

Consultation on Further and Higher Education and the Sustainable Development Goals

St George's House, Windsor Castle

Thursday January 25th – Friday January 26th



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Introduction

Context

For many students entering our universities and colleges, it must seem like a puzzling and worrying time. We face global environmental and social challenges that now threaten to overstep our planetary boundaries¹. Yet tertiary education does not always address these issues, and in fact has been accused of exacerbating them. David Orr has asked "*Why is it that those who contribute to exploiting poor communities and the earth's ecosystems are those who have BAs, MBAs, MScs and PhDs and not the 'ignorant' poor from the South?*"². It has been suggested that much of our learning is currently functional or informational and is reinforced by the neoliberal educational systems of the West, reflecting a broad social and cultural paradigm which is mechanistic and reductionist rather than designed to address the world's complex, interdependent systems³.

Education for sustainable development (ESD) has been promoted not merely as a mechanism by which to convey facts about the resources we use and the inequalities between societies. Rather, it can be a route to enhanced forms of learning overall, in which transformative rather than transmissive approaches predominate, experiential learning and critical pedagogy are facilitated and real world examples exemplify theory and demonstrate the relevance of learning. ESD is no longer seen to be radical. Cortese (2003)⁴ eloquently pleads for higher education in which we achieve an imagined future in which our scientists, technologists and business people design activities that sustain rather than degrade our natural environment and that promote human health and wellbeing. Policy initiatives have attempted to support this move towards education and learning that enables learners to fulfil their own potential and contribute effectively to society whilst recognising and responding to the impacts that humans have on the planet and on each other. Students themselves call for more sustainability; the latest NUS survey revealed that 88% of students believed that universities should actively incorporate and promote sustainable development. At a UK level, the QAA produced guidelines to support embedding of ESD and devolved administrations and a number of network organisations and NGOs, together with outstanding examples of good practice, have continued to promote and extend the concept and practice of ESD in tertiary education. Whilst this demonstrates some progress in UK, some excellent international examples of ESD strategies are emerging. The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2015) enabled concerted local action and catalysed more global interactions. Subsequent to this successful Decade, a Global Action Programme has been rolled out to continue to produce, share and embed knowledge in this area.

Against this background, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emerged in 2015, subsequent to the ending of the fifteen year span of the Millennium Development Goals. Whilst the SDGs are sometimes presented out of context, in fact they represent a return to a holistic view of

¹ Rockstrom, J., et al., *A safe operating space for humanity*. Nature, 2009. **461**(7263): p. 472-475.

² Orr, D.W., *Earth in mind: on education, environment and the human prospect*. 2004, Washington: Island Press.

³ Sterling, S., *Sustainable education: revisioning learning and change*. Schumacher Briefings. 2001: Green Books.

⁴ Cortese, A.D., *The Critical Role of Higher Education in Creating a Sustainable Future*. Planning for Higher Education, 2003. **31**(3): p.15-22.

interconnected environmental and social issues and a aspirational vision for transforming our world, whilst setting out an agenda for 2030⁵. The seventeen SDGs illustrate the concerns of a broad range of civil society voices. Whilst the UN Secretary General recognised that 17 SDGs and 169 targets presented a challenge for nation states, he upheld the views of civil society and presented a 5Ps model as a framework within which to see this process.

What then is the role of tertiary education in relation to the SDGs? Sustainability issues remain and indeed can be seen as multiple and interlinked crises, including climate change, conflicts and migration, biodiversity loss, environmental pollution, social inequalities, poverty and a lack of meaningful work. At the same time, we see bright views of the future, and solutions including technological gains such as widely accessible renewable energy and electric cars, economic transformations such as the circular economy and growth of social enterprise and social changes such as community movements and social media revolutions. Our graduates and students are already excited and active contributors to many of these initiatives. However, there has not yet been a concerted debate on how the further and higher education sector could and should respond to the SDGs and the wider policy context. At this time, we thus call for the sector to not only respond but to lead within UK and more widely.

Consultation format and aims

We established the space for a Consultation at which we invited stakeholders from different parts of the sector to come together and discuss the role of Further and Higher Education (FHE) at this time. This 24-hour consultation (25th-26th January 2018) was convened at St George's House, situated within Windsor Castle, as part of the regular programme of consultations organised on matters of public interest. St George's House is "a physical and intellectual space set in the narrative of history but focused firmly on the future". For each consultation, invited key representatives are hosted together over 24 hours to discuss, debate and reflect on the consultation topic.

Academics, students, senior managers, employers, funders and policy makers shared experiences, knowledges and expectations. The overarching aim of the Consultation was to explore how we can best equip tertiary education students with the capacities to address real world local and global challenges, within the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The questions we addressed were:

- 1. Why and how might we deepen sustainability education in the tertiary sector?**
- 2. How might tertiary institutions engage with the SDGs?**
- 3. What might possible consequences be, in relation to graduate capacities and wider outcomes?**

We saw FHE as recognising the roles that are played in developing the graduates of the future; in offering learning to many of our brightest young people; but also, in maintaining a critical friend voice and holding government and private and third sectors to account; reinforcing policy support and researching implementation. The focus in this Consultation was on education, but we were aware of the intersections of education with research and impact in wider notions of scholarship, and with institutional operations and community engagement. This was the second of two workshops looking at the UN Sustainable Development Goals within education, following one focusing on Young People and the SDGs in November 2017.

⁵ UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2015: A/RES/70/1.

This consultation had the following objectives:

- **To offer a safe space for a range of stakeholders to explore the possible implications of the SDGs for FHE**
- **To raise awareness of the SDGs in FHE**
- **To share good practice and ideas in relation to the SDGs and for ESD more widely, for Universities and Colleges**
- **To contextualize the SDGs within wider trends in FHE and in sustainability practice**
- **To create a vision and begin to outline a strategy to achieve this vision for FHE in UK**

The programme was configured to permit many voices to be heard and to display the plurality of perspectives from consultation participants. Some important perspectives were not included in the programme, but we anticipated that those perspectives would pervade the discussions and offer a wider overview within the discussion sessions. We tried to create some interactive sessions to allow all voices to be heard. We spent much of the first afternoon setting the context and then in the second day we opened up for more space for debate and greater focus on outcomes and potential future directions of action, individually and collectively.

Sustainable Development and the SDGs

Rehema White (Consultation Chair / University of St Andrews / Learning for Sustainability Scotland)

We are overstepping several planetary boundaries, which is having unequal impacts on people around the world and will have serious consequences for future generations. The world needs to respond constructively to this challenge, with a clear vision for the future.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were a policy response emerging from the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, created through a three year negotiation process. They present an aspirational world transformation for 2030, consisting of 17 interconnected goals (see Figure 1) with 169 underlying targets, which give a conceptual idea of sustainability in practice across social and environmental challenges. The goals are intended to be universal, applying in all areas of the world and all sectors. The SDGs aim to promote a paradigm shift of financing beyond 'development aid', with multi-stakeholder partnerships, social investment and ethical trade. Goal 4.7 is about education for sustainable development and so may be of particular interest to the consultation.

Learning for sustainability doesn't just take place in schools through formal learning, but through individual pathways where people learn about sustainability, through primary and secondary education, colleges and universities, workplaces, continuous professional development, as well as through community and life-long learning and in non-formal ways, through, for example, the media and wider cultural influences.

The SDGs are not the only recent policy influence on the embedding of learning for sustainability within further and higher education (FHE). The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development took place 2015-2014, leading to the [Global Action Programme](#) (GAP) on ESD, with the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Reports on [Education for People and Planet](#) (2016) and [Accountability in Education: Meeting our Commitments](#) (2017) have been particularly influential in recent years.

FHE institutions, as places of research and learning, should be exemplars on how to engage with the SDGs. Some institutions are showing leadership, but there is a lack of action across the sector as a

whole. Academics have an important role in critiquing responses to sustainability and the SDGs, and highlighting issues and paradoxes to students. Universities and colleges in the UK are training the world leaders of the future, and students believe that their education should involve both critique of sustainability agenda and information on how to get more practically involved in being part of the solution.

