

- The goal of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development is to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Mastering Sustainable Development at Queen's University, Belfast

Launched in 2005, by the Gibson Institute for Land, Food and Environment, the Queen's Masters programme in Leadership for Sustainable Development is already making a difference within Northern Ireland. The action-focused projects and placements which form a large part of the course have included:

- Organising the first all-party debate - attended by 150 stakeholders - on the state's new Sustainable Development Strategy;
- Working with NGOs to organize a Northern Ireland Green Living Fair, with a University summer school;
- Identifying £10,000 of potential environmental savings within one host business.

The Masters programme - which is based on a Forum for the Future template - is run by the Gibson Institute, but taught by staff from across Queens. It has nine modules which include case study sessions led by practitioners, and panel sessions partially organized by students. There are also separate four week placements in each of five sectors (Business, Governance, NGO, Media, and Rural). Students take responsibility for prior briefing and post debriefing sessions. These are attended by experts and stakeholders from the sector, who contribute to assessments of student presentations. The course also emphasises reflective learning through Personal Position Statements, field trips, e-diaries, and student-led briefing and debriefing sessions.



Queen's Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Gregson (second left) congratulates the Programme team: (far left) Dr Peter Doran (former Degree co-ordinator), Dr Claire Cockerill (current Degree co-ordinator) and Professor George Hutchinson (Director of Gibson Institute) (right)

A number of lectures, placements and projects have focused on sustainable development and leadership in post-conflict communities, and how it can support reconciliation and understanding. Former course director Dr. Peter Doran observes that "One of the most memorable, and poignant, events of the year was a panel and lecture session facilitated by Wilhelm Verwoerd. Wilhelm's grandfather was the architect of South African apartheid, but he now works for reconciliation with former combatants in paramilitary and military/policing organisations in both South Africa and Northern Ireland, several of whom attended the session."

Peter Doran characterises the course as one "which enables students to take responsibility for elements of their personal and collective learning experience. This requires drive, self-discipline and commitment - which are exactly the qualities needed to provide sustainable development leadership within organisations, and society."

Judge's Comments on Course Curriculum - Degrees (continued)

The exciting Masters in Sustainable Development Leadership at the Queen's University of Belfast has many innovative features. It makes excellent use of placements, which benefit both students and the host organisations. The focus on sustainable development and community reconciliation is distinctive if not unique. It is thoroughly integrated into the Northern Ireland community, and will surely create a well trained cohort of future sustainability leaders for the island of Ireland, and the UK, over coming years.