

Sustainability Skills for Growth

Draft Report

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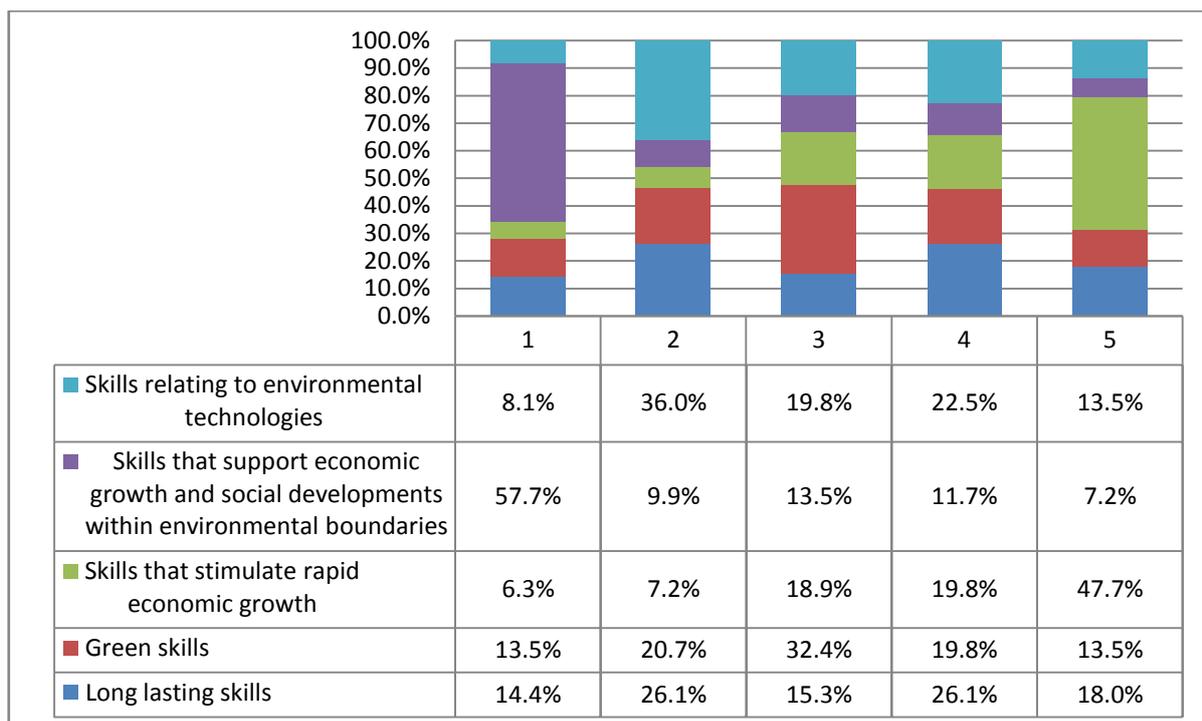
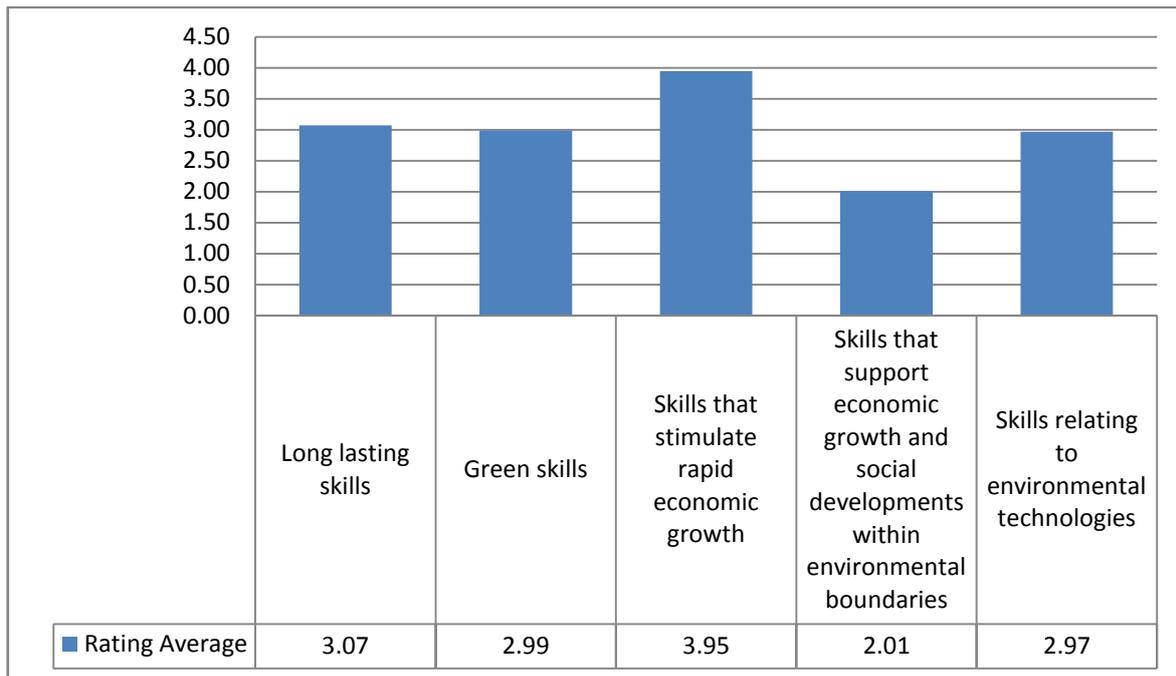
Introduction

This LSIS project led by ESD Consulting Ltd and Bedford College aims to explore sustainability skills, their relevance to employment, employers and business, and the opportunities challenges and barriers to the FE and skills sector in leading the development of those skills.

This is one of two research projects that LSIS has recently commissioned on the topic of sustainability. Together they are intended to develop our understanding of the relevance of sustainability to learning and skills development, and identify effective approaches that can be shared and embedded. The other project, led for LSIS by Change That Matters and Action for Sustainability, explores the relationship and relevance of sustainability and sustainable development to further education, to identify the specific skills and knowledge that teaching staff require to effectively embed sustainability in teaching, learning and the curriculum, and to determine key ingredients, opportunities and strategies. Although they are separate projects, the project teams worked closely together.