The [University of St Andrews](#) are developing a whole institutional approach to addressing sustainability challenges, attempting to link together teaching, research, estates, student engagement, community engagement, governance etc. and encourage effective interactions between different groups.

[Transition University of St Andrews](#) adds to the work, engaging with the university and local community about sustainability in a practical way.

We need to develop creative responses to sustainability and the SDGs in order to push the agenda to a wider range of people, and to step away from usual ways of thinking and be open to new ideas.



Figure 1: The UN Sustainable Development Goals

What are the Purposes of Tertiary Education? Sector Snapshots

Student Perspective

Jodie Waite (National Union of Students / University of Bournemouth)

Education is a public good, allowing students the opportunity to become changemakers in the world. Although only around 3% of people go to university globally, 80% of world leaders went to university, so university education has a disproportionate influence.

Looking through a lens of systems thinking, students can be seen as leverage points in the system of global society. The SDGs offer an opportunity to teach people how to become globally responsible members of society. There are many good examples of education inspiring people to care about sustainability.

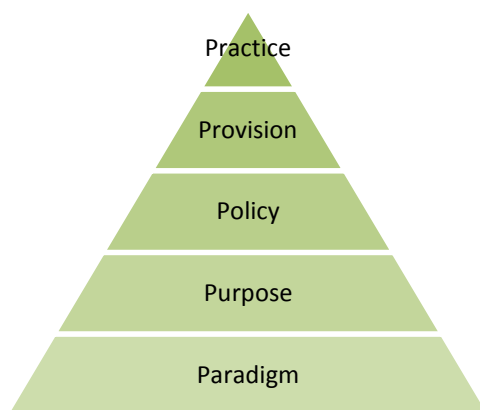
It shouldn't be a lottery of what you study and where that dictates whether you learn about sustainability and how you can make a difference – climate change and global issues will affect everyone. Sustainability should therefore be woven through every course and m

ade both relevant and inspiring. Tertiary education should ensure all students leave with the knowledge and skills to influence society over the longer term.

Academic Perspective

Stephen Sterling (University of Plymouth)

The future is not what it used to be. We are approaching a tipping point, which is widely acknowledged, but most people are continuing to carry on as usual. This is happening in the way we operate as an FHE sector too – there is an unstated assumption that the future is stable and given.



Work in sustainability is on the margins of mainstream education, but we need to consider what sort of education is suitable for the future, and how to be radical and far reaching but also practical in what we deliver.

Our education system is unstable, with unsupportive foundations (see Figure 2). We continue to train the practice, while the paradigm is changing.

Neoliberal education doesn't liberate the creativity that dealing with sustainability requires.



Figure 2: Education System Pyramid
S. Sterling, January 2018

Education can have one of four functions (Sterling, 2001:25):

1. Socialisation – replicate society and culture
2. Vocational – prepare people for employment
3. Liberal humanist – develop the potential of individuals
4. Transformative – facilitate a change towards a more equitable society and a better world

The purpose of education was more intrinsic originally, then became more instrumental towards an economic focus, but what should or could it be? Changing the goals of the system can cause a major shift. Education needs to be re-purposed, to nurture individual and societal change towards a better future.

University Senior Management Perspective

Joy Carter (University of Winchester)

The purpose of a university has been debated for centuries, and involves people, research, knowledge exchange and serving the public good. The SDGs should be at the heart of all these things.

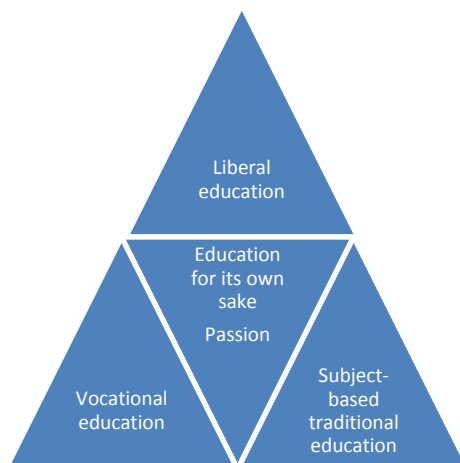


Figure 3: Triangle of Higher Education
J. Carter, January 2018

However, now there is such a market for higher education it is harder to maintain the idea of a university, and the idea of providing public good is no longer such a focus.

Higher Education can be modelled as a triangle (Figure 3). Every course should contain a bit of all three corners, but to different extents. The heart of the triangle is passion, joy, and belief in education for its own sake, and should be embedded in all courses.

Joy's personal ambition is that no student should leave the university without a passion for sustainable development – but that's not easy. Sustainability needs to be addressed at lots of different levels at the University. The Business School is a Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME)

Champion, mainstreaming sustainability ideas within courses, but the work needs to get beyond the business school. The 'ecological university' is a feasible utopia.

Employer / Professional Body Perspective

Shane McHugh (Royal Academy of Engineering)

Whilst we are focusing on education in this workshop, we need to remember the importance of research in universities, including current drivers such as GCRF funding calls. The conversation on the purpose of FHE and how it relates to employers is changing, even for those who take a very utilitarian, vocational view of a university. Three key factors reveal this change:

1. Talking to employers – Employers don't know what skills to recruit for any more as skills needs are constantly changing, and staff need to be retrained. Recruitment decisions are therefore now based on broader attributes, such as resilience, communications and adaptability – skills which will complement artificial intelligence in the workplace and make the business more resilient.
2. Talking to young people – Previous generations valued salary, stability and location when choosing a job, but now what young people look for in a job is creating value or having impact.
3. Reading the evidence – The skills gap is usually thought to be a supply and demand problem and the solution is about trying to fix pinch points, but maybe the issue is what we're supplying

isn't what is demanded. There is ongoing work with the [Centre for Real World Learning](#) at the University of Winchester to consider the habits of mind which support the more technical skills and therefore need developed in FHE.

Education around the SDGs is an exciting way of addressing these challenges, involving systems thinking and problem solving, having an impact on the world, and supporting development of the capacity for adaptability required from employers.

Policy Marker Perspective

David Beards (Scottish Funding Council)

Often the best way to understand the broader policy perspective is to start with the policy positions of key organisations and triangulate. The Scottish Government [Enterprise and Skills Review](#) (2017) still considered the purpose of education to be partly about economics and productivity, and economic growth remains prominent as a Scottish Government narrative. However, the Scottish [Commissioner for Fair Access in Higher Education](#)'s 2017 Report focused on transforming lives by increasing access to education, seeing explorations of identity and philosophy-based education as important, from a view of the role of universities consistent with the enlightenment.

[NUS Scotland](#)'s Citizenship Policy states that students do not want to just learn in tertiary education, but to be equipped to influence the world around them.

It is important to see what narratives people have about themselves, and if you want to make change you need to either fit with that or try to change their narrative. When you look at the mission statements for institutions themselves, Universities say they are focused on students and research, and the Colleges on students, learning and skills.

From a policy perspective there are a wide range of purposes of tertiary education:

- Science, prizes and grand challenges
- Philosophy based general education
- Training citizens for effective democracy
- Transforming lives and instrumental benefits
- Increased value of creativity and problem solving
- Curated knowledge (the academy as a trusted voice in public life)

Public support for the further and higher education sector is generally high, with education seen as a public good where government money should be spent.

Group Reflections

Groups were asked to reflect on the purposes of further and higher education, and there was vigorous discussion about the different purposes.

The SDGs, Sustainability and Tertiary Education: National Policy Perspectives

Scotland

Pete Higgins (University of Edinburgh and Learning for Sustainability Scotland)

Scots played a key role in the industrial revolution (eg James Watt, James Young), and there continues to be a significant oil industry in Scotland which is an important part of the policy context.

The first Scottish Parliament was established in 1707 and the Scottish Parliament was re-convened in 1999, with key responsibilities devolved, including education, health and infrastructure. Many policy changes have taken place since then, connected strongly to who we are as a nation, and many of these are around sustainability.

Following the Climate Change (Scotland) Act in 2010, energy and sustainability targets became policy commitments which were embedded into Scottish strategies. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was one of the first national leaders to commit to the SDGs at a senior level. Scotland is therefore ahead of the game in some areas, with both commitment and will at a senior level in Scotland to take action around sustainability and climate change.

