

Exploring the New Guidance for Higher Education Providers on Education for Sustainable Development

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Education for Sustainable Development Guidance

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AdvanceHE



Quality Assurance Agency

The independent body entrusted with monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education.

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/>

Advance HE

Advance HE is a member-led, sector-owned charity that works with institutions and higher education across the world to improve higher education for staff, students and society.

<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/>



Purpose of the Guidance

- To assist staff in UK higher education institutes seeking to incorporate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within their curricula
- To support students from any academic discipline to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to develop values and take actions to transition society towards sustainable futures
- To support academic and professional service colleagues at all levels, and at all stages in their ESD journey



Content of the Guidance

- Section 1: Introducing Education for Sustainable Development
- Section 2: Getting Started with Education for Sustainable Development
- Section 3: Teaching, Learning and Assessment for ESD
- Section 4: Annotated references and resources



Section 1 – Introducing Education for Sustainable Development

- What Is Education for Sustainable Development?
- The role of higher education in creating a sustainable future
- UN Sustainable Development Goals



Introducing Education for Sustainable Development

- **Sustainable development** - an aspirational ongoing process of addressing social, environmental and economic concerns to create a better world.
- **Education for sustainable development** - the process of creating curriculum and subject-relevant content to support and enact sustainable development.
- **ESD** is education about and for a sustainable future, through the development of relevant skills, knowledge and competencies.

A Starting Definition

'ESD empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity.

It is about lifelong learning, and is an integral part of quality education.

ESD is holistic and transformational education which addresses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment.

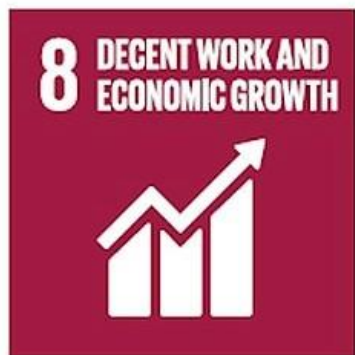
It achieves its purpose by transforming society.'

UNESCO (2019) <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd>





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



How Can it Be Used?

The guidance recognises that there are many ways in which this may be achieved.

It offers suggestions to inspire, inform and enable ESD to be designed into and across curricula as part of a whole-institution approach.

It can be used as both a course design reference point and as an advocacy aid for those supporting ESD agendas in their organisation.



Section 2 – Getting Started with Education for Sustainable Development

- ESD as curriculum framing
- ESD intersections across curricula
- Consulting key players



Section 2. Getting Started with ESD

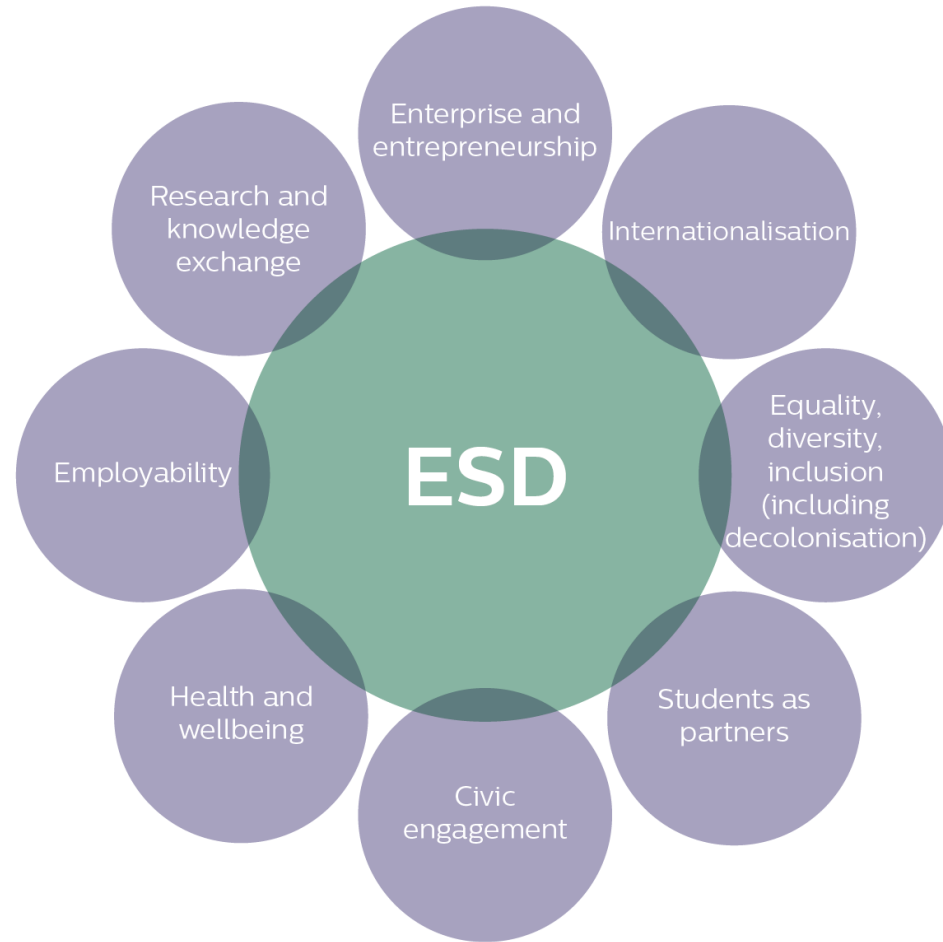
Applies ESD in practice, discussing how to position ESD strategically and operationally across curricula. It offers guidance and identifies ways of involving key players, beginning with students and continuing through employers, enterprise organisations, academics, professional service teams, governance and communities.

