SUMMARY

Following the publication of the QAA guidelines for Education for Sustainable Development, the Student Experience Committee meeting of 30th September 2014 tasked CLL with forming a working group to identify draft institutional objectives for Education for Sustainable Development, and possible mechanisms for implementing the QAA guidelines.

This paper summarises the work completed by the ESD Working Group, and offers a vision/context for moving forward, a draft set of institutional objectives for ESD, and potential implementation mechanisms for implementing the QAA guidelines. An earlier version of this report, which included the draft institutional objectives as in this paper, was discussed and endorsed by the 20th March meeting of the Sustainability Policy Board.

DECISION(S) REQUIRED

Student Experience Committee is asked to consider and approve the draft set of institutional objectives for Education for Sustainable Development, and also the suggested mechanisms for implementation of the QAA guidelines.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS


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DATE: 23.4.15
IMPLICATIONS

Any implications that implementing the recommendations of the report will give rise to under the following categories. If none, put ‘None’.

Financial: None initially, although resource would be needed to support any strategy commissioned

Human Resources: None

Estates: None

Computing Systems and Services: None

Policy/Strategic Aim/Objective: The proposed institutional objectives for Education for Sustainable Development would support the further implementation of ESD across the institution in line with the QAA guidelines published in July 2014.

Corporate Governance: None

Improvement/Performance Management: None

Legal: None

Equality and Diversity: None

Health & Safety/Risk Management: None

Sustainability: The proposal focuses on Education for Sustainable Development, however, the argument is put that ESD needs to be a key part of the curriculum for the university to remain competitive and has the opportunity to be embedded in other co-curriculum activities.

Communications: None

Value for Money: None
DETAIL OF REPORT

Items for Decision

1. Background/Context

ESD has been discussed for many years in the HE Learning and Teaching context, but it was only in 2014 that a guidance framework for ESD was produced by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The framework is outcomes-based for use in curriculum design, and gives general guidance on approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. Whilst not being published as one of the Chapters of the Quality Code, QAA does state that

This guidance is intended to complement Chapter B3 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) dedicated to learning and teaching, but it does not form an explicit part of it. The Quality Code sets out the expectations that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet and is used in QAA review processes. (QAA Framework on ESD, June 2014).

Following the publication of the QAA, the Student Experience Committee meeting of 30th September 2014 tasked CLL with forming a working group to identify draft institution objectives for Education for Sustainable Development, and possible mechanisms for implementing the QAA guidelines.

2. Research Activities undertaken by the ESD Working Group

Chaired by Dr Anne Qualter, a working group comprising academic staff from all three faculties, and representatives from the Guild of Students, Facilities Management and CLL, has met on four occasions over the academic year to undertake the following areas of research/knowledge gathering, which have all informed the development of the draft principles and mechanisms

- Identification of good practice from other HEIs with regard to ESD policy development and implementation
- Identification of where there are existing university modules that include ESD in their curriculum
- Relationship of ESD to existing University of Liverpool policies
- Researching of student expectations with regard to ESD, as part of the curriculum and also external to the curriculum (conducted by the Green Guild team)
- Development of ESD activities for students
- Survey with staff in one school regarding understanding of ESD
- Investigation student incentives for supporting the ESD agenda

The final section of this report (section 4) highlights the key findings from the above areas of work.
3. Vision Statement

The group’s review of ESD has revealed that sustainable development is a powerful underlying theme running through many UG and PGT degree programmes. This is reflective of the explicit inclusion of sustainable development in the skills and knowledge frameworks of many Professional Bodies, and in the QAA subject benchmark statements across disciplines. It is also clear that attention to issues of sustainable development is high on agendas across the wider university: through research activities; in co and extra curricula opportunities; for Professional Services, in particular but not exclusively Facilities Management; and the Guild. Other HEIs have already foregrounded ESD in their curriculum, and through co- and extra-curricular opportunities. These provide opportunities for Liverpool to learn from their experiences.

However, our review has also identified that Liverpool, by building on existing activities in ESD could make a step change and become a leader by creating and capitalising on a whole institution approach to sustainable development, making use of the knowledge, expertise, resources and enthusiasm of staff within and beyond the classroom and taking the application of ESD into the university and the community beyond. To do this, we need to articulate the relationship between ESD and employability, internationalisation, global citizenship, and enterprise. ESD offers opportunities to build on our existing practice, research and teaching expertise in sustainable development to further develop graduates that can collaboratively and creatively contribute to solving complex global challenges.

To take this vision forward, the university should build on existing good practice both within and importantly across the disciplines. Examples, by no means exhaustive, include students in The Department of Geography and Planning working on curricular projects with the Green Guild team; Engineering students working on agriculture projects with students in Life Sciences, and Architecture students supported and mentored by colleagues from the FM sustainability team. Opening up the whole university as a resource for learning in which staff and students collaborate in the creation of new knowledge could make us unique. However, our initial research suggests that there is a need to support staff to develop an understanding of the nature of ESD and how it can be applied creatively. It also implies that if we are to achieve this vision, greater flexibility in our curriculum frameworks may be needed to support innovative approaches to supporting learning.

4. Development of Institutional Objectives and Mechanisms for ESD

The working group has drafted a set of institutional objectives and possible implementation mechanisms for ESD as detailed below:

Overall Aim for ESD

Staff and students will have the opportunity to develop their understanding of, and engagement with, the concepts, practices, challenges, values and skills of sustainable development.

Draft Institutional Objectives for ESD
1. Good practice (from local, national and international contexts) will be identified, adapted, and used to improve practice at the University of Liverpool
2. Learning Opportunities for staff and all students (UG, PGT and PGR) will be research-based, evidence-led and promote inter-disciplinarity and, make use of the resource that is university and wider community
3. Curricula will be further developed that challenge and support student learning with regard to sustainable development.
4. Opportunities for co- and extra-curricular activities to support the ESD agenda will be further developed
5. CPD opportunities will be developed for staff.