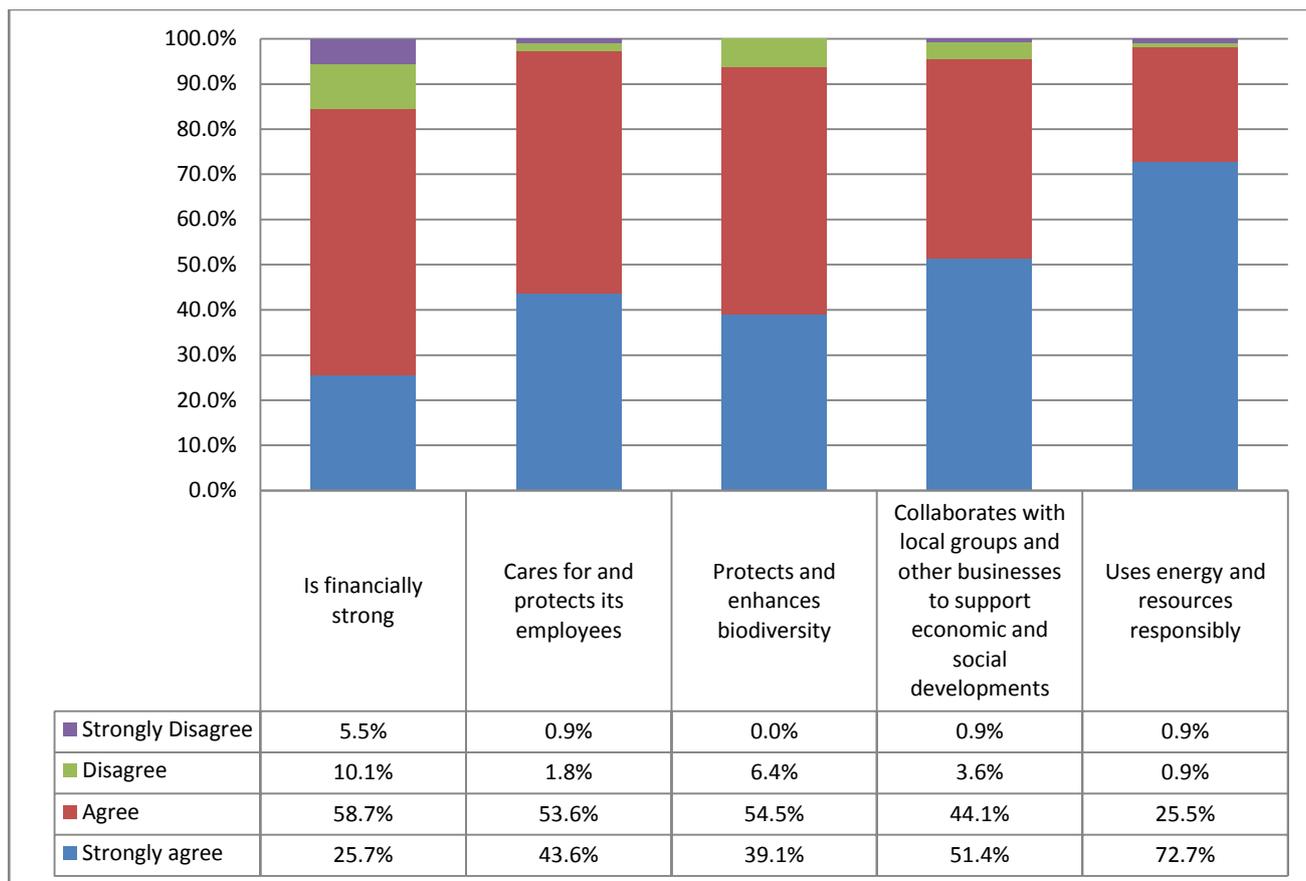
The on-line survey for the Sustainability Skills for Growth research was completed by 111 individuals employed in all parts of the learning and skills sector and related sectors. This report presents the survey results and outlines recommendations. The final report will be developed based on the responses to these recommendations.

**Question 1: How well do these phrases describe ‘Sustainability Skills for Growth’?
Rate the following five statements in order of priority. 1= Describes it very well; 5= Describes it very poorly**



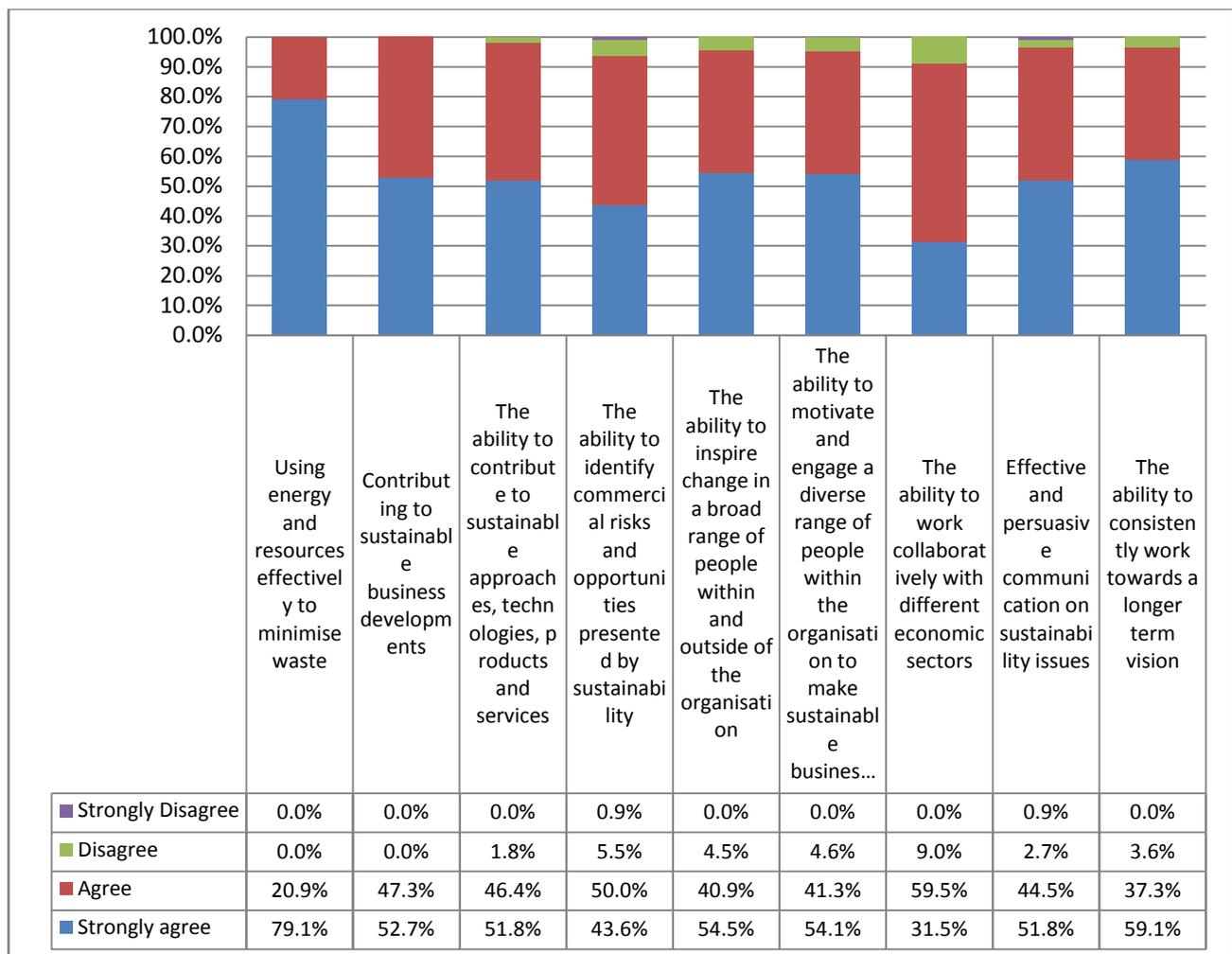
‘Skills that stimulate rapid economic growth’ was given the highest average rating of 3.95 with about 68% of respondents stating that it is not an accurate description of Sustainability Skills for Growth and only about 14% identifying it as an accurate description. ‘Skills that support economic growth and social developments within environmental boundaries’ scored the lowest average rating of 2.01 with about 68% of respondents selecting it as an accurate description of sustainability skills for growth, 19% as a poor description and about 13% non-committal. This may be because 32% of respondents perceived the ‘Skills for Growth’ in the research title as simply economic growth rather than sustainable development.

