



**Tenth International Conference on Environmental, Cultural,
Economic and Social Sustainability
Split, Croatia
January 22-24th 2014**

**Implementing a Comprehensive Institution Wide
Approach to Education for Sustainable Development.
A Case Study of the
University of the West of England, Bristol, UK**

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University of the
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A Comprehensive Institution Wide Approach to Education for Sustainable Development

- This presentation describes the actions taken by UWE, Bristol to develop a comprehensive approach to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within the curricula of the University.
- It describes the process and outcomes of the major actions taken over a period of more than 20 years of engagement commencing with environmental policies and actions initiated in the early 1990s and culminating in the forward looking suite of actions stemming from UWE's new Sustainability Plan.

About and For ESD

We recognise the distinction between
Education *about* Sustainable Development
and Education *for* Sustainable Development

UNESCO ESD Essential Characteristics

Education for sustainable development:

- is based on the **principles and values that underlie sustainable development**;
- deals with the **well-being of all four dimensions of sustainability** – environment, society, culture and economy;
- uses a variety of pedagogical techniques that promote **participatory learning and higher-order thinking skills**;
- promotes **lifelong learning**;
- is **locally relevant and culturally appropriate**;
- is based on **local needs, perceptions and conditions**, but acknowledges that fulfilling local needs often has **international effects and consequences**;
- engages **formal, non-formal and informal** education;
- accommodates the **evolving nature of the concept of sustainability**;
- addresses **content**, taking into account **context, global issues and local priorities**;
- builds **civil capacity** for **community-based decision-making, social tolerance, environmental stewardship, an adaptable workforce, and a good quality of life**;
- is **interdisciplinary**.

- <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/education-for-sustainable-development/>

ESD essential characteristics

- No single discipline can claim ESD for itself; all disciplines can contribute to ESD.
- These essential characteristics of ESD can be implemented in myriad ways, so that ESD programmes reflect the unique environmental, social, cultural and economic conditions of each locality.
- ESD increases civil capacity by enhancing and improving society, through a combination of formal, non-formal and informal education
- <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/education-for-sustainable-development/>

UWE



- In the University of the West of England we have resolved to become the most sustainable university that we can.
- We do this not just for legislative compliance, although that is important.
- We don't do this just to save money, although that is attractive and helpful.
- We do the things we do because it is the right thing to do.
- The values we hold and the society we aspire to help create drive us forward.

UWE

- However, it is not easy.
- The University is a large multi-site institution with 4 campus locations in Bristol.
- 30 000 students
- 3000 staff
- Annual budget of £220 million.
- 4 Faculties, 1 Associate Faculty, 15 academic departments.

Sustainability Leadership

“Sustainability is embedded in how we run the University and how we connect with the wider community”.

Professor Steve West, Vice Chancellor

Sustainability Leadership

"Sustainability is not just about recycling. It is about how we view our world, use its resources and build a future.

It is about all of us in it together".

Emmanuel Okon, 2012/13 UWESU President

Strategic Leadership

Success factors

- Strategic leadership from the Vice Chancellor and senior managers,
- Cross university research and knowledge exchange institute
- Multidisciplinary staff group tasked with promoting education for sustainable development and overseeing its implementation into the curricula.

UWE's Sustainability Mission

- The purpose of the University is to advance knowledge, inspire people and transform futures.
- We recognise that Universities have an obligation to society to play their role in the journey towards sustainability.
- We see this as being exercised through the generation and wise use of knowledge and through our public engagement and knowledge exchange activities.
- We accept the responsibility for supporting the achievement of a sustainable future.

Policy and Plans for ESD

- We recognise that the education of students, future graduates, represents the biggest opportunity for a university to encourage awareness and action for the development of a more sustainable future.
- Hence we have systematically addressed the place of education for sustainable development in our curricula.
- We are progressively infusing sustainable development into the formal curricula of all undergraduate and post graduate provision.
- To do this we have established a policy framework expressed in Strategy 2020 and the new Sustainability Plan.

Policy Hierarchy

- Strategy 2020
- Sustainability Plan 2013-2020
- ESD Action Plan



Sustainability in UWE Strategy 2020

Graduates ready and able to realise their full potential, **make a positive contribution to society and their chosen field of employment or further study, and play their full part in the development of a sustainable global society** and knowledge economy



Strategy 2020

‘At UWE Bristol, ...we will support our staff and students to work and live in a sustainable way’

Sustainability Plan Wordle



ESD in the Sustainability Plan

- ‘The University will enable all students to explore sustainable development in the context of their discipline’
- ‘All Departments... will ensure ESD is embedded at the programme level’
- ‘University will ensure that its staff are trained and developed in their understanding of the underpinning concepts’

Structures and support at UWE

- High level Sustainability Board
- Sustainability Plan
- Institute for Sustainability, Health and Environment
- Dedicated Sustainability Team in Facilities
- Knowledge Exchange for Sustainability Education



ESD Activity at UWE



- Multiple and varied opportunities for staff development
- Sustainable development in all programmes of study
- Innovative cross institutional provision
- Using the estates as a learning and research resource
- Co-curricula activities: volunteering and other public engagement activities, internship and placement opportunities including dedicated Green Internship Scheme with an annual Green Intern of the Year award
- Green Leaders programme in UWESU

ESD and Disciplines

- Locating ESD within the context of the discipline of study.
- Recognises that all disciplines must engage.
- Recognises that the extent of engagement can differ.

How are we doing?

- 2011/12 academic year: 71% of our UK domiciled students engaged with the subject of sustainable development within the context of their discipline.
- 2012/13: expect to achieve a score in the high 80s or low 90s.
- Annual surveys reveal widespread engagement by staff in all disciplines.
- In every Department of the University there are modules exposing students to some of or the entire context of sustainable development.

Erasmus Integrated Programme (IP) on ESD

- Summer 2013: UWE hosted an Erasmus Integrated Programme (IP) entitled “Exploring Hopeful Pathways towards Preferable Local and Global Futures”.
- More than 50 students, both UG and PG, and 17 academic staff from 9 EU countries spent two very full weeks at UWE working with UWE staff and students, exploring issues and challenges in sustainability.
- All students passed the assessment and were awarded credit towards their programme of study in their home institution.

Reflections and Conclusions

- The university is very clear about its responsibility to enable its students to develop solutions for a more sustainable future. We recognise that the conventional disciplinary attributes of a graduate must be blended with a broader set of skills and attributes which result from engagement with the principles and practices of sustainable development.
- We are equally clear that we have a responsibility to society to ensure graduates are equipped with the skills and knowledge to contribute to a sustainable future.
- In order to do this we need to extend engagement beyond the circle of the committed to broaden and deepen individual and institutional activity.