Institution

University of Leicester

What we did

Institutional Context

This work was led by the University of Leicester's Academic Lead for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the Academic Engagement Officer, working with colleagues in the Education, Quality, Enhancement and Development (EQED).

Before this project, the University had already completed a curriculum audit for ESD content as part of a curriculum transformation project in 2017. This audit shows that since 2019/20, 100% of undergraduate courses had at least 1 module with Intended Learning Outcomes aligned to a Sustainable Development Goal.

There is strategic commitment to ESD in multiple elements of the University strategy. The [Education aims,](#) specifically Aim 4 "Empower our students with the expertise and skills they need to realise their ambitions to become positive Citizens of Change" and [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." Are central to our approach to ESD. There are also links with our [guiding principles](#); Environmental Sustainability and Equality and Diversity.

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	2 members of the EQED team, ESD lead, ESD officer	Role of AQ processes and ESD across 4 broad areas	N/A
June 2022	1 Student Union officer	Role of student voice and course reps in ESD AQ processes	N/A

Some key conclusions drawn from those discussions were:

- Our initiatives should focus on enhancing the groundwork that has already been laid through the ESD audit.
- There is varied capacity for wider engagement and EQED and ESD colleagues would struggle if all programmes required bespoke support at the same time.
- The EQED team have processes available that we can enhance to advance our initiatives.
- Colleagues in the Student Union don't feel equipped to engage with ESD at programme approval panels – additional guidance would be valuable for them and academic staff considering programme approvals.

Enhancements carried out

During our initial meetings we agreed on these enhancements as routes to focus our initiatives, keeping in mind existing quality processes and resource implications.

Enhancement	Summary	Status	Supporting Documents
Programme Approval Paperwork update	An update to the ESD question including more detail about why there is a drive to embed ESD and how it links to institutional objectives. A further question added to gather the specific SDG target that the	Implemented February 2023	N/A

Programme Approval Panel guidance notes	Updated section in the panel guidance document with directed questions to review the suitability of SDG alignment in the modules, including links for panel members to check the SDG website.	Implemented February 2023	N/A
Subject Benchmark Statement revision process support	Alongside updates to SBS from the QAA that include references to ESD, we are providing written guidance and the offer of an enhancement workshop for programme teams to support the mapping process.	Taking place May – June 2023	N/A
Module Specification Form update	We aim to include an area in our standard template form for each module to detail relevance to ESD. This work is ongoing and may include an area to detail SDG alignment and/or how the module links to wider institutional objectives such as ESD.	Ongoing	N/A

These enhancements were largely carried out as a partnership between the ESD lead and Academic Engagement Officer alongside 2 EQED team members (Education Developer and Senior Quality Enhancement Advisor).

- Approval for the Programme Approval Paperwork and guidance notes was provided by another Senior Quality and Enhancement Adviser who manages those processes. The final version of this was informed by conversations with colleagues in the Student Union about the resources needed to raise ESD at Programme Approval Panels.
- The approach to the Subject Benchmark Statement review support was supported by the Head of EQED and approved by the Curriculum and Quality Sub-Committee and the workshops will be led jointly by ESD and EQED colleagues.
- The approval for the revisions to the Module Specification form will be presented to the Curriculum and Quality Sub-Committee (CQSC) through a paper seeking support to enact the revisions.

Learnings and Conclusions for addressing ESD through AQ and SV

- Taking part in this process has allows us to reflect on where we are in our ESD journey. We have a completed baseline audit based on SDG alignment at module level but we question how authentically ESD has actually been embedded into modules and how well this translates to students through this process. We now realise there are many opportunities for enhancement initiatives to complement the baseline audit.
- We have realised through this process that linking our intended initiatives to existing AQ processes is the best way for us to achieve engagement with ESD.
- To embed ESD authentically at module level, we need to have the capacity to provide bespoke support to programme teams but we don't have the resource to do this for all programmes at the same time. By providing bespoke support alongside the mapping process to the revised Subject Benchmark Statement over the next 2 years we can spread the resource required for this support.
- After discussing with other institutions about how to improve the reliability of our audit data, we reflected that the SDGs can sometimes be misinterpreted and found that there is value in looking into the Targets associated with each Goal. By adding a requirement to align modules to the SDG Target within each Goal, we hope to improve understanding and authentic engagement with the SDGs.
- Since talking to colleagues in the Students Union and hearing that they don't feel empowered to engage with ESD due to a knowledge gap around ESD at an AQ level, we realised that the people reviewing the completed Programme Approval Paperwork need some form of guidance or training on what to look for in relation to the ESD section.
- To address the annual SOS Sustainability Skills Survey data that highlights a high percentage of our students are interested in learning more about sustainability through the curriculum, we need to involve students in all ESD processes to ensure that the ESD connections we report on, are accurately reflected in the student's experience.

- We requested the addition of specific questions about the success of embedding ESD in our institutional Student Academic Experience Survey, but due to an internal miscommunication/understanding with the committee managing the survey our request wasn't fulfilled. The oversight was raised with our PVC Education, who was extremely supportive and assisted in adding the questions to an alternative questionnaire administered by our Student Union., We would encourage others to persist in promoting ESD within an institution even if initial requests aren't always met with enthusiasm, or the expected outcome. We would also emphasise the importance of building and maintaining productive relationships across institutions.

Outcomes and Next Steps for internal activities

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

- Finalise an approach to the Subject Benchmark Statement workshop that encourages authentic engagement with ESD at module level
- Produce and present a paper to CQSC to seek support for appropriate module specification revisions that will enhance engagement and data on ESD at module level
- Annual student feedback process on how their programmes address ESD
- Looking into further ways to evaluate the impact of these initiatives on the students experience of ESD