Question 2: Do you agree with the following statement? A sustainable business is one that:



With scores ranging from 84% to 98%, a high percentage of the respondents agreed that all five statements describe a sustainable business. The lowest rating of 84% was for economic sustainability and highest rating of 98% for energy and resource efficiency. 97% of respondents identified caring and protecting employees as a key element of a sustainable business.

Question 3: Do you agree with the following statement? These are important skills to support the UK in the transition to a sustainable economy:

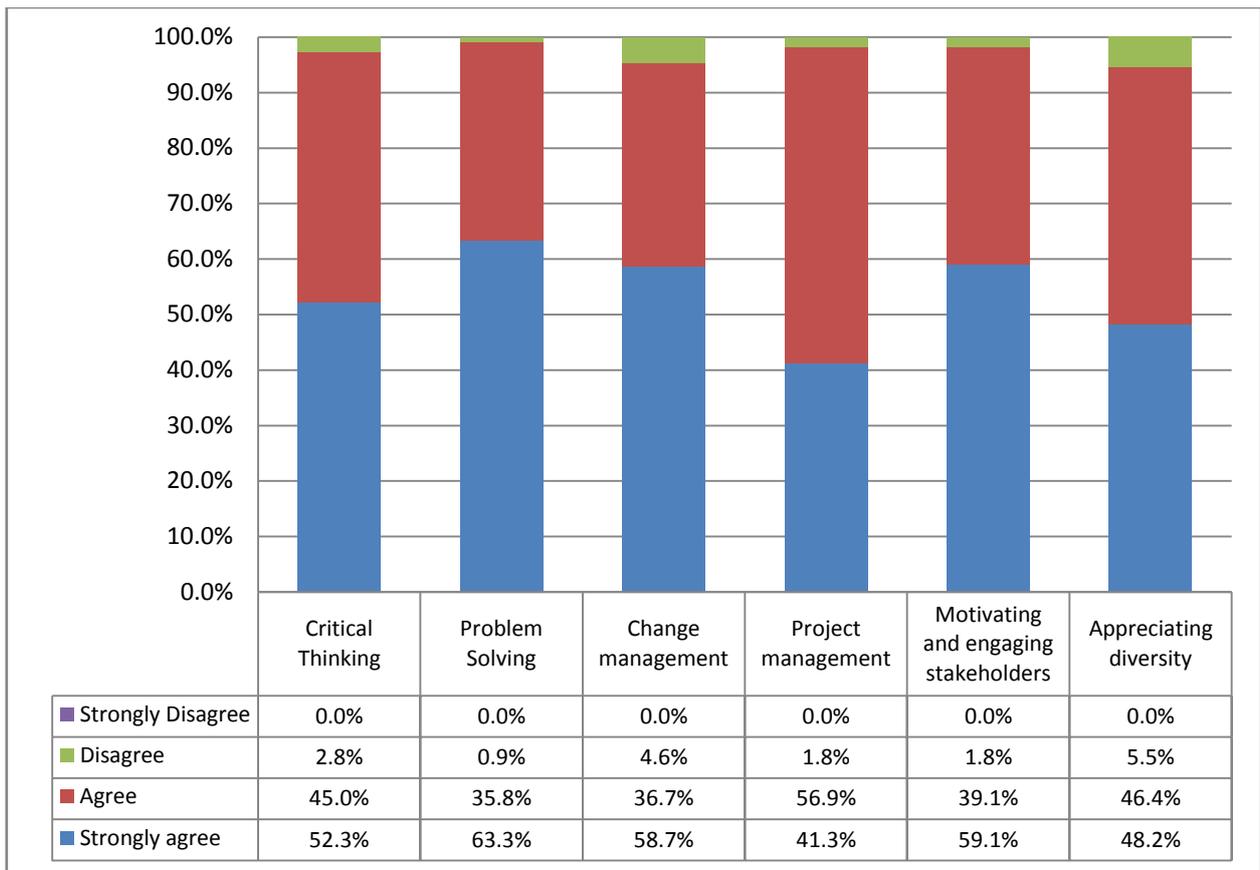


An overwhelming majority of respondents, ranging between 100% and 91% agreed with all these statements. All respondents agreed that skills relating to effective use of energy and resources and contributing to sustainable business developments are important.

The second highest percentage was 98% agreeing that skills relating to contributing to sustainable approaches, technologies, products and services are important.

The ability to inspire change in people and the ability to motivate and engage the workforce both scored 95%. Communication sustainability and consistently working towards a longer term goal were both rated 96%. With a score of 91%, cross-sector collaboration was seen as the least important skill amongst those listed.

Question 4: Do you agree with the following statement? These are important skills to support the UK in the transition to a sustainable economy:



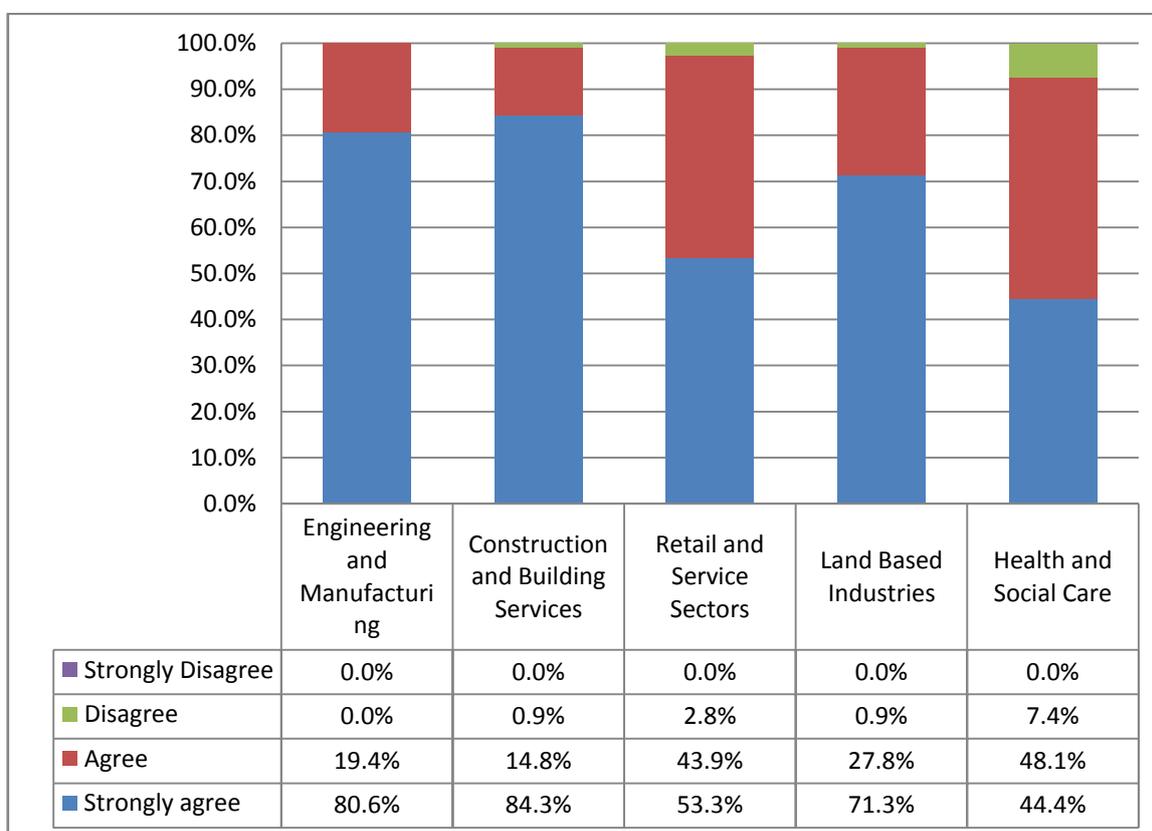
A high majority of respondents agreed on the importance of all these generic skills. The highest level of disagreement of about 5% relates to ‘appreciating diversity’ and ‘change management’.

