

EAUC-Scotland Topic Support Networks (TSNs)

TSN Update: Summer 2015

Background

A Topic Support Network (TSN) is a group of people working together on a specific sustainability subject that is relevant to Scottish colleges and universities. Six TSNs were established for the EAUC-Scotland Branch through the Campus Sustainability Programme (2005-2008) funded by the Scottish Executive and Scottish Funding Council and launched at an event held in May 2007 at the University of Edinburgh, one of which morphed into the EAUC-Scotland Branch; a further three TSNs were established through the EAUC-Scottish members at an AGM held in Edinburgh on 4th May 2010; and the Education for Sustainable Development group have split to allow individual focus on either further or higher education perspectives.

There are now 9 established and functioning networks which address broad sustainability issues. These are:

- Energy Management
- Sustainable Construction
- Travel and Transport
- Waste Management
- Sustainable Procurement
- Sustainable ICT
- Community Engagement
- Education for Sustainable Development in Further Education
- Education for Sustainable Development in Higher Education

If you are interested in an alternative topic which you think may be the basis for an effective TSN, please contact the EAUC-Scotland team on Scotland@eauc.org.uk.

Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the Topic Support Networks is to provide an opportunity for people to work together on a specific sustainability subject that is relevant to Scottish Colleges and Universities. Members of the network can be staff and students in further and higher education institutions or in public or not for profit organisations. It is free to join a TSN but institutions are encouraged to become a member of the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC). You can find out more about the EAUC from www.eauc.org.uk.

Specifically the TSNs will provide opportunities for individuals and institutions to:

- Share information on best practice and support (e.g. between institutions and strategic partners);
- Identify problems, threats, and opportunities for new initiatives;
- Participate in consultation exercises;

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- Deliver practical outcomes that will help others in the sector through case studies / templates / guidance / workshops/ general support amongst individual practitioners;
- Provide networking opportunities to the sector in Scotland by topic area; and
- Provide added value to the Universities and Colleges Climate Change Commitment for Scotland (UCCCfS) and the wider EAUC training programmes & projects by theme.

Benefits

The intended benefits of being a member of a TSN include:

- Sharing experience with colleagues in the sector in similar situations;
- Being part of a group that can develop solutions to solve the problems you are experiencing;
- Sharing the burden of horizontal scanning, particularly useful for keeping up to date with legislation;
- Contributing to a group that can influence change in the sector; and
- Raising the profile of your institution by taking a proactive approach to sustainable development.

Organisation and Structure

- The EAUC-Scotland office will provide the structure for the TSNs;
- Each topic area will have a convenor who is well informed about the topic area and must be a member of the EAUC;
- TSNs will meet twice a year, or as considered necessary, to ensure face-to-face contact. However a change in the set up of how TSN groups meet is also required for network links to potentially reach the whole sector. The use of a variety of media could be used to ensure members are fully engaged, i.e. via email discussion groups, increased video conferencing opportunities and web conferencing (webinars) to reduce travel and pressures of host institutions;
- Convenors will provide EAUC-Scotland with a topic title to be covered in upcoming meeting, identified presenters to invite and a small outline of what the group would like them to cover in their presentation, and suggested dates for TSN meetings;
- A member of the EAUC-Scotland team will invite presenters unless the Convenor wishes to do so, as well as arranging room bookings and catering as required and advertising the events;
- Focus is primarily on (but not limited to) meeting the demands of already interested individuals in specific topic areas to ensure a good solid network;
- Each TSN is supported by a JISCMail email address. These lists are open to all working within the FHE sector in Scotland, and key partners. The EAUC-Scotland Office maintains these lists and retains the authority over their membership beyond FHE staff and students;
- A Convenor can stand down from the TSN at any time, provided there is a suitable handover period to ensure consistency within the TSN.

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Framework for TSN meetings

To ensure that TSNs are beneficial to colleagues with varying degree (from limited to advanced) of knowledge and experience in the sector, the agendas for each TSN meeting will be carefully constructed to reflect the generic structure below to ensure that the objectives of TSNs are being met at each meeting**:

1. Major challenges facing FHE institutions in Scotland
 - *identify problems, threats and opportunities for new initiatives;*
 - challenges currently faced; and
 - provide a strategic view of the future regarding Scotland.
2. Effective sustainability management - top tips
 - *share information on best practice and support (e.g. amongst institutions and strategic partners);* and
 - help those attending better understand the major sustainability management challenges the sector is facing and provide up-to-date advice about effective measures that can be put in place to improve how they can play their part.
3. Overview of recent changes to be aware of in the [TSN topic] sector
 - provide delegates with a summary of what has been happening in recent months (the last year) and the ways in which this will be likely to affect them in the future.
4. Practical outcomes
 - *Identify practical outcomes to deliver that will help others in the sector through case studies / templates / guidance / workshops / general support amongst individual practitioners*

There may also be one or more short presentation(s) or a tour if the Convenor has invited a speaker/guide relevant to the group.

**** the italic writing in the structured agenda above represents the three key objectives of Topic Support Networks**