Institution

University of Worcester

What we did

Institutional Context

The University of Worcester (UW) was celebrated as 'Sustainability Institution of the Year' at the Green Gown awards in 2019. The University and Students' Union obtained the inaugural National Union of Students (SOS-UK) Responsible Futures accreditation in 2015 and were reaccredited for a fourth time in June 2022.

The University has had an overarching Sustainability Policy since 2008, and in respect of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) the University's policy is "Ensuring curricula reflect and align with our values for inclusion, internationalisation, ethical and socially responsible global citizenship." This goal is also reflected in the University's Sustainability Strategy 2020-2030, which provides the framework for annual target setting and actions. Theme 2 is "Integrating sustainability through knowledge, skills and experience", and our three core commitments here are to:

- Embed inclusion of sustainability principles in our formal curriculum and learning and teaching practice.
- Provide appropriate sustainability training for all our staff and students and encourage them to engage in sustainability practices.
- Ensure there are opportunities for students and volunteers to engage in applied sustainability projects.

The UW Learning and Teaching Strategy (2020 – 2025), recognises that UW has a national reputation in relation to education for sustainable development and that we are committed to strengthening and extending this, as reflected in our endorsement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Accord. The Learning and Teaching Strategy promotes the development of five Graduate Attributes that reflect the University's values and mission, enabling graduates to have a positive impact on their own lives and those of others. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is captured in the Social Responsibility Graduate Attribute – "Graduates who are globally and socially responsible, culturally aware and understand the ethical impact of decisions."

ESD has been part of the University's Curriculum Design Policy for a number of years (Principle 9 - promote ethical and environmental responsibility, including an understanding of sustainability in its widest definition). However, inclusion of this has not been systematically monitored through the course development and quality processes until relatively recently.

Currently, the expectation to embed 'Education for Sustainable Futures' in all courses is now part of the University's Course Approval practices and Departmental Periodic Review processes, focussing specifically on embedding the graduate attributes in the curriculum and learning experiences of students. Whilst all courses are expected to reflect all five attributes, there is no standard way of doing this, and specific courses give greater or lesser emphasis to different attributes. The University recognises it is important that students develop the attributes within a disciplinary context. The University has developed a toolkit to support course teams in embedding the attributes and this is explicitly monitored through the course approval and reapproval process. Currently compliance is largely evidenced by a short statement within the Course Handbook for Students which are part of the approval documentation.

Additionally, a section has been included in the course Annual Evaluation process template (section 15) since July 2022 (for evaluation of the 2021-22 academic year) which asks course leaders to review progress on embedding the graduate attributes:

- *Identify what progress the course has made in considering and embedding the Graduate Attributes within the curriculum.*
- *Identify what has worked well and what impact is anticipated or can be evidenced.*
- *Outline the next steps.*

> **Note: the project workstream and outcomes outlined below should be considered in conjunction with another associated ESD project workstream undertaken Eleanor Lengthorn working with colleagues specifically in the School of Education at Worcester to embed engagement with ESD (see separate internal summary for this work).**

Initial engagements with colleagues and students

At the start of this collaborative enhancement project the goal was to explore the effectiveness of these new processes, to see how they were being interpreted, how they might be enhanced, and how key stakeholders in these processes could be better supported.

Date	Attendees	Focus	Supporting Documents
May 2022	Academic Lead for Sustainability, Director of LTQE, College Director LTQE, Senior Quality Officer AQU.	Discussion with senior UW QA&E personnel	Email, meeting notes, meeting summary.
May 2022	SU Engagement Officer, SU Sabbatical officer (education and welfare)	Discussion with SU engagement staff and Sabbatical officer.	Email, meeting notes, meeting summary.

Meeting with University QA&E personnel:

Discussion focussed on the process of course approval/periodic review, also touching on the course/module evaluation process briefly. Some key conclusions drawn from those discussions were:

- Whilst we have had some curriculum design guidance around ESD for a while, this has not really been part of the core checklist of things to consider for course approval, and engagement in this by course teams has been variable.
- Noted the need for some more support/training for course teams in taking the new guidance and documentation forward.
- Noted that there was an opportunity (specifically in course annual review) to have evaluation, based on these new course approval requirements.