Question 5: Are there any other skills you would see as being important to support the UK in the transition to a sustainable economy?

This question generated a range of responses identifying skills such as systems thinking, long term planning and financial planning. However of the 35 skills suggested by those who responded, 20% suggested that communication skills were critical in the transition to a sustainable economy.

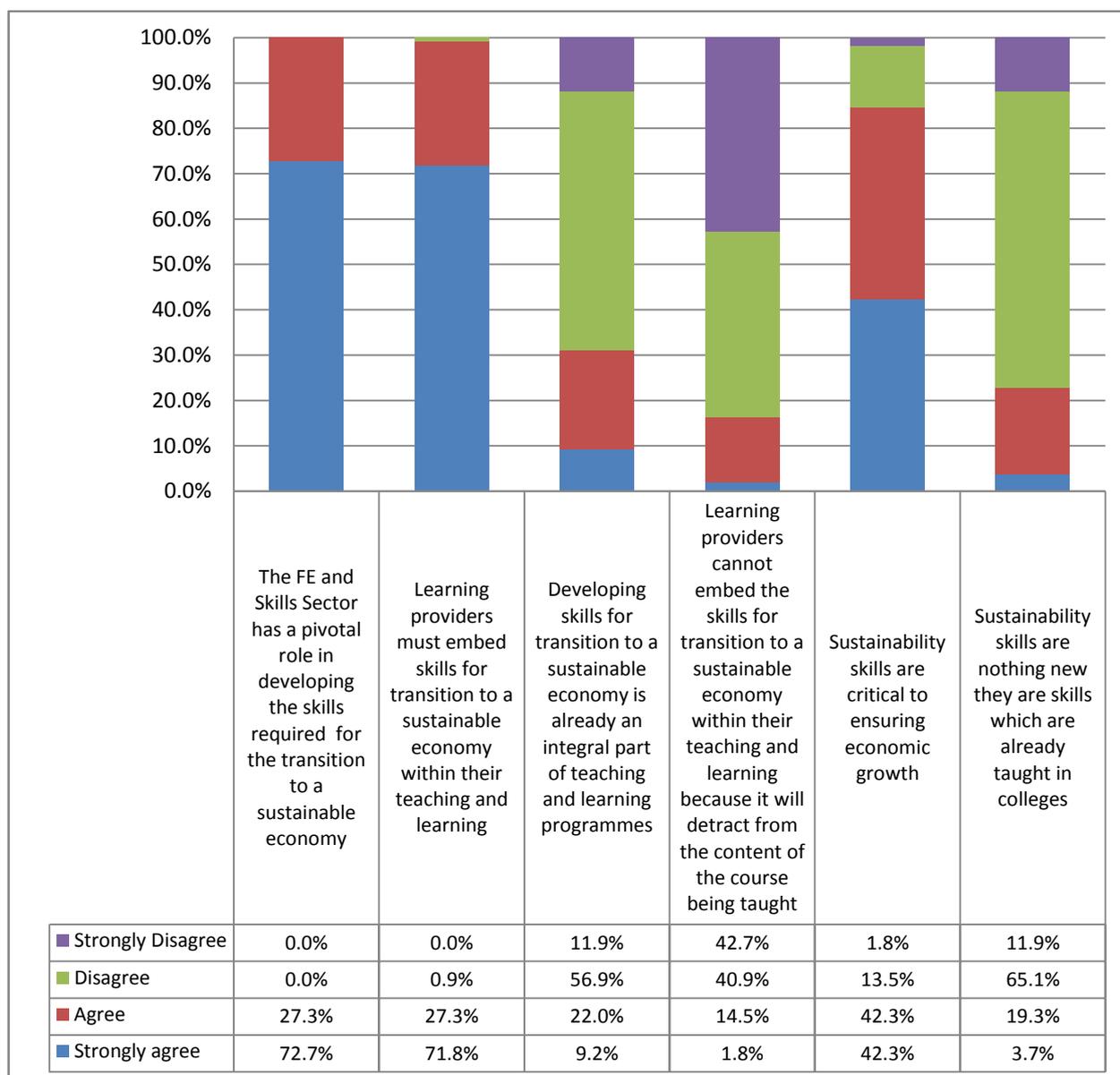
Other common themes included the need to collaborate and share best practice at a national and international level. Knowledge management and entrepreneurship were also well represented in the feedback. Those who responded clearly highlighted a need to marry up new technical knowledge with a practical application of this new thinking and new approaches.

Question 6: Sustainability skills are particularly relevant to these sectors of the UK economy:



100% agreed that sustainability skills are particularly relevant to the Engineering and Manufacturing sectors and 99% chose Construction, Building Services and Land Based industries. The lowest rating of 92% was given for Health & Social Care. This is likely to be partly due to the strong national focus on stimulating growth in the Construction and Technology sectors, including investment in environmental technologies and energy efficient buildings. Some may see sustainability relating only to technical disciplines and do not see its relevance to sectors such as Health and Social Care.

Question 7: Do you agree with the following statements?