The sustainability agenda joins up a lot of areas of Scottish policy, including: the environment; health and wellbeing; renewables and green technology; community development; culture, heritage and languages; land reform, access and land use strategy; farming, forestry, fisheries and food; tourism, recreation and rural economy; and education. The biosphere-related SDGs are particularly important to both action and identity in Scotland.

There is a longstanding interest in education and environmental and sustainability education in Scotland, including input by key figures such as James Hutton (1726-1797), Sir Patrick Geddes (1854-1932), Prof John Smyth (1924-2005) and others, which has created an educational legacy which is different to elsewhere in the UK. Primary and secondary education is wide and often interdisciplinary, 4 year undergraduate degrees allow for breadth as well as depth, and FHE is generally free to access.

Learning for sustainability (Lfs) was developed further in Scotland 2011-2017 on the back of several key influences:

- Push from non-governmental organisations, non-departmental government bodies and charities to make this a political priority
- One Planet Schools Ministerial Advisory Group produced a [Learning for Sustainability Report](#) supporting a whole school approach to Lfs (including Education for Sustainability (ESD), global citizenship and outdoor learning) as an entitlement of all learners, requiring Lfs teaching, a whole school approach, and structures to support it. All 31 recommendations were accepted by Scottish Ministers in March 2013.
- The Scottish Government's Lfs Implementation Group took forward the One Planet Schools work, linking Lfs to the UN SDGs, to create the [Vision 2030+ report](#). This was accepted in full in March 2016 by three Scottish Ministers and formally launched September 2017.
- General Teaching Council embedded Lfs within the [Professional Standards](#) for all teachers
- Development of a UN Regional Centre of Expertise in ESD for Scotland, [Learning for Sustainability Scotland](#)

- The role of and work taking place to progress the agenda in individual universities and colleges

There is pressure on universities and colleges to progress around sustainability through influences such as [Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Reporting](#), and embedding Leadership in Environmental and Social Sustainability within the Scottish Funding Council's [Outcome Agreement Guidance](#).

Sustainability is being embedded into FHE institutional policies and strategies, through both structural changes and long term ambitions and targets. The University of Edinburgh has sustainability embedded into strategic, learning and teaching and research committees, research academies and individual colleges and schools, as well as a Carbon Neutral by 2040 commitment. There is increasing interest in the SDGs and sustainability from a range of courses, but it is not spread across the whole curriculum. Work to ensure students can develop sustainability understandings through an optional interdisciplinary online course is ongoing, but unless the course is required not many will take it.

Funding drives the research agenda, and the SDGs present an opportunity here. The Global Challenges Research Fund requires comment on alignment of proposed research with the SDGs.

It is important to remember that we don't just teach what we explicitly state or believe we will teach, but also implicitly teach through the learning environment, and through what we choose not to teach.

England

Stephen Martin (Change Agents UK)

Robotics and technology are taking over a lot of graduate roles, and we need to reconsider education.

In 1992 This Common Inheritance was an education policy around the environment, but nothing more has been done. Recent announcements around Theresa May's 25 year plan (watch via The Independent [here](#)), with no targets, have brought a lot of questions from environmental commentators such as [Jonathan Porritt](#).

It is unclear how the UK will do their Voluntary National Review on progress on the SDGs, because we are not collecting data that we have capacity to deal with.

The new Office for Students (OfS) is aiming to improve value for money (and perhaps quality) of higher education, and the Teaching Enhancement Framework (TEF) is considering Longitudinal Educational Outcomes, so new things are emerging. SDG 4 is all about Quality Education, so the question is how can this be understood and reported by the OfS, and fed into the UK's [Voluntary National Review](#) on progress on the SDGs.

James Longhurst (University of the West of England)

The [University of the West of England \(UWE\) Bristol](#) is doing a great deal of work around the SDGs.

UWE is a large, multi-site university on a long term (20+ years) journey to become a more sustainable university. When the SDGs were published, the university started to map activity against the goals:

- High level mapping of the four UWE Faculties against the SDGs in 2015/16 in terms of activities and facilities (Arts, Creative Industries and Education, Business and Law, Environment and Technology, Health and Life Sciences).
- Sustainability Plan 2013-2020, mapped in 2016 to consider how the themes of the plan contributed to the ambitions of the UN SDGs.

- Refreshed Sustainability Plan 2.0, in 2017, to better fit the SDGs
- Selected UG and PGT Programmes mapped from 2016 onwards. Programmes analysed through stakeholder engagement, with large versions of maps to be put in public areas stating what the course does against each of the SDGs. Mapping isn't mandatory but encouraged. Some departments invented their own analysis structures and reporting mechanisms.
- Research Institutes, Centres and Groups mapped from 2017 onwards using code to find key words, fed into Faculty Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee for review and approval, then to Sustainability Board before publication.
- Research Impact Case Studies being mapped from 2017 onwards
- The Students Union @ UWE Sustainability Action Plan mapped in 2017/18
- Community Engagement, Partnership and Public Engagement to be mapped from 2018 onwards

All information is the on the University's [sustainability webpages](#).

Next steps include embedding SDG mapping into Quality Management and Enhancement Framework, which is again not required but strongly advised.

Wales

Carolyn Hayles (University of Wales Trinity St David)

Following the establishment of the Welsh Assembly (1998) and their enhanced powers (2006), the Welsh Government had a duty to set out how it would promote sustainable development in the exercise of its functions. Between 2002 and 2008, a lot of work was done to embed Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) into education.

Wales was the first certified [Fairtrade](#) country in the world (2008), and released the [One Wales One Planet](#) scheme in 2009, stating that "within the lifetime of a generation we want to see Wales using only its fair share of the Earth's resources".

During the Decade of ESD, Wales achieved a great deal, and the Estyn (inspectorate of quality and standards) [Final Report](#) (2014) highlighted that ESD had galvanised pedagogical innovation and encouraged partnerships and networks, and recognised the importance of strong political leadership in advancing ESD.

The [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act](#) followed a year-long consultation in 2014-15 on the "Wales we Want", which engaged people in discussions about the future of the country. The Act was launched 2015 with seven Wellbeing Goals, *'the lens through which public services will be looked at; a single shared purpose for Wales'*:

1. A prosperous Wales
2. A resilient Wales
3. A healthier Wales
4. A more equal Wales
5. A Wales of cohesive communities
6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language
7. A globally responsible Wales

46 National Indicators sitting under these were agreed and published in March 2016, with the Act commenced in law in April 2016. The first Wellbeing Assessments were a year later, with the first Wellbeing Plans for next stage of the Act due in April 2018.

The Act also outlines 5 Ways of Working towards sustainable development which apply across all geographic areas: Long term; Prevention; Integration; Collaboration; and Involvement.

ESDGC education and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WFGA) has been mainstreamed and embedded into education – other than higher education – through seven themes: natural environment; consumption and waste; climate change; wealth and poverty; identity and culture; choices and decision; and health. These are part of the education inspection framework, so good practice is shared and weaknesses addressed.

Higher education institutions choose their own way to embed the Act, and the SDGs, in their activities.

[University of Wales Trinity St David](#) (UWTSD) have taken a systemic approach since 2012 to embed sustainability into culture, curriculum, campus and community engagement. Jane Davidson, former Environment Minister for Wales, took a lead on sustainability at the institution so was in a good position to push for change. UWTSD voluntarily adopted the WFG Act goals, principles and duties in 2015, and worked to integrate the goals within: university policy and procedures, strategic plans, sustainability KPIs, faculty sustainability plans, degree validation/re-validation processes, the ESDGC and WFGA Certificate (an optional online interdisciplinary training certificate open to all staff and students which has proved really popular), and internal funding for ESDGC research projects.

The Welsh Universities' Future Generations Group was established to join up the work of different universities around sustainability and advance progress, which is now increasing links with Wales' Regional Centre of Expertise on ESD, [RCE-Cymru](#).

Ireland

Patrick Paul Walsh (University College Dublin / UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network)

National sustainability plans exist from the departments for environment, but as the environmental, social and economic have to be integrated there is a need for further work on what different silos are doing about sustainability and the SDGs, and how they can better work together.

