



Topic Support Network:  
Education for Sustainable Development  
In the Scottish Higher Education Sector

**EAUC-Scotland & Learning for Sustainability Scotland**

**Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2013**  
**Queen Margaret University 10am – 2pm**

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1.	<p><b>Welcome and introductions</b> <i>Mike Pretious and Carol Brennan, Queen Margaret University</i></p> <p>Mike and Carol outlined the purpose of the TSN was to form focus groups with which to continue discussion and progress around ESD in Higher Education in Scotland. Event was co-hosted by EAUC Scotland and Learning for Sustainability Scotland This was the first TSN for ESD in HE. 8 Different Universities and Colleges were represented.</p>
2.	<p><b>Update on ESD activity in Scotland</b> <i>Betsy King, Learning for Sustainability Scotland</i></p> <p>Presentation delivered by Betsy King is available <a href="#">here</a>. Betsy's presentation gave an update on the formation and progress on the work of Learning for Sustainability Scotland and of Scotland as a UN Regional Centre of Expertise.</p>
3.	<p><b>Sharing Practice and Experience</b> <i>Marie-Jeanne McNaughton- Uni. Of Strathclyde, Ullrich Kockel- Heriot-Watt Uni., Rehema White- University of St Andrews, Carol Brennan- QMU.</i></p> <p>This session allowed for the 4 presenters to present on their work in ESD at their own institutions. A short Q&amp;A followed.</p> <p><b>Marie-Jeanne McNaughton</b> was unable to attend but notes on her prepared talk titled 'Learning for Sustainability in undergraduate/PG courses in the school of Education' are available <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p><b>Carol Brennan</b> spoke on ESD at QMU, in particular on the progress of their Curriculum working group and QMU graduate attributes. For more information please see Carols presentation <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p><b>Rehema White</b> presented on the Sustainable Development programme (undergraduate and postgraduate) at the University of St Andrews. In particular, Rehema focussed on the value based approach of the programme, along with how ESD activity is moving across other areas of the University such as in the local community, staff and senior management. Key point was that the success of ESD in the curriculum needs a focus on pedagogy, rather than just curriculum. For more information Rehema's presentation is available <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p><b>Ullrich Kockel</b> spoke briefly on some of the progress and challenges experienced at Heriot-Watt</p>

	<p>in getting ESD integrated into the curriculum. Instead of having a specific degree, Heriot-Watt have integrated 'sustainability' much wider though-out a wide range of degree programmes, however there is a risk that the true value and meaning of ESD may be lost amongst other focuses/ disciplines. There are several meanings for sustainability across the University which poses a challenge to ensuring the quality of ESD. Heriot-Watt does have significant support from senior management in that their principle has made a public statement that he will support it. Key point was that although ESD in the curriculum appears to be well integrated across the University, there is no united or agreed approach to what this means, or how it should be done well.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Facilitated discussion session</b></p> <p>In this session, there were 3 rotating discussion tables:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the <i>vision</i> for ESD in Scottish HE? (<i>Facilitated by Betsy King</i>)</li> <li>2. What <i>progress</i> has been made so far on integrating ESD in the curriculum in Scottish HE? (<i>Facilitated by Rehema White</i>)</li> <li>3. What are the <i>key challenges</i> for integrating ESD in the curriculum? (<i>Facilitated by Mike Pretious</i>)</li> </ol> <p>Outcomes of discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Vision</b>- the vision for ESD in higher education in Scotland was represented through a mind-map with the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with the wider community</li> <li>• Holistic: across the beyond the institution</li> <li>• Equitable</li> <li>• Where there is building of links/ relationships/ capacity</li> <li>• Strong relationship between research and teaching</li> <li>• Reflective learning</li> <li>• Challenging but inclusive</li> <li>• Incorporating social justice, environment/ ecology</li> <li>• University engagement with schools, community, business</li> <li>• Outdoor learning</li> <li>• A sense of global citizenship</li> <li>• Cross-cutting/ interdisciplinary themes</li> <li>• Embraced by both staff and students</li> <li>• Real life teaching/ active learning</li> <li>• Where resource is given to deliver ESD in institutions</li> <li>• Inspirational</li> <li>• Diverse and collaborative</li> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• Strategy</li> <li>• Strong communications and social networks (physical and virtual)</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p><b>IN SUMMARY:</b>  <b>Something inspirational and challenging that is positively embraced by, and engages across,</b></p>

the whole institution.