The guidance prioritises engagement with students, in particular collaboration and co-creation of learning, as well as identifying activities that are already happening in their communities.

Emphasises the importance of strategic institution-level commitment and support when looking to progress ESD. It discusses how ESD can reinforce and frame other institutional objectives such as internationalisation and developing global perspectives; promoting employability and enterprise, working with communities, and progressing equality, diversity and inclusion.

Explores how ESD can be used to motivate staff and students to go beyond a focus on their own discipline/subject area is discussed as a means of promoting interdisciplinary working that could help innovative ideas to emerge.

Intersections with other priority areas



ESD is best achieved when

1. ESD objectives, targets and KPIs are part of the institution's strategic priorities and subsequent strategies and policies.
2. The framing of ESD within the curriculum is included in the validation of new courses and ongoing review of existing courses.
3. ESD is central to the staff and student induction process, as well as staff appraisal and/or promotion criteria.
4. ESD is articulated within quality assurance and enhancement processes.
5. Staff development to enable ESD is fully supported at an institutional level.



Section 3 – Teaching, Learning and Assessment for Education for Sustainable Development

- Key competencies for sustainability
- Course and module learning outcomes
- Assessment for, of and as learning



Section 3 focuses on teaching, learning and assessment approaches for ESD.

It introduces the key competencies for sustainability, course and module learning outcomes for ESD and guidance about developing learning environments to support ESD.

This section can be used alongside the Quality Code's Advice and Guidance on course design and development, to help academics in a practical and applied way.

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>



Key competencies for sustainability

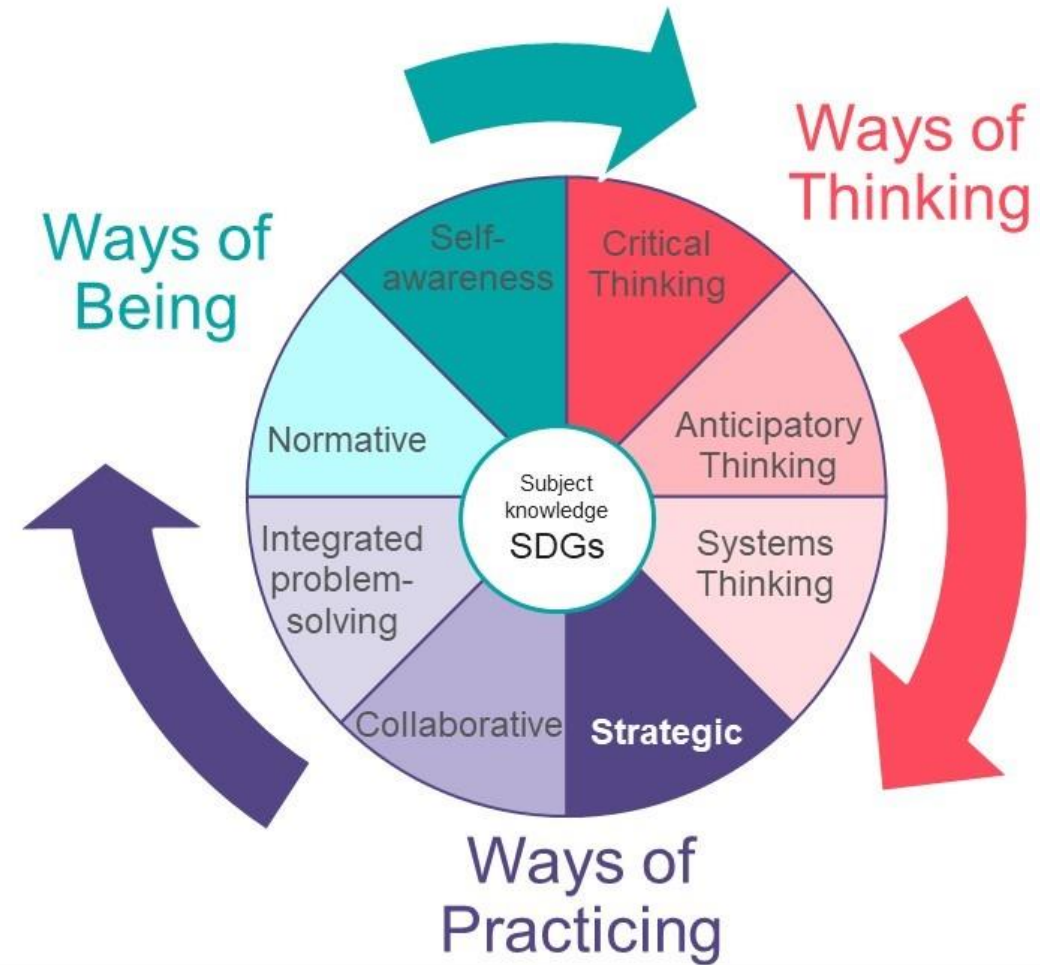
Learning outcomes are presented aligned with the following key competencies for SD.

