

FINAL REPORT

Greening tomorrow's leaders: developing sustainability teaching across disciplines at UEA

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What would it take to ensure that each UEA student graduates with the ability to articulate a sustainability 'perspective' relevant to their field of study?

Is there a value to such an undertaking, for students, for academic departments and for the university?

Is sustainability a specialist topic, or is it related to other topical issues such as employability, widening participation, and the future of HE?

Background

HEFCE and HEA have called on universities to embed sustainable development more strategically into the overall student experience. This means using curricula and pedagogical approaches to ensure that graduates are globally-aware and sustainability-literate. Sustainability will also be included in quality measures, with guidance to be published in September 2013.

UEA's commitment to ESD was signalled in 2012 with the People and Planet Green Education Declaration <http://peopleandplanet.org/green-education-declaration>. UEA's People and Planet branch is the largest in the UK. At UEA most activity on sustainability-related education has been driven by grass roots initiatives:

- Sustainability-related degree programmes such as the Low Carbon MBA; MSc Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security; MA/MSc Environmental Sciences and Humanities)
- Sustainability sections in many modules across most Faculties
- Networks (Sustainable Healthcare Education in Medical Schools and Reports 'Evaluating Green Champions in Higher Education Institutions')

Overview – Greening Tomorrow’s Leaders

This teaching fellowship was funded to explore the value of positioning UEA as a leader in sustainability education, by building on our existing reputation as in environmental education.

The initial question (‘should every UEA graduate be able to articulate the relationship of ‘sustainability’ to their field of study?') focussed on the *content* of sustainability education: what kinds of information and skills should be included in our curriculum to ensure that graduates are ‘sustainability-literate’? How does each academic department see the relevance of sustainability to their discipline?

The aims of the project have changed in significantly in response to the evidence and policy drivers uncovered during the literature review, and to guidance from the Higher Education Academy. What was initially intended as a six-month project has received enough support across campus to continue until January 2014, as part of the HEA Green Academy Change Programme. This second phase is considering whether UEA should look at new models of sustainability *pedagogy* rather than sustainability *content*.

Primary outputs:

- Review of the literature on student, employer and academic interests on sustainability (Appendix A)
- Discussions with representatives of all Faculties regarding sustainability content and faculty and student interest
- Assembly of a cross-campus team to bid for inclusion in the HEA Green Academy 2013 (Appendix B)
- Project plan for the second phase of the project, under the auspices of HEA Green Academy (Appendix C)

Recommendations

1. Align with UEA 50th Anniversary

UEA: The Next 50 Years would be a way of involving students, staff and the community to develop a ‘future orientation’ for UEA degrees

2. Focus on pedagogy for ESD, rather than content (see Appendix E)

Often learning is seen as gaining knowledge values and theories related to sustainable development but ESD learning requires a shift in the mental models which frame our thinking. This includes many skills which are also alluded to in the corporate plan and the new academic model, including:

- Learning to ask critical questions
- Learning to clarify one's own values
- Learning to think systemically
- Learning to respond through applied learning [applying theory to practice]
- Learning to explore the tension between tradition and innovation
- Learning to envision more positive and sustainable futures

In short much of the literature on education for sustainability recognises that there is no country which is sustainable, and no roadmap or recipe for success. Therefore we have to *learn* our way toward more sustainable futures: **achieving sustainable development is essentially a process of learning** (UNESCO ESD: An expert review of processes and learning 2002 p.7), See Appendix E for more details.

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