Northern Ireland are hiring people to collect statistics on SDGs, and there are aspirations for a stakeholder committee to push things forward.

Engaging with International Policy on the SDGs

Patrick Paul Walsh (University College Dublin / UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network)

The engagement of stakeholders is strongly encouraged around UN processes related to sustainable development, with the [2030 Agenda](#) intended to be "of the people, by the people, and for the people". Work is ongoing to ensure that people and organisations realise their role in seeing through the agenda. The role of the scientific and academic community is specifically mentioned within this, and implementing the UN 2030 Agenda will require a lot of work around research and innovation, so will fail without the engagement of Universities. See the role of universities on the SDGs in Figure 4.

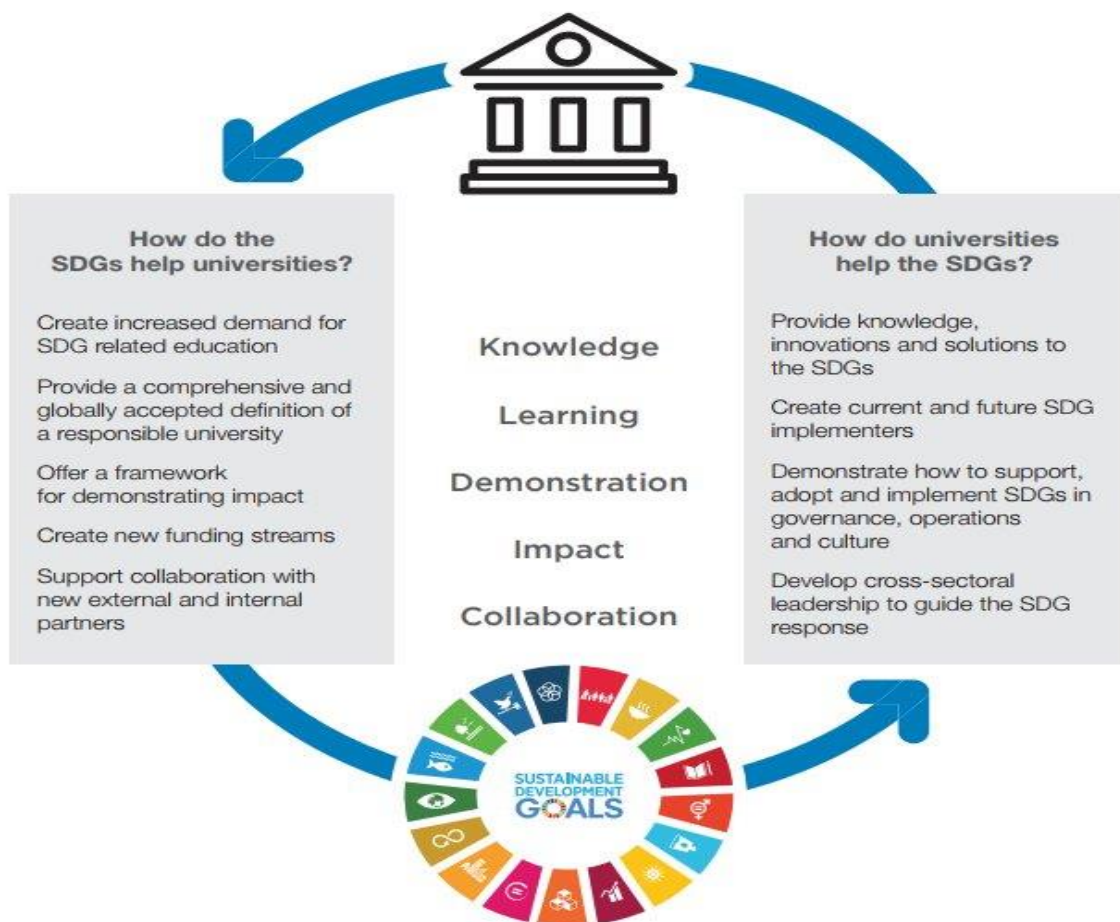


Figure 4: Universities and the SDGs

Universities must allocate their resources and set their research agendas to support the goals, but funding partners and streams, including EC Framework 9, will need to support research on the SDGs within universities.

Science can influence SDG policy through: the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF); Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM); Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR); and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). New entry points have been developed to increase the opportunities for Science Policy Interface and decrease the time lags between science raising a warning, action at a global level, and the reduction of impact/harm.

The Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2019 aims to bring a solid science and evidence base to support policies for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the HLPF, and is currently being prepared by an independent group of experts. The group is looking to academics to submit case studies, publications, or papers that can support achieving the SDGs. They are requesting contributions on: interactions among SDGs and their targets; transformation pathways towards sustainable development; looking beyond the SDGs (major issues identified by research which are not explicitly taken into account in the SDGs); and the role of science for sustainable development, before the deadline of 2nd February 2018.

The role of universities in the 2030 sustainable development agenda also includes developing structured electives, through opportunities for volunteering, and through developing teacher and other skills-based training.

Examples of FHE initiatives progressing the SDGs

Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC)

Rebecca Petford (EAUC)

[EAUC](#) is a membership organisation which has been going for around 20 years. The Scotland Office is funded by the Scottish Funding Council to provide an enhanced level of sustainability support to Scotland's colleges and universities. EAUC provide training, knowledge sharing networks and communications, representation activities, one-to-one support, and run focused projects. They celebrate outstanding work through the annual [Green Gown Awards](#), and share good practice by uploading case studies and resources on the open-access [Sustainability Exchange](#).

The EAUC aims to support institutions to embed environmental and social sustainability in all FHE activities. The [LiFE Framework](#) demonstrates a strategic cross-institutional approach to delivering sustainability, including a focus on policy and strategy, stakeholder engagement and links to the curriculum.

EAUC's 2017-2021 Strategy focuses on "Making Sustainability Just Good Business", with a focus on extending sustainability responsibilities outside of estates teams. Current work is focusing on engaging senior leaders, who can unlock capacity and change institutional norms. Research has found that using the right terminology and framing is important to get engagement, and EAUC are developing a range of resources to support this.

In Scotland, EAUC have been engaging with the Funding Council to develop with a new section embedded in the Outcome Agreement Guidance (used to develop the commitments institutions make in terms of expected delivery in exchange for their funding) on [Leadership in Environmental and Social Sustainability](#). This highlights the importance of carbon reporting, senior level commitment to sustainability, strategic planning and targets, staff and student engagement, and "ensuring students develop the understanding of environmental and social sustainability required for the workplaces of tomorrow". This addition has led to a lot of conversations with lead planners and Vice Principals in institutions for both the EAUC team and sustainability leads, and done a lot to get sustainability out of estates silos.

Tertiary education exists to support students to develop the skills and knowledge they need for the future, and there has been increasing interest around embedding sustainability within the curriculum. The conversation has moved from "should we" to "how". A recent half day event on [Measuring Sustainability in the Curriculum](#), run with Learning for Sustainability Scotland and the College Development Network, proved popular, and funding is being sought to develop a set of resources and training for lecturing staff to push this work further.

It is important students are supported to cultivate a career in sustainability if they want to do so, yet careers advisors have limited knowledge in this area and there are few resources available. EAUC-Scotland developed the [Careers in Sustainability](#) guidance and webinar series to support students and careers advisors to better understand, prepare for, and develop a career in sustainability. More work is

needed in this area, as it is important we don't lose students who are passionate about making a difference due to a lack of careers advice.

EAUC value working with organisations outside the UK FHE sector, and set up the Future Business Council of leaders from Universities and global companies to explore and start to address the graduate sustainability skills gap. Another group, the Global Alliance of Tertiary Education and Student Sustainability Networks, was set up to share resources and strengthen individual national voices to engage about sustainability in FHE internationally.

The [SDG Accord](#) is a Global Alliance initiative, intended to inspire, celebrate and advance the role of the tertiary education sector have in addressing sustainability, and to act as a commitment learning institutions make to each other to deliver the SDGs, report on progress, and share learning nationally and internationally. A summary of the reporting will be reporting to a UN High Level Political Forum. The Accord can be signed by senior leaders on behalf of an institution or related university/college support organisation, or by individual students, academics and operational staff as a personal and professional commitment. [Resources](#), including a webinar series, exist to support institutions to better understand and engage with the SDG Accord.