2. **Progress** made so far-

- Scotland is perceived as progressed in the area of ESD and sustainability as there appears to be strong networks, government support and there is some engagement on all levels (VC, comms, academic and operations).
- Top-down and bottom-up approaches are debatably easier to achieve than 'middle level'. Question as to which is more challenging.
- The presence of Learning for Sustainability Scotland is great progress for Scotland in ESD and there are many more 'sustainability badged' courses coming up.
- However, question raised as to how much of a paradigm change for ESD has actually been achieved in schools despite programmes like Eco-Schools.
- There is also other progress that is not labelled ESD i.e. experiential learning.
- There is a need to map possibilities for ESD and recognise existing fragmented issues.
- There is a lot of relevant research out there however ESD is not a good name! There is still work to be done on language used around ESD.
- Still difficult to compare globally. How can this be done?
- ESD progress depends on the university context i.e. definition/ scope, location, size, discipline focus, relationships with local community etc.
- The 'impact agenda' promotes sustainability in universities.
- Scotland is getting much better at communicating success, making results and intent visible.
- There is now a PhD forum on sustainability
- Awards like the Green Gown Awards are great for demonstrating excellence. Could we run awards at national or institutional level?
- However no Scottish institution has signed up for the Green Academy
- Current differentiation between Scotland and England poses a challenge for taking advantage of UK opportunities.

**IN SUMMARY:**

**Some progress made but there is still a long way to go. Academics engage with research, students engage with knowledge and experimental learning and there is varied but good research out there. Scotland do well in knowledge exchange but there is a need to be better at sharing successes and results.**

3. **Challenges** to ESD:

- Institutional boundaries are an issue as it prevents cross-institution knowledge sharing.
- The 'cultural code' has yet to be cracked. Hard to engage across cultures.
- Disparity between disciplines (i.e. sciences and humanities) is a challenge.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of benchmarks for ESD or ways of assessing and reviewing success.</li> <li>• Needs to be a focus for ESD- i.e. task groups across sectors. The challenge is how this can be done.</li> <li>• Lack of funding to explore new avenues is also an issue.</li> <li>• The language of sustainability can itself be a barrier. It was felt that LfS is better than ESD.</li> <li>• The fear of loss of academic freedom and the personal challenge can be difficult to overcome if trying to explore ESD.</li> <li>• The tendency to stick with ‘business as usual’ is also a barrier to change.</li> <li>• People fear job loss or discrimination if they try something new or try to explore a new paradigm such as ESD.</li> </ul> <p><b>IN SUMMARY:</b>  <b>There is a varied understanding of ESD which makes it hard to practice and embed. There is also a strong environment bias that needs to be overcome for ESD to be approached appropriately and engaging students and hearing the student voice is a challenge but also an opportunity.</b></p>
6.	<p><b>Moving Forwards</b></p> <p>Examples of task groups identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bench-marking progress on ESD</li> <li>• LfS as a way of bringing arts and sciences together (de-silo-ing uni communities).</li> <li>• Sustainable Tourism</li> <li>• Research in sustainability</li> <li>• Pedagogy for ESD</li> <li>• Language used around sustainability in HE.</li> <li>• Mapping ESD in Scotland</li> <li>• The relationship between graduate attributes and ESD</li> <li>• Engaging the wider community on ESD in the curriculum</li> <li>• Embedding and integrating ESD into the curriculum</li> </ul> <p>Further thoughts welcomed on how these task groups could take shape.</p> <p>Thank you from LfSS, EAUC and Mike Pretious and Carol Brennan as convenors of this Topic Support Network.</p>
5.	<p><b>Next Meeting</b>  Summer 2014</p> <p><b>For more information on this Topic Support Network please contact Mike Pretious on <a href="mailto:mpretious@gmu.ac.uk">mpretious@gmu.ac.uk</a></b></p>