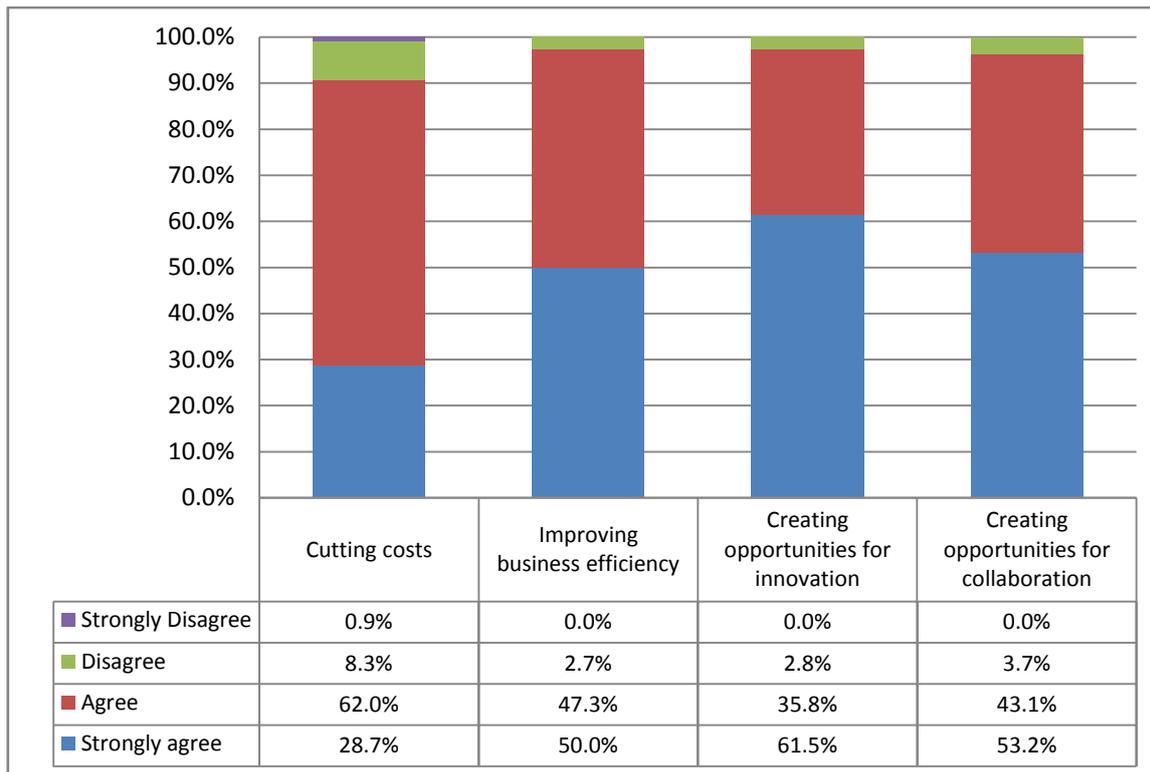


100% of respondents recognise the important role of the FE and Skills sector in developing skills for transition to a sustainable economy. 99% agree that skills for transition to a sustainable economy must be embedded in teaching and learning programmes.

Only 31% agreed that existing teaching and learning programmes already incorporate skills for transition to a sustainable economy.

17% agreed that embedding sustainable economy related skills into an existing course would detract from the content of the course being taught while 31% agreed that such skills are already a part of teaching and learning programmes.

Question 8: Sustainability skills can stimulate economic growth by:

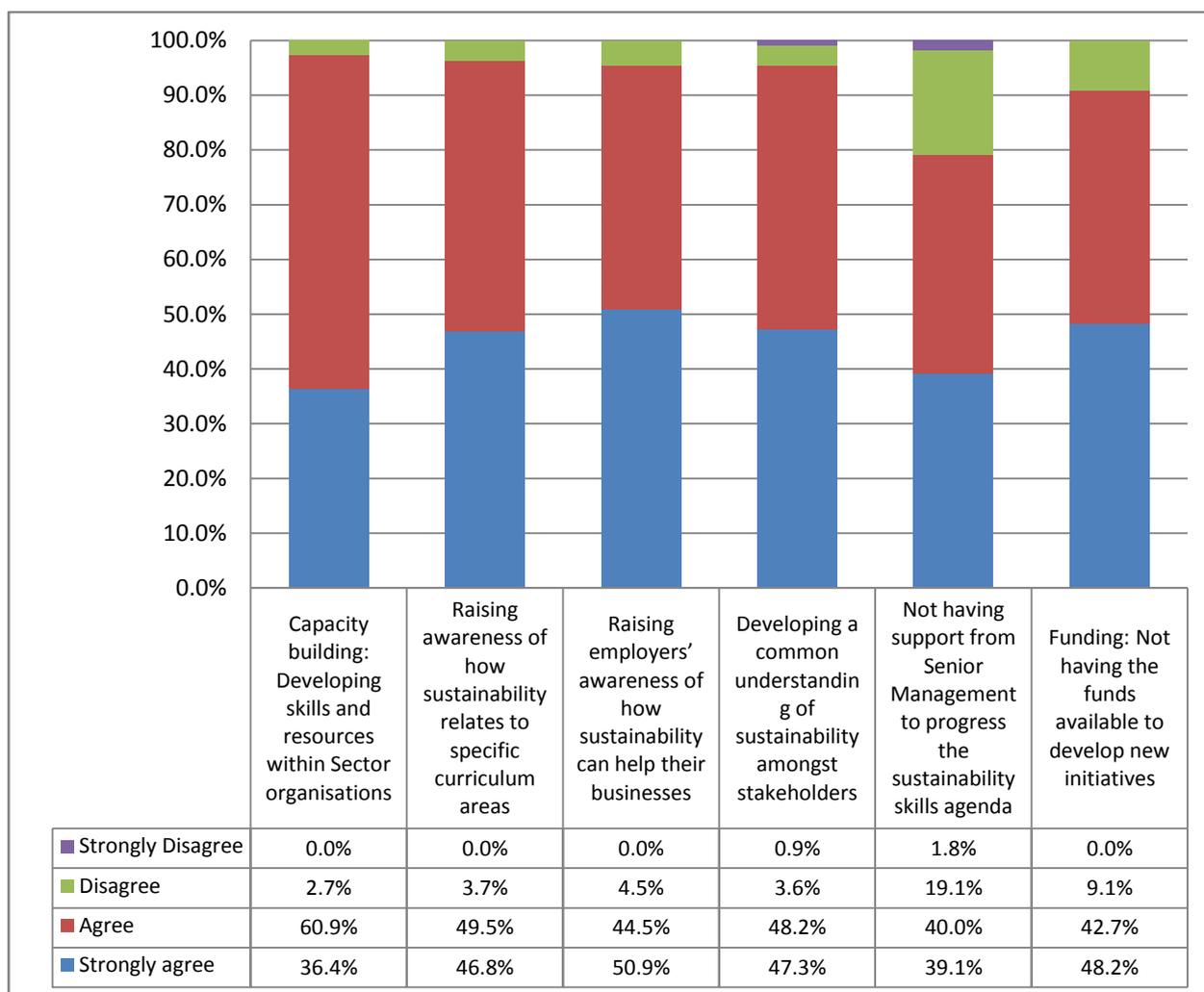


91%-97% of respondents agreed that sustainability skills can stimulate economic growth through cost-cutting, business efficiencies, innovation opportunities and collaboration opportunities.

