getting unit level evaluation. (response rates to OUE is 15%).
  - At programme level there may be the perception by staff that sustainability education is included because there is a unit in the first year. However, when it comes to the NSS survey results, for example, where students are asked questions about sustainability having had a three year gap since they last explicitly seen sustainability in the curriculum and results are low, you can surmise sustainability is not embedded.
- Capacity to implement detailed monitoring needs to be resourced and careful consideration needs to be given to how it will be implemented due to survey fatigue by both staff and students and existing workload commitments of staff especially around responding to OUE questionnaires.
- If this is a priority for the university, it needs to be embedded in our normal review cycles.

## Next Steps for internal activities

- AMR is currently under review
- OUEs are currently under review
- QA documentation may be revised as the curriculum transformation progresses
- A Sustainability Director to be appointed to sit at senior management level