Transition

Maria Cooper (Transition Network)

The [Transition movement](#) is less about academic exploration of sustainability and more about lived experience. My entire career and income stream comes from "what I was doing when I was supposed to be studying"! There is a lot of power in changing individuals and communities by just rolling up your sleeves and doing stuff with other people, whether they are projects on edible campus, sustainable travel, skill sharing and so on. We need to embody and not just teach SDGs. We can consider the inner as well as the outer landscape.

A [Guide](#) has been created to support starting or developing Transition movements in Universities and Colleges based in the experiences of a number of institutions' experiences. Although Transition is all about environmental and social sustainability there is no explicit tie to the SDGs in this Guide.

Key aspects of the Transition movement:

- *It's holistic in how we engage with people and integrate sustainability ideas into what we do.* How do we embody the SDGs, not just teach them, or let them pass as just another policy document? An important success factor is to engage more than one community – Transition University of St Andrews brings together students, academic staff, professional staff, estates staff, and local community members.
- *It's personal* – it's about an inner challenge too.
- *It's about designing resilient groups* – resilience is needed at both the individual and group level to deal with personal challenges and develop social infrastructure to address wider issues.

Key challenges of Transition in Universities and Colleges:

- *Transience* – there is a high turnover of staff and students, and continuation is reliant on a few champions over time. We can see institutional memory loss at times. However, transience also means that all those people who engage go and plant that seed elsewhere a lot faster than in more static groups.

- *Funding* – sometimes initial funding can be found externally, but to be sustainable organisations they need to be supported internally. Some groups become compost, but hopefully feed wider institutional experience.

Transition and the learning experience it provides:

- *Give lived experience* – bodies and habits need to be engaged as well as heads, and institutions should walk the walk of a good lifestyle with minimal impact to increase the impact on learning. ("Tell me and I will forget / Show me and I may remember / Involve me and I will understand" Confucious).
- *Give community* – individuals need community to support them to deal with sustainability challenges as individuals and groups.
- *Give deep understanding* – engaging more deeply allows individuals to look at the ethics and values behind sustainability and the SDGs, and try to internalise and embody them.

Universities and colleges should learn to be explicit living examples of the SDGs, where students can learn to live the good life rather than just learn about it.

Rethinking Economics

Maeve Cohen (Rethinking Economics)

[Rethinking Economics](#) is a global organisation with groups throughout the world, partly built upon post-crash economics. The network has 52 groups in 23 countries, and 3910 total members worldwide.

The economics education provided in universities generally follows only one school of thought, not considering history, alternative schools of thought, or links with other disciplines. We need a pluralistic, critical, real-world economics in the classroom and for society

There are various major economic schools of thought, including:

- Neoclassical economics – focuses on individuals and competition
- Post-Keynesian Economics – effective demand model, what we pay into society is what defines our output
- Feminist economics – considers gender relations and recognises unpaid work that women do
- Ecological economics – recognises that economy is embedded in environment so there is a need to consider the environment in all decisions

Economics graduates shape our economy, as they run big businesses and banks, and create economic policy. Universities need to be teaching economics that supports the world we need to build. Students need to demand this type of learning.

["The Econocracy"](#) is a book written by Rethinking Economics to share how economics works, and how it backs up our national and international decision-making, with non-economists. There are reading groups for this book around the world.

Rethinking Economics requires a long term strategy due to the constant turnover in student members, meaning there is a need to re-recruit each year – but also high number of students graduating with alternative perspectives.

Glasgow Caledonian University

Prof Cam Donaldson (Glasgow Caledonian University)

The idea of the Common Good / Common Weal has been in the DNA of Queens College, one of Glasgow Caledonian University's predecessors, since 1875. Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) is the University for the Common Good.

The SDGs can be embedded into what a university does in two ways – you can attract the best talent and see what they research and teach and link that to the SDGs, or you can use the SDGs to drive institutional planning. GCU have chosen that the University of the Common good be driven by the SDGs.

Key Common Good or SDG-related activities at GCU include:

- Muhammad Yunus was Chancellor until late last year. Yunus is a signatory of the SDGs and has won a number of great accolades for his work on community-based poverty relief
- Glasgow School for Business and Society is a signatory of the Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) and was in 2013 the first Scottish university to join the UN Global Compact. Socially purposeful entrepreneurship is embedded into the curriculum, with opportunities for students to engage with practical related experiences
- The university is accredited as an Ashoka U Changemaker Campus, meaning they go beyond the curriculum to enhance access, mobility and student participation in socially purposeful projects both in and out of class, locally and across the world

Aspirations around the SDGs are core to how GCU works internationally. GCU was the first foreign university to be granted degree awarding powers in the USA due to the distinctiveness of their fair fashion and social business offer. In Dhaka, the Grameen Caledonian College of nursing runs as a social business and trains local nurses from impoverished backgrounds to Western standards. In South Africa they partner with Transnet freight rail company to offer work-based learning. GCU is also a founding partner in the African Leadership College.

The university research strategy works across the SDGs, grouping researchers into themes, and promoting cross-School and cross disciplinary working through research centres which focus on societal needs. The Centre for Climate Justice, and the Yunus Centre which explores the impacts of microlending on social enterprise on health and well-being.

The social-orientation and research agendas within GCU work well together, creating, in their graduates, leaders across a wide range of sectors who see the SDGs as the new bottom line.

How can and should the SDGs influence Further and Higher Education?

The plenary discussion highlighted five ways that the SDGs could and should influence FHE: by encouraging reconsideration of the sector's role; by directly embedding the SDGs in learning and teaching; by highlighting the need to consider student diversity; by using them to measure impact; and by creating a sense of urgency to take action.

Reconsidering the Role of the Further and Higher Education Sector

The aspirations of the FHE sector are important to reconsider. The role of FHE has been seen for many years to be to train professionals, so they, and the country, can succeed. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) was developed to increase accountability within the sector, with this aim in mind. However, this teaching and research has been based on a set of core assumptions about the world we live in, many of which have led to serious sustainability issues. We need to change these core assumptions, and change mainstream education, rather than just teach about the SDGs on the side: we need a transformation rather than merely tweaking.

The FHE sector is changing, with the marketised system meaning that universities collaborate less these days. The number of universities is likely to double in the next 10 years, and new universities will be able to adapt to a changing sector faster. Existing institutions need to collaborate and change to survive, locally as well as globally.

The SDGs should be seen to be future-proofing what the institution does, providing a blueprint towards 2030. Universities and colleges need to "do", as well as teach and research, and it is important to have senior leaders in our institutions who understand the importance of this agenda.

Higher education institutions, as places of critical thinking, also have an important role to play in critiquing the SDGs as a means to address the challenges we face in the world, as well as critique the progress shown by governments, private companies, third sector organisations, and our own sector.

Embedding the SDGs in Teaching and Learning

We currently have a window of opportunity where both students and employers are asking for more sustainability skills. We need to consider how we are teaching about sustainability, how students are learning, and how we link their entire learning journey.

One option to ensure that students and graduates are able to think critically about sustainability is to introduce mandatory sustainability modules within institutions. However, both students and teaching staff can react negatively to mandated interventions (although it is getting harder for staff to play the academic freedom card when it comes to teaching).

Sustainability can instead be built into quality management systems, allowing course tutors to get the ethos into every course in an appropriate way, rather than a standard course for all. This will do more to change institutional cultures, but means that tutors need a high level of knowledge about sustainability. Capabilities here can be assessed at the interview stage and developed by formal and informal training and engagement.

In whichever way it is delivered, sustainability education needs to be fun and relevant for students, and teaching staff need to learn how to engage students creatively and critically rather than just teach. NUS's popular [Responsible Futures](#) programme allows students to say what they want, and be agents for institutional change. The classroom should provide the opportunity for critical thinking partnerships, where students are encouraged to engage around both their learning and their lifestyles. However, this is reliant on having appropriate class sizes to allow such engagement, and institutions being receptive to students engaging with both their learning and learning environment.