- systems thinking
- anticipatory thinking
- normative competency
- strategic thinking
- collaborative competency
- critical thinking
- self-awareness
- integrated problem-solving competency



Teaching, Learning and Assessment for ESD

UNESCO key competencies for sustainability



Teaching, Learning and Assessment for ESD

	Competency	A student who displays this competency can:	
Subject knowledge and knowledge of all SDGs	Systems thinking competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise and understand relationships analyse complex systems consider how systems are embedded within different domains and scales deal with uncertainty 	Ways of thinking
	Anticipatory competency (Future thinking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand and evaluate multiple outcomes create their own visions for the future apply the precautionary principle assess the consequences of actions deal with risks and changes 	
	Critical thinking competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> question norms, practices and opinions reflect on one's own values, perceptions and actions take a position in the sustainable development discourse 	
	Strategic competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop and implement innovative actions that further sustainable development at the local level and further afield 	Ways of practicing
	Collaboration competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> learn from others (including peers, and others inside and outside of their institution) understand and respect the needs, perspectives and actions of others deal with conflicts in a group facilitate collaborative and participatory problem solving 	
	Integrated problem-solving competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> apply different problem-solving frameworks to complex sustainable development problems develop viable, inclusive and equitable solutions utilise appropriate competencies to solve problems 	

Teaching, Learning and Assessment for ESD



	Competency	A student who displays this competency can:
Subject knowledge and knowledge of all SDGs	Self-awareness competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reflect on their own values, perceptions and actions ▪ reflect on their own role in the local community and global society ▪ continually evaluate and further motivate their actions ▪ deal with their feelings and desires
	Normative competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie one's actions ▪ negotiate sustainable development values, principles, goals and targets, in a context of conflicts of interests and trade-offs, uncertain knowledge and contradictions

Ways of being

From competencies to learning outcomes

Learning outcomes		
Knowledge	Skills	Attributes and values
A student with normative competency can:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the wide range of human cultures in existence, and understand both the benefits and the challenges that these cultures present in terms of SD Demonstrate that both unsustainable and sustainable practices take place in an evolving context, necessitating adaptability in policy and planning responses Identify the interactions between human communities and ecological systems, and be able to assess the potential impacts upon each other Identify ethical questions and use ethical frameworks Identify practical interventions for sustainability challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tackle and negotiate SD conflicts with an awareness of different perspectives and motivations Identify the opportunities to support and develop a progressive and resilient culture that encourages citizens, professions and institutions to put learning into practice Debate and explore fairness and justice, including social justice Develop alternative solutions that provide new opportunities for engagement with SD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate SD values, principles, goals and targets, in a context of conflicts of interests and trade-offs, uncertain knowledge and contradictions Understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie one's actions Engage with and understand different world views Appreciate, critique and value different cultural contexts



Examples of practices

Examples from practice: Knowledge Exchange for Sustainability Education

Established in 2008, the University of the West of England's (UWE) Knowledge Exchange for Sustainability Education (KESE) group is a cross-university staff team that works to progress education for sustainable development through curriculum mapping, staff development, student engagement and celebration. The group comprises of a representative from each academic department, the sustainability team and the SU. Its core purpose is to provide a means for discussion of ESD within the University. It shares examples of good practice across the institution and supports staff who are seeking to include ESD within their modules and programmes. Led by the Associate Professor for ESD, KESE takes responsibility for the annual ESD report and sets the agenda for the annual ESD Action Plan. KESE regularly reports on its activities to UWE's Sustainability Board.