Other suggestions included:

- Improving individual skills and competitiveness
- Stimulating growth in new markets
- Creating Green Jobs
- Enterprise
- Strengthening local supply chains
- Changing business culture & markets
- Inclusive by definition, a positive approach to sustainability skills growth will open up economic opportunities to a diverse range of new or previously excluded people, whose ideas and energy will improve the opportunities that flow from a real programme of skills development in this field
- A truly sustainable economy will be steady state. Economic growth, by definition is unsustainable on a planet of limited resources
- Economic growth is not necessarily best indicator of progress towards sustainability
- Creating alternative jobs e.g. in solar panels rather than straight plumbing/elect. Protecting resources which will be needed in the future
- Creating awareness both internal and external

Question 9: Key challenges faced by FE and Skills Sector organisations include:

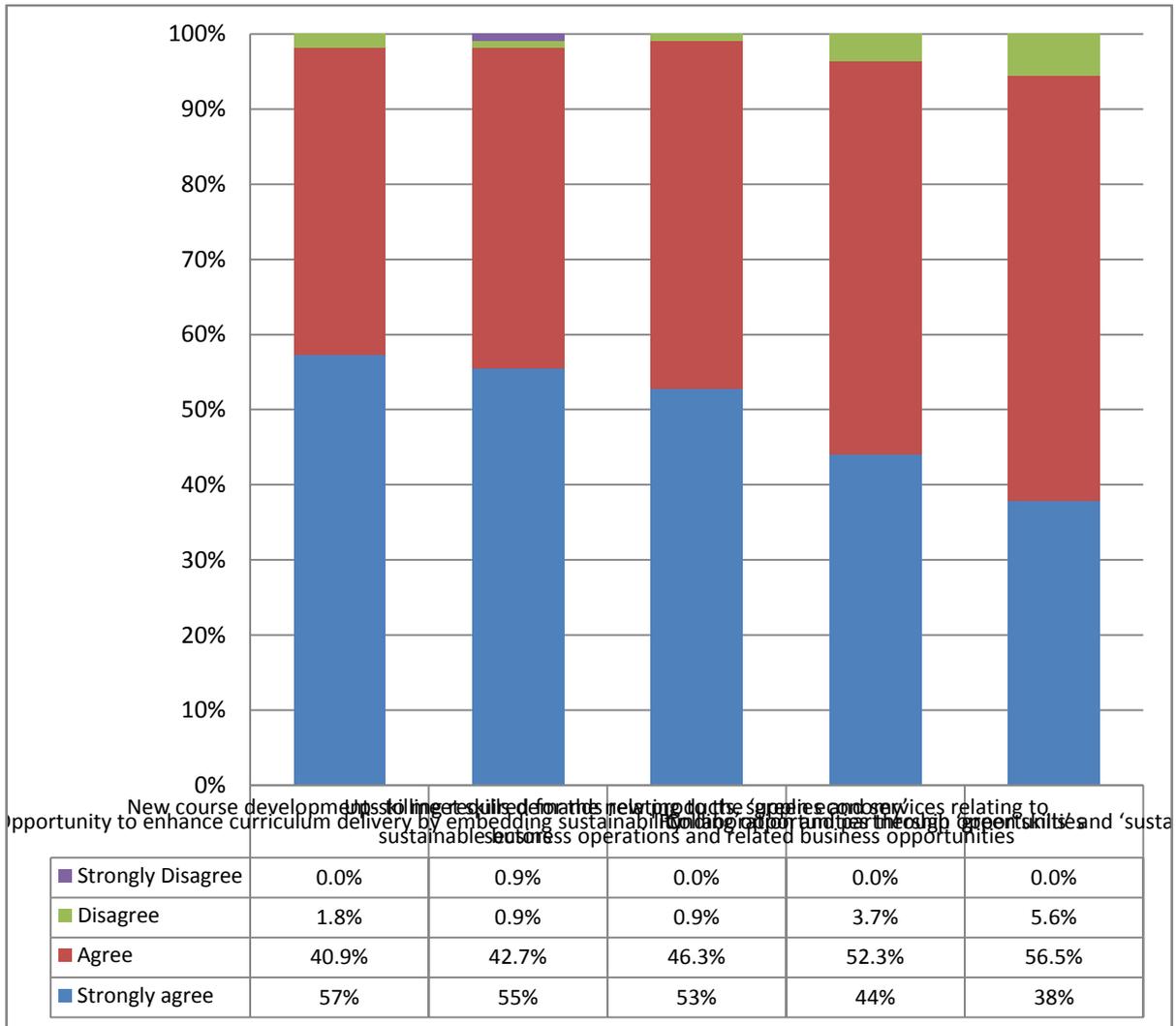


Capacity building, awareness raising, developing a common understanding of sustainability, top-level support and funding are all seen as key challenges faced by the Sector organisations. 79% agreed that 'not having management support' is a key issue of concern. This implies that 21% of the respondents' organisations senior teams are committed to the sustainability skills agenda.

Other suggestions included:

- To get the message right
- Government policy!
- Specifications of qualifications need changing
- A perceived lack of available time to focus on the topic
- access to sustainable technologies
- Capital investment
- Industry, local authority type support/engagement
- Encouraging OFSTED to prioritise it as a key agenda item

Question 10: Key opportunities for FE and Skills Sector organisations include:

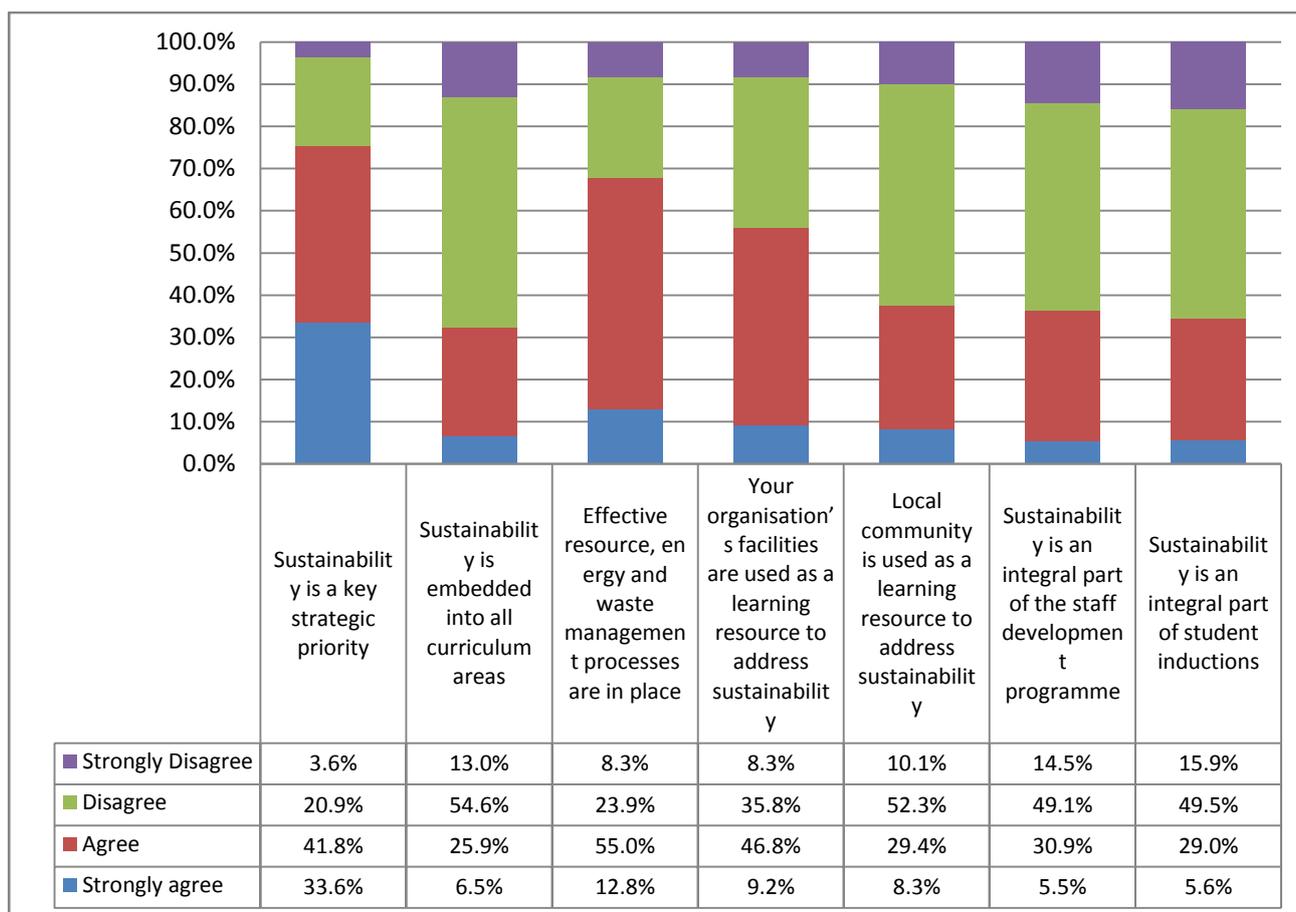


The listed opportunities all scored very highly with 94% for funding, 96% for collaboration, 98% for curriculum enhancement and new course developments and 99% for up-skilling of the workforce.

Other suggestions included:

- Government - involvement with the progress
- Outdoor education - sense of place. John Muir Award
- Improvements in student progression to employment
- Funding opportunity is becoming tighter , needs further coordination

Question 11: To what extent do these statements apply to your organisation?



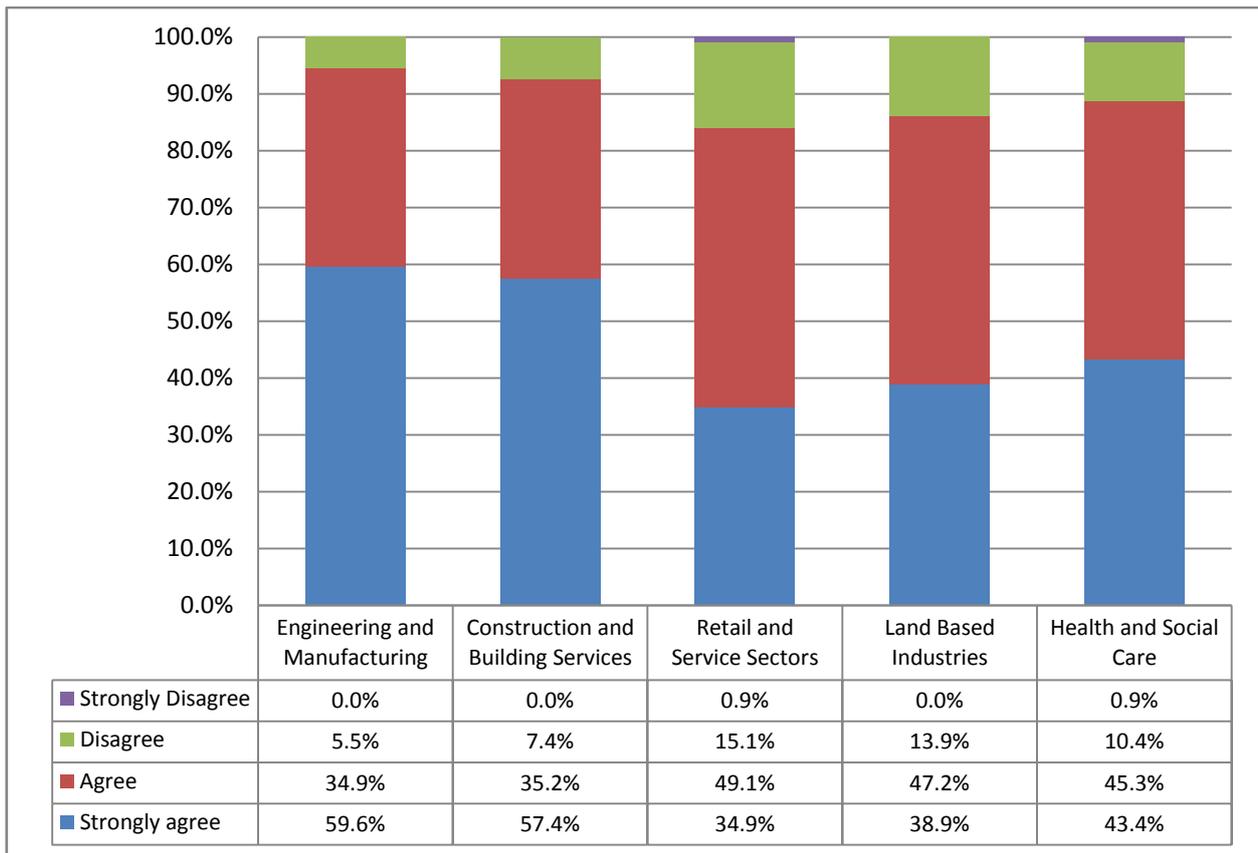
About 75% of respondents stated that sustainability is a key strategic priority in their organisations with:

- 32% having embedded sustainability into all curriculum areas
- 67% with effective resource, waste and energy management processes in place
- 56% utilising facilities as a learning resource
- 37% using the community as a learning resource
- 36% embedding sustainability into CPD programmes
- 35% embedding sustainability into student inductions

These responses illustrate the strong and growing focus on energy and resource efficiencies. They also illustrate the limited sustainability focus in curriculum content, community links, staff development or student inductions. In response to Question 9 only 21% of the respondents had agreed that their organisations are committed to the sustainability skills agenda. This also shows that sustainability may be identified as a key strategic priority in many organisations but a commitment to sustainability skills is still to be developed. In response to Question 3, 100% of respondents had indicated that energy and resource efficiency is an important skill to support the UK in the transition to a sustainable economy. Cost benefits of energy and resource efficiencies tend to be a key incentive for all Sector organisations. Many organisations that have identified sustainability as a strategic priority perceive energy and resource management as their sustainability goal and have not yet developed a curriculum focus.

Other: None suggested.

Question 12: These are the potential growth areas within the UK economy:



All five sectors were rated highly as potential growth areas with about 95% for Engineering and Manufacturing and 93% for Construction and Building Services. 84% of respondents agreed that Retail and Service Sectors are potential growth areas.

Summary of the Key Findings

1. The research title Sustainability Skills for Growth was interpreted by many respondents as skills for economic growth rather than sustainable development. This is evident in the 48% of respondents defining Sustainability Skills for Growth as 'Skills that stimulate rapid economic growth' and only 7% agreeing with the 'Skills that support economic growth and social developments within environmental boundaries' option.
2. Responsible energy and resource utilisation and caring and protecting employees were seen as the two most important characteristics that define a sustainable business. The financial strength option was rated lowest amongst the five options. This suggests that although the importance of financial well-being is recognised, it is not seen as the most important aspect of a sustainable business within the wider social and environmental contexts.
3. Effective energy and resource utilisation; contribution to sustainable business developments; and contributing to sustainable approaches, technologies, products and services were identified as the most important skills to support the UK in transition to a sustainable economy.