Highlighting the Need to Consider Student Diversity

It is important to reflect not only on what we are teaching, but also on who we are teaching. All institutions are open but they are not diverse, which is potentially damaging with respect to furthering the SDG agenda.

In addition, education is not just a one-way process, and students' political and socio-economic backgrounds will affect how they interact with both their education and with sustainability. Generally, those with a higher socio-economic background are more likely to believe can make a difference in the world, while those from lower socio-economic backgrounds may have more pressures on them while studying and feel the pressure to get a job immediately following graduation. We need to ensure students get the type of education which best suits their abilities and interests, and that they are better supported to participate on an equal footing.

We also need to ensure that all students who wish to are supported to move on to meaningful and secure jobs where they can make a positive impact on the world as well as meet their income needs.

Using the SDGs to Measure the Impact of the FHE Sector

Being able to identify the sustainability outcomes we want from the FHE sector, and how we might measure them, is a key priority which might be assisted by application of the SDGs.

Graduates go on to influence the world in their personal and professional lives after studying, and it would be interesting to follow students through a longitudinal study to see how they have contributed to SDGs. The academic community is experienced at measuring outcomes to justify funding, but resources are needed to trace how research and interventions influence wider systems.

Creating a Sense of Urgency

The SDGs are looking towards 2030, which is not far away. We do not have time to wait before starting to deliver on these goals, in order to both play our part and minimise the negative effects of unsustainability. We need to consider what we can do right now, and what we can do in a year or two, and get started.

Lessons from Elsewhere

National Health Service (NHS)

David Pencheon (formerly NHS Sustainable Development Unit)

People think that sustainability must be easy to discuss in the NHS, but it is not. Selling and engaging people around sustainability is a task which the department had to learn over time.

Two key issues:

- Most people in the health profession are not interested in the long-term future, as they are used to responding to immediate crises not long-term planning. Humans are a fight and survive species and we are trying to do something different when it comes to sustainability.
- Most people in the health service are not interested in health, they are interested in disease!

Considering the best way to start conversations around sustainability is very important – the SDGs are not a good place to start. It is necessary not to have a communications strategy but an engagement strategy, which is about listening too (and aligns with the culture of listening to the patient in the NHS). Work out which aspects of sustainability people are interested in (loneliness, flooding, dementia and so on) and use that as a hook to introduce the SDGs.

There are three basic rules within the NHS:

- Don't break the bank
- Don't break the law
- Don't break your contract with the people you are there to serve (not just employers)

Mandating actions is not the most effective way, the best way is to get the approval in advance, then charm people into complying with a large stick behind!

For leaders, instilling a sense of competition can be effective. If you can get them to say they would like to measure how the organisation is doing, or compare to those down the road, then you can have a framework based on the SDGs ready for measuring this. They will likely question where the framework came from, and then the background of the SDGs is an open conversation topic.

Private Sector

Louise Scott (Pricewaterhouse Coopers)

Some leaders in the private sector are responding very well to the SDGs. At the Edie Forum there were several presentations and companies with good sustainability focus such as Innocent, Coop, ING and Dell have all focused on relevant aspects.

PwC is the biggest professional services firm in the world, and the largest graduate recruiter in the world. They have sustainability teams globally who consult for clients, plus an in-house corporate responsibility team. The SDGs are used to link the work of sustainability teams around the world

Why should businesses care about the SDGs? This is a big conversation topic in the private sector.

- Increased government focus on sustainable business

- Improved business performance and lower costs of equity and debt
- Inclusive business opportunity worth \$12 trillion – [Better Business, Better World Report](#) on the opportunity of sustainability for business

The SDGs are complex and very broad, but businesses should engage with them through a process of prioritisation. PwC did some work to assess what the priority SDGs were for businesses, and found:

- 83% of companies mentioned doing work on the SDGs, but 61% of all companies were not meaningfully engaged
- SDG priorities in UK for companies were 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 13 (Climate action) and 5 (Gender equality). Citizens in the UK care about 2 (Zero hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and 1 (No poverty). UK Government priorities are 14 (Life below water), 15 (Life on land) and 4 (Quality education), which are the ones we are struggling with as a country.
- Energy efficiency work should be SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) but is but often recorded as 13 (Climate action)
- Most SDG reporting is still at a qualitative level only

Regulation is driving better quality reporting across the world. Companies who prioritise the SDGs score better in terms of reporting quality, but there is a need to "translate" them for business use, and make their actions more meaningful and relevant; it seems that the SDGs were written more for government and it remains difficult to align with key private sector initiatives such as the UN Global Compact and Global Reporting Initiative, supported by PwC, produced ["An Analysis of the Goals and Targets"](#) to provide target level analysis, illustrative actions and examples of existing disclosures.

PwC's [Global Goals webpages](#) share a lot of information to support businesses to engage with the goals through a three stage process:

- 1) Prioritise and map the SDGs where you can have the most impact, based on stakeholder preferences and local needs where your business operates
- 2) Identify potential actions by looking at the target level and considering the more valuable contributions you can make (including positive externalities of actions on other goals)
- 3) Analyse shared value opportunities in terms of both value to the business and impact for society

We might need a guide for the further and higher education sector like the one for business.

Partnerships

Emily Auckland (UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development)

UKSSD is a cross sector collaboration initiative for stakeholders around sustainable development. What can colleges and universities bring to partnerships around the SDGs?

The SDGs create a common purpose and language for partnership work, which is particularly good when engaging between academic and non-academic audiences.

[The Partnering Initiative](#) say there are 5 building blocks required for partnership work on the SDGs between different sectors: supportive policy, sufficient infrastructure, effective partnerships, strong and outward-looking organisations, and skilled individuals who communicate well.

Within partnerships, we need to ensure there are shared expectations, the right power dynamic, and that the personalities involved work well together. Understanding both what you can offer and want to get back from a partnership, and how the other partners feel about this, is vital to understand from the start. Businesses now don't just want to give money to social and environmental projects, they sometimes want to get involved in the project itself.

We need our future leaders to have the right competencies to engage with others in effective partnerships – negotiation, communication, coaching, listening skills etc. The purpose of tertiary education should be to create these competencies to allow graduates to work in partnerships to solve the problems we face.

UKSSD have a wide range of partners, and are doing the first comprehensive review of the UK's performance against the SDGs, looking at UK-appropriate indicators, synergies, and what's happening on overseas territories. Everyone is welcome to [join the UKSSD network](#) as a friend or partner.

The Hard Rain Project

Mark Edwards (The Hard Rain Project)

The project came about when Mark got lost in the Sahara desert, then after being rescued heard "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna" Fall by Bob Dylan, and came up with the idea of illustrating each line of the song. He spent a long time taking the pictures, and then developed the exhibition.

The exhibition of photos and lyrics has travelled the world, supported by governments, companies, and FHE institutions. It presents a different, creative way to look at the problems of the world.

A copy of the book was sent to all leaders in the world, with then Prime Minister Gordon Brown talking about the fierce urgency of need for action in his reply. The SDG goals are a real opportunity to make a difference, and we need to get the leaders who have signed up to them to take action. We need to give our support to make this happen. Hard rain brought lots of emails demanding solutions to the problems that Bob Dylan had written about.

A second exhibition called "Whole Earth?" tried to give people the information they needed to take action, and a new one is now being developed on the SDGs.

We need a surge of creativity if we are going to deal with the problems we face. How can universities be part of that surge?

United Nations

Monika MacDevette (United Nations Environment Programme)

The SDGs are the responsibility of all the member states convened by the UN. They belong to everyone, and were developed and launched through their governments in a global forum. They should be seen as a representation of what everyone wants to do. Expectations are very high – this is about moving the human condition in a particular direction.

There is no doubt that education is foundational in achieving the SDGs. Dialogue within individual sectors is critical, and learning can be spread further through networks such as GUPES (the Global

Universities Partnership on Environment for Sustainability). Global south universities are hungry for ideas, and UK institutions are some of the pace-setters.