Meeting with SU staff and sabbatical officer (May 2022).

Some key conclusions drawn from those discussions were:

- Currently very little feedback from course reps around ESD. SU does lots of leg work to do student survey and aware that students do care but little explicit learning and teaching concern.
- Students feel like they don't know what they need to learn or what to do but that the scope is limited to environmental issues 'saving the planet' and not about broader social justice concerns.
- Feeling there is no SU voice on sustainability leadership - challenge is that these processes rely on students (transient, engagement levels vary).   Issue of 'churn'.
- Common barriers of lack of time, money, resource, as well as lack of training materials, lack of trainers. Also finding differing level of commitment among SU staff.
- Work to be done about course reps, a course rep sustainability conference perhaps? ESD training the trainer? Expanding the student Sustainability Network into clubs and societies.

Enhancements carried out

Building upon the initial meetings, several enhancements were planned to be carried out, building upon the insights that processes were in place, but staff/students lacked information on how to utilise these.

Pilot/intervention

To provide information/guidance on ESD for course/department staff teams undergoing (re)approval or review to help them to engage more fully with ESD, and to make this richer and more explicit in their curriculum design and course documentation. Specifically, to support course/department staff teams' engagement with; Graduate Attribute 1 (Social Responsibility), Curriculum Design Principle 9 and UE3 Education for Sustainable Futures.

Enhancement	Summary	Status	Supporting Documents
Presentation to College LTQEs	Presentation developed setting out ESD context at UW and flagging up supporting information, for discussion at College LTQE meetings.	Presented at College LTQE meetings Autumn 2022. Well received but have not followed up systematically on impacts. Stimulated informal contact with a wider range of course teams interested in developing ESD.	Presentation slides. Emails.
Presentation at course reps conference	Presentation developed setting out ESD context at UW, outlining role for students and flagging up supporting information and opportunities for engagement.	Presented at January 2023 conference. Good feedback from students but not systematically followed up on whether utilised in CL roles.	Presentation slides. Emails.
Presentation to QA&E personnel	Presentation arranged for January 2023 with staff to discuss ESD in QA&E as part of one of their regular staff meetings.	Presentation postponed and then Head of Academic Quality (who had arranged the meeting) left. Considerable 'churn' in AQU staff so not yet rearranged.	Emails.
Workshop with course teams - Psychology	ESD 2-hour staff development workshop arranged for School of Psychology 'Away Day' April 2023.	Workshop postponed and no new date set.	Emails. Workshop resources.
Review of docs (course approval and departmental review for 2021 – 2022).	Asked to review documents for 2021-22 processes then arrange to meet with a CL currently going through approval to discuss approach and needs.	Link to course approval documentation supplied February 2023. No AQU capacity to support review so left to project lead -started but limited capacity to finish.

Course currently going through approval was identified, CL contacted but discussion did not happen as approval process was paused for resourcing review in March 2023. | Emails. Notes on course documentation review. |
| **Student's as Academic Partners (SAPs) project** | Staff-student project to look at mapping courses to SDGs and GAs and CL and student views on this. To look at courses not traditionally focussed on ESD work; Psychology and Biology. | Project approved November 2022 and student recruited January 2023. Project still underway to be completed June 2023, with presentation at June UW L&T conference. | Emails, project proposal. |

Learnings and Conclusions for addressing ESD through AQ and SV

- Documentation wording: A commitment to embedding ESD is there in high level strategic documents, but it is not always clear what about sustainability (ESD) is being asked for and reviewed/checked through the

course approval and reapproval processes. The current focus is on evidence for embedding the graduate attributes. The social responsibility graduate attribute encompasses ESD, but explicit links to sustainable development become lost in the documentation and guidance wording. The link is implicit rather than explicit and further guidance is needed on how social responsibility relates to ESD to avoid 'word creep' and foster terminological exactitude and avoid loss of clear reference to sustainability.

