

Annex D: Issues for consultation and response form: sustainable development

1. This is the electronic response form for the consultation document 'Sustainable development in higher education' (HEFCE 2008/18).
2. Responses should be e-mailed to sustainabledevelopment@hefce.ac.uk by **Friday 5 September 2008**.
3. We will publish an analysis of responses to the consultation. Additionally, all responses may be disclosed on request, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. The Act gives a public right of access to any information held by a public authority, in this case HEFCE. This includes information provided in response to a consultation. We have a responsibility to decide whether any responses, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. We can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. This means responses to this consultation are unlikely to be treated as confidential except in very particular circumstances. Further information about the Act is available at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk.

Respondent's details

Are you responding: On behalf of an organisation
(Delete one)

Name of responding organisation/individual	Sheri Leigh Miles, National Convenor, Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges
Contact name	Iain Patton
Position within organisation (if applicable)	Executive Director.....
Contact telephone number	01242 714321
Contact e-mail address	info@eauc.org.uk

Consultation questions

(Boxes for responses may be expanded to the desired length)

Consultation question 1: Do you agree that our vision (paragraph 21) is still appropriate and that the proposed objectives are sufficient to achieve this vision?

The vision is still appropriate and the consultation events were welcomed by members as a way of demonstrating continued support and buy-in for the vision as well as allowing for critical debate. The proposed objectives are felt to be insufficiently challenging, practically robust and lacking in measurable specifics to truly enable the vision to be manifested. Given the prominence of this agenda and the time we have in which to act, the actions are not sufficiently ambitious for a sector rightly identified as key to driving change.

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Comments from members have included statements such as 'business as usual' and 'disappointing' which are not indicative of this document providing inspirational leadership or direction.

Consultation question 2: Is the proposed action plan fully aligned with, and sufficiently complete to deliver, the vision?

Increased confidence around 'environmental' elements of sustainable development are clear within the document but for community, economic and other elements demonstrate much less clarity of purpose. Our membership has grown out of the 'environmental' aspects but as the significantly changed member profile demonstrates this is not sufficient to provide a complete picture of SD activity within the sector. Specific support for good practice, challenging actions and recognition are needed in all areas of SD to enable a holistic realisation of the vision.

An almost complete lack of mention of the role of students within this agenda is also a significant omission given the function of universities and also the body of energy that this group potentially represent.

Consultation question 3: Which actions should take priority?

Each EAUC member will have a differing perspective on what should be prioritised – therein lies the challenge of providing leadership to such a diverse group! Promoting inclusivity that enables all SD practitioners – of whatever persuasion – to share the vision and be clear what they can contribute to it may be of better long-term benefit than promoting one action above others for short-term gain.

Consultation question 4: Do you feel that there are any other sustainable development activities which HEFCE could help support?

Continued support for networks such as our own and activities to inspire and lead university managers to put sustainable development and corporate responsibility on the agenda will be invaluable.

Pressure on VC's and other senior managers within institutions to provide drivers for change is welcomed by EAUC members at the practitioner level. Getting the issues onto the radar of this group (and keeping it there) is often an issue. HEFCE must become more confident in its responsibility to lead the sector.

Consultation question 5: Are there any other ways in which you feel HEFCE could help promote sustainable development, in particular the non-environmental elements of the agenda? Views expressed need not be in the form of fully worked-up ideas.

Supporting and raising the profile of existing good practice around behaviour change and other 'beyond green' activities would be useful. Publications or events of this work should be supported.

Consultation question 6: Should there be a sector strategy for carbon management? If so what should it look like?

Volatile energy markets and fast-changing economic situations may be driving forces beyond anything HEFCE can hope to achieve. Given the nature of the sector, leadership should be demonstrated by demanding reductions in advance of government target dates.

Consultation question 7: Could the sector reduce carbon emissions earlier than the government target for 2050, for example 60 per cent by 2030-2040? How should we deal with interim targets?

Where better than universities to drive technological and human behavioral change research? Universities have the opportunity to be test-beds, pioneers and models of new more sustainable systems and cultures. To fail to grasp this opportunity and responsibility calls into question the very role and value of a university in the 21st century.

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Consultation question 8: Do you have any other comments on the strategy or action plan?

This consultation is timely given the fresh impetus by DIUS in their Sustainable Development Action Plan for 2008-2009 just published. In it DIUS focuses on supporting a more sustainable HE sector. There is a clear message about the need to integrate sustainable development into the HE curriculum. We are hugely disappointed by any inclusion of sustainability in the recently launched HEA Strategic Plan.

EAUC UK Office
Medway Building
University of
Gloucestershire
The Park
Cheltenham
GL50 2RH

Tel: 01242 714321
info@eauc.org.uk
www.eauc.org.uk

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