The SDGs were intentionally designed to be integrated, so you can't pull one out and deal with that like was possible with the Millennium Development Goals. It is vital to explicitly show the interconnectedness of SDGs as critical narrative for breaking down barriers. Much of the work in both the UN and our institutions is very disciplinary, and the SDGs allow conversation between them, which is where some of the most exciting opportunities can be found. The SDGs create a common language.

Further and higher education institutions need to support the UN through advocacy and activism to push the sustainability agenda further.

Yidan Prize Foundation

Clive Lee (Yidan Prize Foundation)

The Worldwide [Educating for the Future Index](#) evaluates the extent to which education systems teach "future skills". It was created by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and commissioned by the Yidan Prize Foundation, and considers 35 economies, including the UK. There is ongoing work to try to further improve the index, including consideration of how to measure the impacts of expending efforts on teaching around the SDGs.

The Yidan Prize is the world's largest international recognition in the field of education. It invests US\$3.9 million annually into prizes for laureates who are making game-changing contributions to education research and development. These can go to anyone in any role, not just academics, but to anyone with the idea and ambitions to create a better world. The money can be used to further their projects, and the prize will help expand their impact globally.

Discussion: How can the FHE sector work with and learn from other sectors?

This discussion primarily revolved around the business sector, and how universities and colleges can engage with businesses to work with them, learn from them, and support their development. Private sector companies sometimes seem to set sustainability targets which are mis-aligned with their business models, and it is important to ensure that the sustainability aspirations they communicate are realistic. The risk of greenwashing makes both FHE institutions and the UN nervous to support them, but we should support the efforts companies are making, talking to them as people rather than professionals about the differences they can make, and encouraging honesty about their operational impacts, in order to drive change.

Some companies are beginning to do good work around considering and addressing their climate and sustainability risks, as is demonstrated in the [Better Business Better World](#) report by the Business and Sustainable Development Commission. Companies both want to be as profitable as possible and look good, and those leading on sustainability have proven an ability to reduce costs, improve their product ranges, and increase their profits in the process.

Universities need to get better at collecting and mapping data on the SDGs to enable more partnership working with non-universities. The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) have produced a [guide](#) to support this work. Businesses now often want to be more active partners in making change happen, rather than just sponsors, and this should be encouraged.

The World Benchmarking Alliance are developing systems to benchmark private companies' performance against the SDGs. Could Universities do something similar? Could the SDGs get embedded into some of the benchmarking that already goes on in FHE?

Some companies are completely reinventing their business models to ensure their resilience (e.g. Shell). Many of our major companies are not that old (Uber is 7 years old, Facebook 14, Google 19). We should expect to see many more disruptive business models in the next few years. There will be huge disruption to FHE sector over the next decade or so too due to a wide variety of external forces, and if FHE institutions do not adapt to be relevant they will be at risk.

Graduates are now asking companies at the recruitment stage about their sustainability credentials. Generation Z are very independent and self-driven, and both FHE and businesses need to prepare for this.

Discussion: How can and should the Further and Higher Education Sector support the SDGs?

The SDGs present more than a mapping exercise and need to lead to change. The plenary discussion followed five key topics related to FHE supporting the SDGs: key challenges of engaging with sustainability; potential practical actions for individual institutions; reconsidering priorities in light of the SDGs; reconsidering education models in light of the SDGs; and a set of next steps emerging from this workshop.

Challenges of Engaging with Sustainability / the SDGs in FHE Institutions

- Universities are under greater pressure from government to prove their value than ever before using established metrics, which makes change difficult
- Senior management are often firefighting.
- Research journals and the Research Excellence Framework (REF) reinforce disciplinary boundaries and discourage collaborative research (although 25% of rating is based on impact, where the SDGs can play a role).
- FHE Institutions have a wide range of impacts - we need to consider sustainability impacts upstream (resources), downstream (knowledge, research), as well as day-to-day operations.
- Difficult to prioritise actions because the SDGs are a systemic response to systemic problems – we need to consider regulation, governance, individual institutions and partnerships in what we decide to do.
- Need to consider our language and approach for engagement.
- Loss of relevant leadership in FHE including HEFCE, HEA and QAA!

Potential Practical Actions for FHE Institutions

- Influence Governors to make sure they are aware of the SDGs and that they must act. The SDGs provide legitimacy and mandate. They can be used to leverage changes in mission statements, and provide a sense of urgency as well as the possibility of metrics.
- Support more interdisciplinary research, and research around both pedagogy and the SDGs. Challenge-led research supports interdisciplinary working and integration of the SDGs.
- Link SDG teaching by academics to GCRF proposals and research by academics.
- Teach what students want to learn (need more research on this) and employers need them to know (need more research around SDGs impact on employability), as well as what the world needs.
- Mandatory courses for students and staff (including support staff) on sustainability are one approach to teaching about the SDGs. Embedding relevant content in all courses is another. Both have pros and cons.
- Institutions need to collaborate as well as compete to address these challenges – nationally and globally. Collaboration has been successful in the past in addressing societal issues (e.g. widening access agenda).
- Wider engagement beyond the sector is important, to learn from other actors and develop responses in partnership to address sustainability issues.
- Hives of activism around topics or networks could be tapped into to increase momentum.

Reconsidering the Priorities of FHE Institutions

- We need to think about values more. How do we internalise our values as individuals and organisations? Should we be influencing students' values? Should we be honest about the values of our organisations and talk about them more?
- There is a mis-match between current accountability measures (financial, research impact, etc.) and the real role of FHE institutions (developing skills and knowledge for the future). We need more commitment to interdisciplinary learning and developing effective graduates.
- Students need to be prepared to co-create a future world. They need transferrable skills, creativity, and the ability to deal with uncertainty and be productive in an uncertain world. These should be key graduate attributes.
- Quality should be measured in terms of transforming students and institutions to deliver a sustainable future.

Reconsidering Education Models

- How can FHE remain relevant? We don't know what the future of tertiary education will be. Do we need a different learning model?
- We need to discuss the purpose of education as a whole, not just tertiary education, and reconsider the whole system.

Suggestions for Next Steps

- Developing a powerful FHE narrative around training the architects of the future that will appeal to hearts and minds is important. We need VCs to want to be involved, and other sectors to be inspired. Prepare a one page narrative for inspiration and focus.
- Consider the rhetoric of the SDGs, and how to alter the language or narrative to engage people with them. When appropriate, consider who has the most potential to influence particular goals, and how to best engage them with the agenda.
- Representative bodies within the sector need to understand and engage with this agenda. Engagement with the new Office for Students around the SDGs and education quality should be a priority.
- An award could be established for institutions which deliver quality and embedded ESD.
- Develop better reporting systems to gather and share activity and progress within the sector.
- Engage with existing initiatives such as the EAUC SDG Accord; GCRF.
- Develop a Steering Group from the sector to take discussions forward as a way to address the gap in leadership from FHE support organisations other than NUS and EAUC.
- Establish a group of senior leaders from the sector willing to champion action on the SDGs to drive progress in their own institutions and catalyse change across the sector.

Closing Reflections

Rehema White (Consultation Chair / University of St Andrews / Learning for Sustainability Scotland)

The event started by considering the purpose of education, and how we can engage with the UN SDGs to better address sustainability challenges. The Goals can be seen as both a means of engagement and a way of strengthening legitimacy to the sustainability agenda.

We need to:

- Reframe economic problems around social and environmental needs
- Think about long-term vocational learning and resilience in our education
- Not forget about the challenges of inequality and widening access
- Offer transformational opportunities for students and staff
- Develop a collective voice as a sector and engage with other sectors and beyond our borders
- Think more about how we engage in a constructively critical way
- Consider the links between the goals, and the opportunities these might unlock
- Be radical, but become mainstream
- Engage hearts and minds, but in a way that can be measured
- Be creative and inspired, but also acknowledge technological advances
- Have the mandate, but choose the carrot rather than the stick
- Work with the legitimate voices we have, and strengthen the movement

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all participants for their contributions and engagement and to Rebecca Petford for recording and draft report provision.