- The best mechanisms to encourage course engagement: Staff can see engagement with ESD as an extra/addition to the work they do for approvals – there is a 'mix' of voluntarism and compulsion in current processes. The course approval planning form allows the 'opt out' of considering ESD (yes/no on the AQU planning checklist). Lack of understanding about ESD within both course teams and AQU staff hinders fuller engagement. Equally, discussion is needed in terms of how ESD links to other approval priorities, such as embedding the graduate attributes recruitment/retention/attainment and employability for example. As with the first bullet point above the key is the development of further guidance, including succinct guidance documents to support the enhanced understanding of ESD for all those involved in QA&E processes.
- Capacity building: embedding ESD in the curriculum is not a quick process, nor is it a smooth, linear process. The experience is more slow progress along a long, winding road with may potholes! Recent 'churn' in key leadership roles within both the University's AQU and the SU has disrupted the momentum and capacity that has previously been built up. The key challenge here is how best to build resilience and develop a body of knowledge and practice that is independent of personnel changes.
- Engagement with students: this remains an important area for development as students play a key role in QA&E processes and course enhancement and development at all levels. However, whilst sustainability issues are of importance for students, it appears that engagement within approval and representation processes seem chiefly restricted to those students on programmes which have significant sustainability-related content. More structured assistance and guidance to support the wider engagement with ESD by students in course enhancement processes is needed, including further steer from the SU in terms of training and guidance for course representatives.
- Monitoring and evaluation: Review of the impact of new initiatives to embed ESD have been limited. There is a need to build in more robust measures of review and impact into course approval and monitoring and enhancement processes, the key question is how? Quantifiable/measurable outcomes are useful e.g., 'mapping' alignment to the UN-SDGs and/or a list of sustainability competencies but run the risk of being a 'tick-box' exercise), and there may also be scope for more qualitative narratives too (here narratives in Departmental Review documents and AERs/Course Handbooks offer a way forward). A key area for further development is measurement of the impact for students and their learning.

Outcomes and Next Steps for internal activities

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

- To produce guidance documentation on the relationship between ESD and the graduate attributes, specifically the 'Social Responsibility' attribute, to support more explicit embedding, clarifying and tightening-up wording used in documentation.
- To produce further training and support regarding embedding ESD, considering self-guided training materials to support in-person work, to overcome time and capacity issues in delivering in-person training.
- To consider whether the university should look to specify more explicitly how courses evidence engagement with ESD, such as through reference to the SDGs in course documentation and how engagement with the social responsibility graduate attribute is evidenced.
- To consider how the university might measure/evidence student engagement with ESD more systematically through planned student surveys, and measure achievement in relation to graduate attributes, since these do essentially define what we intend to be core student outcomes of studying at Worcester.

Institution

University of Worcester: School of Education

What we did

Institutional Context

UW was celebrated as 'Sustainability Institution of the Year' at the Green Gown awards in 2019, following which "Sustainable Futures" was added as a key theme to the institutional research strategy.

The expectation is to embed 'Education for Sustainable Futures' in all courses is part of the University's Course Approval practices and Departmental Periodic Review processes, as well as including 'Social Responsibility' as one of the five Graduate Attributes to be embedded in all university courses and curricula.

The UW Learning and Teaching Strategy (2020 – 2025), recognises that UW has a national reputation in relation to education for sustainable development and that we are committed to strengthening and extending this, as reflected in our endorsement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Accord.

At the start of this collaborative enhancement project, December 2021, there was minimal formalised ESD in the SoE Secondary Education curriculum (limited to a few classes involving geography education) and no sustainability consideration, as yet, in its learning, teaching and quality processes.

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
Dec 2021	8 SoE staff	Inaugural ESF SIG – staff development	ESF SIG 1 – meeting slides
Jan 2022	3 SoE senior leaders	ESD staff development opportunity	SL E-mail
April 2022	1 student union staff member 1 SU elected official	Potential scope of activities related to SV remit.	UW SV
Dec 2023	13 SoE secondary staff	Embedding ESD in PGCE	UW CPD

Some key conclusions drawn from those discussions were:

- PGCE Secondary trainees miss out on course rep ESD training
- There is little happening but there is an SoE staff appetite for ESD
- There is student appetite for ESD but a lack of leadership
- DfE S&CC confirms that is part of SoE remit
- Our initiatives need to focus on building ESD understanding and a community of practice. General and phase specific training may have value as a initial step. Students need support on ESD leadership and action opportunities.