Potential Implementation Mechanisms

The working group has also identified potential mechanisms for supporting the implementation of the draft objectives as outlined in the table below, and identified possible timescales for implementation in order to form the basis of an action plan. (It must be noted that some of these activities cannot be taken forward without some dedicated resource being made available)

(Timescale Codes; S=by Dec 2015; M=by July 2016; L=July 2016 onwards)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Institution</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. HoS/D’s encouraged to create locally meaningful school level approaches for implementing &amp; enhancing ESD in programmes. (M/L)</td>
<td>1. Staff development through ULTRA CPD Framework, and online resources. (M/L)</td>
<td>1. ESD as a key element in induction (e.g. a short course/more socially focused events).and transition (M)</td>
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<td>2. Staff (including professional services) ESD activities recognised in workload planning. (L)</td>
<td>2. Staff network ‘community of practice.’ (S).</td>
<td>2. Guild take a lead in co- and extra-curricular activities that encourage and educate for sustainability.(S)</td>
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<td>3. The University communicates and celebrates sustainable development activity/achievements throughout the University and the Guild (L)</td>
<td>3. Capturing and sharing of case studies. (M/L).</td>
<td>3. Promotion of personal and professional development for students through My Liverpool.(S)</td>
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<td>4. Development of enabling structures to facilitate interdisciplinary learning (L)</td>
<td>4. Professional Services (e.g. FM) involve students and staff in sustainability planning and projects.(M/L)</td>
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<td>5. Students and staff collaborate in the development and design of curricula for ESD. (M/L)</td>
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<td>6. Programmes &amp; modules where students can engage in sustainability related interdisciplinary projects, promoting innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship. These can include real world and estate based activities which are clearly indicated in module handbooks etc. (M-ongoing)</td>
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5. Key findings arising from the group research

Good Practice from other HEIs

Members of the working group also researched/contacted other HEIs to identify existing good practice regarding ESD policy development and engagement of staff and students in supporting the ESD agenda. Examples include the ‘sustainable campus’ initiative at the University of Leeds where students can engage in fieldwork on campus, and the University
of Manchester’s interdisciplinary inquiry-based group learning that focuses on complex real world problems, and specific ESD related induction activities.

**Existing ESD opportunities in the curriculum**

A number of degree programmes have been explicitly incorporating Education for Sustainable Development in their curricula for many years e.g. Engineering, Business and Management and Planning. However, if a wide definition of ESD is taken, many other curricula also incorporate ESD e.g. Law and Social Justice programmes, although these elements of the curricula might not use the term ‘ESD’. Discussions at the working group also identified a number of opportunities for interdisciplinary work in the area of ESD e.g. Engineering students undertaking project work with Management School students in order that both groups of students develop a wider understanding of ESD issues from alternative perspectives.

**ESD in current institutional policies**

ESD is an existing component within the institution’s existing sustainability policy which is reviewed annually. The Sustainability team from FM are actively engaged in ‘living lab’ activities with staff and students, engaging in wider city wide environmental and sustainability initiatives.

Although ESD is not explicitly mentioned in our existing institutional policies and strategies concerned with Learning and Teaching, it is connected/integral to our employability policy and global citizenship strategy.

**Student expectations of ESD**

The Guild has also conducting student led research into student attitudes towards ESD through surveys and focus groups. The key findings of this first survey, conducted early 2014, were that 94% of survey respondents (n=592) agreed that the University should be promoting sustainable development and 76% of respondents believed that it should be a part of all courses.

A second student survey (n=254 - Spring 2015) asked students to identify currently existing ESD opportunities in their degree programmes. The survey found that ‘social wellbeing’ featured prominently in courses for respondents from HSS; less so for students from the other two faculties. Other skills such as ‘economic wellbeing’ and ‘critical thinking’ also featured from respondents in all three faculties. Examples of ESD in modules ranged from a ‘Grand Challenges’ module in Life Sciences to evidence of skills being embedded in modules as commented on below:

‘in our law and economics module we learnt about how people react to externalities more than cost and benefit’

**Staff preparedness for embedding ESD in the curriculum**

A study of staff to ascertain their understanding of the meaning of ESD was undertaken in one large school. 30% of module leaders indicated that they did not understand ESD, yet a review of programme and module specifications uncovered a significant amount of coverage of sustainability topics.
Development of ESD activities for students

Since October 2013 the Green Guild team have been engaged in promoting student engagement in education for sustainable development through a wide range of extra- and co-curricular activities and through curriculum research with nearly 5000 student engagements in projects to date.

Extra-curricular activity has included outreach work with 15 schools and student ambassadors supporting each individual school's sustainability projects, and 'Behaviour change' projects such as Student Switch Off, where Halls students compete to save the most energy, pledge to save water and recycle kitchen waste. In addition, regular gardening and bee keeping sessions are delivered on the roof top garden. The Seed Fund program has provided opportunities for students to work in teams lead on their innovative and enterprising projects.

Student Incentives

The University of Liverpool recognises that employers want students to have experience that extends beyond their degree so in the 2015/16 academic year the Sustainability team will be launching the Liverpool Award for Sustainability.

The award has been created to provide students with the opportunity to develop their employability skills whilst improving skills and knowledge in sustainability. By working with the Sustainability Team, participating students will begin to gain an understanding of what sustainability means in a business environment. Completion of the award will involve three key components: workshops, assessed tasks and volunteering. The award/activities will be promoted through 'My Liverpool' and a recognition process for students developed via the HEAR.