KESE is the recipient of an Advance HE CATE Award.

Section 4 – Annotated references and resources

- International and UK policy and strategy frameworks
- Open education resources
- Perspectives on ESD and higher education experience
- ESD curriculum design tools, frameworks and models



AdvanceHE



The revised guidance is available to download:

Advance HE Members

<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/teaching-and-learning/education-sustainable-development-higher-education>

QAA Members

<https://membershipresources.qaa.ac.uk>

A free Executive Summary is available on each website.



ESD and UWE.

How are we using the Guidance?

2007 Institutional Review of Sustainability in the Modular Scheme

2008 Cross university Knowledge Exchange for Sustainability Education (KESE) group established to promote and enhance ESD in the formal and informal curriculum

2011 Annual Institution wide Sustainability and Education Conference Established

2012 Annual ESD review meeting cycle with individual HoDs instigated

2012 ESD incorporated into the Academic Development Programme for new staff

2014 QAA–HEA Education for Sustainable Development Guidance launched

2014 UWE Certification to ISO 14001:2004 EMS including teaching and learning

2015 Internal and external verification that all taught programmes address sustainability in the context appropriate to the individual discipline

ESD and UWE.

How are we using the Guidance?

2016 NUS–SOS Responsible Futures accreditation

2017 Appointment of Associate Professor in Education for Sustainable Development

2018 KESE Group wins UWE's first Advance HE Award for Collaborative Approach to Teaching Excellence (CATE)

2019 Two UWE members appointed to Advance HE – QAA Education for Sustainable Development Guidance Advisory Group, UWE co-chair group

2020 Strategy 2030 launched

2021 Launch of QAA –Advance HE Education for Sustainable Development Guidance (ESDG)

2021 UWE Learning and Teaching Committee recommends incorporation of ESDG in all programmes and inclusion of new ESDG within the Quality Management system.

ESDG Advisory Group

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Supporting the role of universities in leading individual and societal transformation through education for sustainable development

Discover Sustainability

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s43621-021-00058-3>

Recently a sub group of the ESD Advisory Group has published an open access paper in Discover Sustainability exploring some of the implications of the ESD Guidance.

Discover Sustainability



Case Study

Supporting the role of universities in leading individual and societal transformation through education for sustainable development

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Abstract

There is growing recognition of the value of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for all learners, and of the unique role that universities play in the transformation of individuals, institutions and societies towards more sustainable futures. Universities engage and even lead in several areas: education, research and community engagement, all of which are essential in this transformation. Further, given their focus and influence, universities are pivotal to action needed to realise the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but, to date, UK university integration of ESD and engagement with the SDGs is relatively limited. In recognition that a more urgent and meaningful response is needed to deliver the 2030 targeted socio-economic transformation outlined by the SDGs, the UK ESD Guidance has been comprehensively revised to support universities to deliver education which enables students to acquire sustainability competencies, equipping them to play leadership roles in an increasingly uncertain world. In this case study, we critically analyse the role of universities and explore why ESD needs to be more urgently integrated in teaching and learning. We review the barriers to achieving ESD in UK universities at political and institutional levels. Finally, we explore the policy-practice interface and outline how the new UK ESD Guidance can support universities in leading individual and societal transformation through ESD and act as a stimulus for embedding ESD in university curricula in both UK and international contexts. We conclude that universities have as yet unfulfilled potential to explore and facilitate ESD for sustainability leadership.

1 Introduction

We are facing global environmental challenges that threaten to overstep our planetary boundaries, whilst social inequalities have been exacerbated [1, 2]. Sustainable development is offered as a route to envision better futures and address these challenges. It is no longer a marginal concept and has now been mainstreamed in policy, business and many practice contexts across society as a whole. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were launched in 2015 to create a global framework and impetus for action in transforming our world for a more sustainable future [3]. The SDGs recognise

Other Output

Simon Kemp & Jim Longhurst (2021) Climate, Environment and Sustainability: the Importance of Universities in Addressing the Climate Crisis.

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk//en/news-events/blog/climate-environment-and-sustainability-the-importance-of-universities-in-addressing-the-climate-crisis>

QAA, Advance HE and UK ESD Advisory Group (2021) Accelerating Education for the SDGs: New Higher Education Sector Guidance on Education for Sustainable Development.

In Accelerating Education for the SDGs in Universities. Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

<https://blogs.upm.es/education4sdg/2021/07/27/accelerating-education-for-the-sdgs-new-higher-education-sector-guidance-on-education-for-sustainable-development/>



Thank You

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Sustainability at UWE
<https://www.uwe.ac.uk/about/values-vision-strategy/sustainability>

UWE website <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/>

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