The ability to inspire change in people and the ability to motivate and engage the workforce both scored 95%. Communicating sustainability and consistently working towards a longer term goal were both rated 96%. Cross-sector collaboration scored the lowest at 91%.

- 4 & 5. Respondents demonstrated a clear appreciation of the relevance and importance of the listed generic skills for the UK's transition to a sustainable economy. These included critical thinking, problem solving, change management, project management, motivation and engaging stakeholders and appreciating diversity.

Further suggestions given by respondents as generic skills important for transition to a sustainable economy included, amongst others, technical, communication, leadership, financial and entrepreneurship skills. Respondents also highlighted the importance of a global focus and lifecycle assessment.

6. The scores range from 91 to 100% suggesting that respondents understand the relevance of sustainability skills to all of the listed sectors. The higher scores received by the Engineering and Construction sectors may be due to the national focus on Green Deal and related initiatives, resulting in a perception that sustainability is more relevant to these sectors.
7. All agreed that the FE and Skills sector has an important role to play in developing skills for transition to a sustainable economy, with 99% agreeing that skills for transition to a sustainable economy must be embedded in teaching and learning programmes. Only 31% agreed that existing teaching and learning programmes already incorporate skills for transition to a sustainable economy.
8. Respondents agreed overwhelmingly that sustainability skills can stimulate economic growth through cost cutting, business efficiencies, innovation and collaboration opportunities. Other suggestions included stimulating growth in new markets and strengthening local supply chains.

The importance of inclusion by opening up new economic opportunities to a diverse range of new or previously excluded people was highlighted by one respondent. Two other respondents stated that economic growth is not necessarily the best indicator of progress towards sustainability.

9. Capacity building, awareness raising, developing a common understanding of sustainability, top-level support and funding are all seen as key challenges faced by the FE and skills sector organisations. For 79% of the respondents 'not having management support' was a key issue of concern.

Other challenges identified by respondents included:

- Getting the message right
- Government policy!
- Qualification specifications
- A perceived lack of available time to focus on sustainability
- Access to sustainable technologies
- Capital funding
- Industry, local authority type support/engagement
- Encouraging OFSTED to prioritise it as a key agenda item

10. Respondents agreed that the sustainability agenda presents many new opportunities for the FE and Skills sector, including opportunities for funding, collaboration, curriculum enhancement and up-skilling of the workforce.
11. 75% of the respondents indicated that sustainability is a key strategic priority in their organisations. 67% stated that effective resource management processes are in place and 32% said their organisations embedded sustainability into all curriculum areas.

This may suggest that a majority of organisations seeing sustainability as a key priority only focus on the estates and operational aspects with relatively few of them focusing on curriculum developments.

12. All five economic sectors listed in the survey were rated highly by respondents as potential growth areas.

Sustainability Skills for Growth Recommendations

Your thoughts are appreciated on these draft recommendations. Please send your responses to kluxton@bedford.ac.uk by the consultation's closing date of 31st March 2013.

R1: A clear and consistent message must be given to the FE and Skills sector about what is meant by sustainability and what it means for the Sector and its stakeholders.

Comments:

R2: It is important to present a balanced view of sustainability, including a strong people focus, in order to develop a greater appreciation of the wider sustainability issues.

Comments:

R3: Generic skills are as important as industry-specific skills in transition to a sustainable economy. These will help achieve and maintain a sustainable economy. Financial skills are only one of numerous important generic skills that contribute to sustainable growth. There should be an expectation for training programmes and learning providers to develop these important skills regardless of the topic of study.

Comments:

R4: There must be a concerted effort within the FE and skills sector to embed sustainability into all curriculum disciplines, and to emphasise the relevance and importance of sustainability to all sectors of the economy.

Comments:

R5: When communicating sustainability, reference to economic growth must always be within the environmental and social contexts. Sustainable development must be seen and understood as achieving and maintaining economic well-being within environmental and social boundaries.

Comments:

R6: Sustainability to be made and integral part of the FE and skills sector organisations' policy, strategy and longer term plans.

Comments:

R7: Awarding bodies should review the qualifications' content and expected delivery methods in order to place a greater emphasis on environmental and social developments, not focusing purely on economic developments.

Comments:

R8: A strong sustainable development focus to be developed and embedded into the internal and external quality monitoring processes and relating guidance.

Comments:

R9: There must be an expectation from the Sector organisations to work collaboratively with external stakeholders on sustainable community development initiatives.

Comments:

R10: There should be targeted financial support for the low carbon retro-fit of the ageing building stock in order to reduce the Sector's environmental impact.

Comments:

R11: There is a misconception that environmental technologies are always sustainable. Such technologies provide a means for obtaining energy from a sustainable source such as the sun. This process is sustainable only if the technology is durable, economically viable and is used appropriately where it makes a net positive social and environmental impact. Do you agree?

Comments:

R12: The 'getting the message right suggestion' of one respondent could relate to the 'sustainable technologies' reference as well as the importance of delivering the wider sustainability message. Providing clear guidance and direction to the Sector would be crucial in building the Sector's capacity to develop sustainability skills for growth. Awarding bodies should review the qualifications' content and expected delivery methods in order to place a greater emphasis on environmental and social developments, and not focus purely on economic developments.

Comments:

R13: A representative body to be identified or created to guide sustainable development related activity across the Sector. This may include identifying and communicating opportunities that will link economic and social development priorities to curriculum content and delivery, through a collaborative approach. Such a body would have a clear appreciation of the wider strategic sustainability issues as well as operational issues such as those relating to investment priorities, capital developments, travel, procurement, energy, waste, partnership opportunities and others.

Comments:

R14: Organisations to develop strategies for embedding sustainability into the curriculum by:

- Using the organisation as a learning resource
- Supporting community developments through curriculum delivery
- Embedding sustainability into staff and student inductions
- Embedding sustainability into CPD programmes.

Comments:

Appendix 1 – Detailed response to Question 5

Question 5:

Are there any other skills you would see as being important to support the UK in the transition to a sustainable economy?

1. Knowledge of international best practice
2. Because problems facing us require greater collaboration - the ability to work together is important. Methods like Holacracy are critical
3. Long term emergency planning
4. Systems thinking, people management adaptation, communication
5. Clear and transparent communication.
6. To be aware of the practicalities of change. What it means to real people, how it impacts on their lives.
7. E+D
8. Leadership & Management.
9. Reflection Skills
10. Global Approach
11. Forecasting tomorrow's needs.
12. Enterprise should link to sustainability
13. Knowledge of environmental issues and technologies
14. Financial
15. Life cycle cost analysis
16. Financial Risk assessment
17. Collaboration
18. Social engagement
19. Communication through a variety of mediums
20. Communication & dialogue skills
21. Appreciation of global economic factors
22. Creativity, co-operation
23. Flexibility and adaptability
24. Engineering and practical skills to install renewables/insulation
25. Entrepreneurialship
26. Environmental scanning
27. Giving value to criteria that are not normally economically valued e.g. quality of life, pollution impact
28. Management and Leadership
29. Technical Knowledge
30. Strategic rather than tactical decision making
31. Education of youth from a very early age
32. Communication skills needed to promote benefits
33. Communication
34. Resource acquisition and effective deployment
35. Creating awareness