Enhancements carried out

Building upon initial meetings, several enhancements were carried out, building upon the insights that processes ought to reflect UW's responsibilities as a leading teacher education institution and in line with UW practices.

These were:

Enhancement	Summary	Status	Supporting Documents
1: Creation of an SoE Special Interest Group (SIG) on Education for Sustainable Futures (ESF)	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 Dec 2021 – ongoing. Termly meetings.	UW01
2: SoE ESD Staff Development Day.	100+ staff: Introduction to UN SDGs, Sustainability at UW, Carbon Literacy introduction, phase specific workshops (EY, Primary, Secondary and FE). Creating departmental commitments and processes for ESD	Delivered April 2022	UW02;UW02b
3: ESD staff survey	Reconnecting staff to their departmental commitments.	Delivered Oct 2022, results shared Jan 2023	UW03a; UW03b
4: ESD embedded into the Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Action Plan	Development of an additional strand of sustainability to the 2022/23 LT & Q, focusing on ESD in the curriculum, ESF SIG and staff development.	LTQ E Plan 22/23 developed and reviewed (March 23)	UW04
5. SoE staff CPD and staff/student action	Three staff CPD sessions exploring ESD though Bendell's 4R enquiry. Delivery of whole cohort (160 PGCE trainees) introduction to ESD, followed by subject based sessions on ESD in subjects. Development by staff of subject reflections for partnership community and student development of teaching resources for ESD in their own classroom (for dissemination through partnership magazine).	CPD delivered Nov and Dec 2022 PGCE sessions delivered Jan 2023 Submissions for publication April 2022	UW05a; UW05b; UW05c
6. Communicating ESD priority to partnerships	Development of a mentor mat and provision of mentor training for SD Alliance schools	Jan 2023 and March 2023	UW06a; UW06b

This work at UW was led by an SoE Senior Lecturer with no remit, but an unerring passion for ESD, working alongside a variety of SoE colleagues.

- Process 1 enabled the development of a community of practice with ESD engaged staff from each of the four SoE departments. It has led to the creation of an ESF SIG resource list that has been disseminated to the wider SoE staff and a resource box that is shared by the departments.
- Process 2 enabled a strong message from SoE leaders that ESD is our remit. Departments were urged to explore their practice and develop three key targets for the 2022/23 academic year and confirm these with senior leaders. Lending gravity to the day and creating a record of commitments.
- Process 3 reconnected staff, after the summer break, to their ESD commitments. Several leadership participants recognised the reminder it has served and then arranged Carbon Literacy training for their teams. It might be useful to issue a further survey with key reminders and reconnection to ESD commitments.
- Process 4 has seen the inclusion of specific ESD actions that are now being monitored. This feels a very positive step.
- Process 5 has seen the successful delivery of ESD related sessions in science, MFL, History, RE, Psychology, FE, Geography, Maths, PE and English, with the creation of a wide variety of teaching resources that will be shared with 100+ partnership schools.
- Process 6 has engaged middle leaders in alliance schools with the ESD processes that have been embedded in the SoE, with knowledge building CPD and opportunities for their schools to participate in activities.

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 leadership in these processes is vital to enable them to understand what the ESD agenda entails and how to specifically address this in taught programmes, but also in our SoE processes e.g., there has been a reluctance to explore carbon behaviour change in advance of an Ofsted visit.
- Secondary SoE staff were highly engaged and were creative in driving curriculum change in their own subject areas.
- Secondary PGCE Course representatives do not get to participate in the SU SDGs training. The SoE could provide separate ESD training for course reps.
- Opportunities to evaluate ESD experiences and content haven't existed in the SoE review processes before.

Outcomes and Next Steps for internal activities

I am most pleased that ESD now features in the SoE Enhancement Action Plan and that our sustainability actions were commended in our Departmental Periodic Review in February 2023.

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

- Continual annual review of ESD in Learning, Teaching and Quality through inclusion in the Enhancement Action Plan
- Evaluation with SoE colleagues on ESD in their subject specific PGCE in order to prevent this being a tokenistic, one-off, curriculum change.
- Publication and dissemination of an ESD focused practitioner magazine to partnership schools
- Inclusion of survey questions in annual student feedback process on how their programmes address ESD