Appendix 1: Participants

| Name | Role | Organisation |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Jamie Agombar | Head of Sustainability | National Union of Students |
| Emily Auckland | Network Director | UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development |
| David Beards | Senior Policy Officer | Scottish Funding Council |
| Craig Bennett | Chief Executive Officer | Friends of the Earth |
| Professor Joy Carter | Vice-Chancellor / Chair | University of Winchester / GuildHE |
| Maeve Cohen | Director | Rethinking Economics |
| Maria Cooper | Education Assistant | Scottish Communities Climate Action Network / Transition Scotland |
| Professor Cameron Donaldson | Yunus Chair in Social Business & Health and Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) | Glasgow Caledonian University |
| Mark Edwards | Chief Executive | The Hard Rain Project |
| Dr Carolyn Hayles | Academic Lead | Institute of Sustainable Practice, Innovation and Resource Effectiveness (INSPIRE), University of Wales, Trinity St David |
| Professor Peter Higgins | Professor of Outdoor, Environmental and Sustainability Education | University of Edinburgh |
| Professor Simon Kemp | University Lead, Education for Sustainable Development | University of Southampton |
| Christina Laing | Director of Sustainability and World Skills | Fife College |
| Clive Lee | Chief Executive | Yidan Prize Foundation |
| Professor James Longhurst | Professor of Environmental Science and Assistant Vice Chancellor | University of the West of England, Bristol |
| Dr Monika MacDevette | Depute Director, Ecosystems Division | United Nations Environment Programme |
| Professor Stephen Martin | Professor of Learning for Sustainability / Honorary Professor | University of the West of England / University of Worcester |
| Shane McHugh | Head of International Activities | The Royal Academy of Engineering |
| Marion Osieya | Writer and Research Consultant | Digging Deeper |
| Dr Nat Panda | Chair | People & Planet Board of Trustees |
| Dr David Pencheon | Honorary Professor of Health and Sustainable Development (formerly Director of the Sustainable Development Unit for NHS England) | University of Exeter (formerly NHS England and Public Health England) |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Rebecca Petford | Scotland Programme Manager | Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) |
| Professor Bill Scott | Emeritus Professor | University of Bath |
| Louise Scott | COO Global Sustainability | PricewaterhouseCoopers |
| Professor Stephen Sterling | Emeritus Professor of Sustainability Education | University of Plymouth |
| Jodie Waite | Vice President (Education) | NUS Scotland |
| Professor Patrick Paul Walsh | Professor of International Development Studies / Senior Advisor | University College Dublin / UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network |
| Dr Rehema White (Consultation Chair) | Academic / Chair | University of St Andrews / UN RCE ESD Learning for Sustainability Scotland |

Appendix 2: Consultation Programme

Programme

25-26th January 2018

Day 1 Programme

1200 Arrival and Registration

1245 Lunch

1345 Introduction to the workshop

Welcome to St George's House Gary McKeone (St George's House)

Workshop aims and introduction Rehema White (University of St Andrews and LfS Scotland)

Introduction to the participants

1415 What are the purposes of tertiary education? Sector snapshots

- Student Jodie Waite (University of Bournemouth)
- Academic Stephen Sterling (University of Plymouth)
- College David Hughes (Association of Colleges)
- University senior management Joy Carter (University of Winchester)
- Employer / Professional body Shane McHugh (Royal Academy of Engineering)
- Policy maker David Beards (Scottish Funding Council)

Group reflections

1510 The SDGs, sustainability and tertiary education: national policy perspectives

Scotland Pete Higgins (University of Edinburgh and LfS Scotland)

England Stephen Martin (Change Agents UK)

Wales Carolyn Hayles (University of Wales Trinity St David)

Ireland Paul Walsh (University College Dublin)

1550 Break

1610 Examples of FHE initiatives progressing the SDGs

Pecha Kucha type presentations:

- EAUC Rebecca Petford (EAUC and LfS Scotland)
- Transition Maria Cooper (Global Ecovillages Network)
- Rethinking economics Maeve Cohen (Rethinking Economics)
- Glasgow Caledonian University Cam Donaldson (Glasgow Caledonian University)

1700 Break (Evensong)

1800 Critique and response

Interactive group discussions

1. How can and should the SDGs influence Further and Higher Education?

1900 Break; Dinner at 1930

2200 Tour of St. George's Chapel

Day 2 Programme

9.00 Lessons from elsewhere

NHS David Pencheon (NHS)

Private sector Louise Scott (Pricewaterhouse Coopers)

Partnership Emily Auckland (UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development)

Feedback to plenary group perspectives on purposes of tertiary education

10.00 Visioning

Group discussions

2. How can University and College education further the pursuit of the SDGs?

3. How can University and College education offer constructive input to the concept and implementation of the SDGs, and to the wider pursuit of sustainability?

4. What outcomes might we see if we have tertiary education considering sustainability and informed by and informing the SDGs?

Within and across sectors

1045 Break

1100 Plenary feedback

Plenary discussion

1200 Final thoughts

1215 Lunch and Departures

Appendix 3: List of Resources

Resources

East, M. and White, R.M. (2016) Reflecting on the Emergence of the UN Sustainable Development Goals: A Call for Action in Scotland. Report for Scottish Government and COSLA. pp55
http://learningforsustainabilityscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ReflectionSDGsScotland_15April2016.pdf

Everard, M. & Longhurst, J.W.S. (In press) Reasserting the primacy of human needs to reclaim the 'lost half' of sustainable development. *Science of the Total Environment* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2017.10.104>

Fiselier, E.S., Longhurst, J.W.S. & Gough, G.K. (2017) "Exploring the current position of ESD in UK higher education institutions", *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-06-2017-0084> (The paper can be accessed at: <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/eprint/MFNPFBJ5DP2TNXTGAPP/full>)

Fiselier, E & Longhurst, J.W.S. (2018) A Critical Evaluation of the Representation of the QAA and HEA Guidance on ESD in public web environments of UK Higher Education Institutions. In W. Leal Filho (ed.), *Implementing Sustainability in the Curriculum of Universities*. World Sustainability Series, Springer. pp223 – 246. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-70281-0_14

Global Masters Development Programme: join this programme to train Masters Students professionally to implement the Agenda, contact Paul Walsh www.globalmdp.org website

Gough, G.K. & Longhurst, J.W.S. (forthcoming) Monitoring progress towards implementing sustainability and representing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the curriculum at UWE Bristol. In W. Leal Filho (ed.), *Implementing Sustainability in the Curriculum of Universities*, World Sustainability Series, Springer. pp279 – 290 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-70281-0_14

Heroes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtJ6tau1RMQ>

Hurdles: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R51ijgtRqZU>

Leave No One Behind: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uphifd-Uuys>

QAA and HEA (2014) Education for sustainable development: Guidance for UK higher education providers. QAA763 - June 14, Gloucester <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Education-sustainable-development-Guidance-June-14.pdf>

SDG Academy University Partnership, contact Paul Walsh (16 SDSs courses, UN SDG Advocates, Webinars and more). <https://courses.sdgacademy.org>. (We use in UCD as Discovery Modules open to anyone inside or outside UCD!)

SDG toolkit: Analysing the network of SDG goals and targets; a useful visualisation tool providing variety of information on linkages at goal and target level. <https://kumu.io/jeff/sdg-toolkit#sdgs-as-a-network-of-targets>

TEDx Talk: "Everyday Citizens and the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy8kit9gnbM>

The Future Starts Now: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEMXBNJq8as>

The SDG Academy Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WeLT2Zq84e4>

UN: The Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2019 will be presented to a meeting of global leaders at the UN General Assembly in July 2019 during the UN HLPF. The report will summarize the best of SDG research around the world. It is a new and innovative pathway for academic research to get into policy making at the global level. UN Resources on the 2030 SD Agenda:
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network SDG Index country profiles, global report and indexes for the SDGs: <http://www.sdgindex.org/>

UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network SDG toolkits of resources for organisations, employees, students, media etc: <http://www.globalgoals.org/resource-centre/>

UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network SDG University Guide Website <http://ap-unsdsn.org/regional-initiatives/universities-sdgs/university-sdg-guide/>

UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network SDG University Mapping Report http://ap-unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/University-SDG-Guide_web.pdf

'We The People' for The Global Goals: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RpqVmvMCmp0>

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