

Consultation on Advance HE PSF update 2023 EAUC response- July 2022

As the alliance for sustainability in higher and further education, EAUC Scotland were pleased to see education for sustainable development explicitly outlined under K3 in the updated draft of the Professional Standards Framework for higher education staff. Based on our experience of education for sustainable development in the UK higher education sector, EAUC Scotland have the following feedback as part of the PSF feedback process:

Critical Strands

- The three critical strands of inclusion, context, and effectiveness are useful and are clearly entwined throughout the dimensions of the PSF. However, we feel an additional strand of 'impact' should be included so that staff are conscious of the effect their practice has on students, staff, local and global communities, the environment, and the economy. Learner outcomes are included under effectiveness, but we believe education has greater impact than just on the learner themselves and this should be acknowledged by all staff. Particularly the sustainable impact of practice.

Dimensions

- The three dimensions of values, knowledge and activity are appropriate and the way they have been hierarchised, so values underpin knowledges which underpin activity, is sensible. The approach echoes the heads (knowledge), hands (action), hearts (values) [approach](#) that is shaping practice in global [Regional Centres for Expertise](#) on education for sustainable development. Therefore, there should be good cohesive examples of good practice to help people achieve the standards with ESD in mind.
- The introductory phrases of the dimensions don't align with the image: if the diagram is to flow, values should be the leftmost ring feeding into knowledge in the middle and both knowledge and values flowing into activity on the right as outlined in the above phrases. For ESD specifically, the link must be obvious between K3 and values, and actions (not just values as we have the impression from the diagram) so people consider alternative pedagogies and assessment methods that align with ESD as well as values such as criticality and collaboration.

Knowledges

- K3 may need more explanation so educators understand the scope of ESD. There are misconceptions among staff that are new to ESD that it is purely about incorporating a bit on climate science into a single lesson rather than raising awareness of wider sustainable issues outlined in the 17 sustainable development goals and building capacity to address these issues through the QAA ESD competencies. If a glossary is introduced, a definition of both sustainability and education for sustainable development to highlight the difference would be helpful. For sustainability the Brundtland definition would be widely understood and the UNESCO definition of ESD as used in QAA guidance would ensure continuity throughout sector. Linking to the QAA guidance for ESD would also be beneficial.

Professional values

- There is an opportunity to make interdisciplinarity explicit in the professional values, which would support K3-ESD. V5 could be expanded to encourage collaboration both within and beyond discipline. EAUC Scotland have had feedback from the sector is that there is no institutional support for interdisciplinary working despite clear desire from staff to work in this way to progress education for sustainable development.

Areas of Activity

- Under A3, students should be assessed on their sustainability literacy or on their ESD competencies as a criterion in assignments to ensure K3 is being met.

Descriptors

- The descriptor for associate fellow only requires K1 and K2 which we feel is an oversight, it should also include K3. EAUC Scotland understand there needs to be some level of progression through seniority of roles but PG Cert graduates entering the role of associate fellows will have been required to apply ESD in their training, so it seems remiss to exclude it from their job. Any role with agency over content that is being taught should be required to apply K3. The kind of [ESD competencies](#) outlines in the QAA guidance which educators should be incorporating to achieve K3 support good learning no matter the subject, and overlap with other standards such as V2 (critical thinking competency), V3 (systems thinking and integrated problem solving competency), V4 (self-awareness competency) and V5 (collaboration competency). Therefore, these competencies will already be applied in many courses. EAUC Scotland feel adding this to the associate fellow descriptor is not a significant addition to their workload.
- Descriptor 4 is an opportunity to ensure a senior level ESD champion that can progress ESD from the top down. Making K3 part of D4.2, to introduce policy, procedures, initiatives and strategies to support teaching staff to embed sustainability in their curriculum could be transformative for the institution as a whole.
- EAUC Scotland feel a descriptor for students with a role such as teaching assistant would be beneficial. Having standardised requirements for these positions across the sector will streamline training and ensure staff and students know what is expected. K3 could be extended to this descriptor but as students don't have agency over the content that is taught, and therefore the capacities built for sustainable development, EAUC Scotland don't feel it's necessary but they should be made aware of it.

EAUC Scotland appreciate the opportunity to support this consultation process and if we can assist further please contact lpatterson@eauc.org.uk.