

RGS-IBG Annual Conference 2014

# **‘Mobilising Expert Knowledge to Facilitate Education for Sustainable Development’**

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# Presentation outline

1. ESD overview
2. Background to UWE project
3. Key stages of knowledge mobilisation

# ESD

“Learning **for and about** sustainable development aims to prepare graduates to be able to contribute to, stimulate and lead the debate on complex issues such as what constitutes global citizenship and good governance, sustainable resource use, and the determination of ecological limits”

*(QAA/HEA, 2014, 7)*

# Sustainability in HE

- UN DESD and ESD Characteristics
- HEFCE Sustainable Development Framework
- NUS/HEA Survey
- QAA/HEA ESD Guidance

# What is sustainability?

- Global citizenship and environmental stewardship
- Social justice, ethics and wellbeing
- Future-facing outlook
- Systems and consequences of actions

*“in the context of disciplines and in professional and personal lives”*

# UWE project background

- Long-term bottom up growth of ESD provision across institution
- Need to progress ESD provision and ‘extend the circle of the committed’
- Recognition that much expert knowledge exists
- Need to further promote and facilitate interdisciplinary teaching, learning & research

“You will never gain momentum unless it is **part of everything you do**. It is not currently worked on explicitly by all programme teams. There is still scope for developing all staff knowledge and awareness. You are not advanced unless it is so ingrained that it is automatic for all staff to make the connection.”

# Barriers to further provision

- Lack of staff time
- Limited understanding of sustainability
- Lack of confidence/perceived lack of capability of staff to sustainably teach sustainability
- Discipline identity



# Solution?

Generic  
learning  
resource



# WHERE TO START?

# Talk



# How?

## Me to 'them'

'Here's our idea'... 'Sustainability is about'...  
'How does that sound to you?'

What is already happening?

Where?

To what extent?

By/to whom?

# Response

Not what I do?

Too BUSY?

**NOT  
INTERESTED?**

**NOT  
RELEVANT?**

Not my  
responsibility?

**NO!**

**Come in**

**WE WANT  
TO DO MORE**

**IT IS  
IMPORTANT**

**Thank you for  
asking**

# Project process

- Agreement of framework
- Steering group
- Departmental, faculty and institutional consultation
- Library and TEL support
- Student advisory panel
- Continuous testing



# Emergent issues

- More happening than has previously been recorded: How to capture?
- Uncertainty over definitions of sustainable development/sustainability
- Need for a common baseline
- Need for clarity/bigger picture

# Challenges

- Who are the experts? Whose knowledge is 'valid'?
- What resources already exist?
- Relative novelty of interdisciplinary work of this nature
- ICT systems



# Praise for the process

- Appreciative of consultative approach
- Encouraged to see broad view of sustainability being taken
- Welcoming of the opportunity to reflect on current practice and consider future developments
- Staff were generous in the time and attention they gave
- Face-to-face interviews more successful than electronic surveys

# Outcomes

- Realisation of scale of knowledge and practice across institution
- Renewed enthusiasm
- Shared ownership of agenda across staff groupings
- New systems, resources and activities

# ‘Be braver’

- “We can go further but we need to take small steps. We still need to win the hearts and minds of all staff. This is a pervasive issue which will grow in importance.”
- “If we believe in this issue, we need to be proactive in conversations with employers and professional bodies to say ‘you should be looking at this’”

# Transferable lessons

## *NO SINGLE SOLUTION*

- Flexibility essential
- No quick fix
- Respect and embrace diversity
- Everyone is an expert
- Work with existing structures (in the first instance)

# Tips for success

- Allow time
- Personnel are important (role and knowledge of the institution)
- Variety of approaches
- Personal approach/target meaningful groups
- Have frameworks and systems ready asap
- Be prepared to try new things