



Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education

Vol. 2, No. 2.

ISSN: 1473-8376

[www.hlst.ltsn.ac.uk/johlste](http://www.hlst.ltsn.ac.uk/johlste)

PRACTICE PAPER

## The Concept of Sustainable Tourism within the Higher Education Curriculum: A British Case Study

Graham Busby ([gbusby@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:gbusby@plymouth.ac.uk))

University of Plymouth

Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 6NQ, UK.

DOI:10.3794/johlste.22.57

© Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education

### Abstract

Sustainable tourism has been a frequently used term for many years and is, therefore, a key concept for consideration within undergraduate tourism programmes. This case study details the curriculum design of those provided by the University of Plymouth and identifies modules likely to incorporate some aspect of the concept. Findings from a short survey of final-year students are presented according to their degree programme. Whether students are direct-entrants or have been with the university from year one is shown to influence perception of the curriculum. Student recommendations as to improving the profile of sustainable tourism, within the awards, are presented.

**Keywords:** tourism degrees; sustainable tourism; curriculum design

### Introduction

Tourism journals contain a plethora of articles on sustainable tourism and its development. However, little research exists on the incorporation of such a concept in tourism studies at a higher level (Hunter-Jones 1997; Busby 2001). The only reported research in Britain appears to be an investigation into the 81 taught postgraduate tourism courses although this was based on content analysis, in terms of award title and module content, obtained from prospectuses (Flohr, 2001). Whilst Busby and Fiedel (2001) have utilised the same method with undergraduate programmes, it is argued that prospectuses do not provide an accurate picture of actual module content. A review of such content across a representative sample of institutions would be the ideal; however, it is beyond the scope of this paper which presents a case study of the position at the University of Plymouth. Sustainable tourism, as a concept, is an important curriculum component since many of these graduates will become the managers of the future.

This paper reviews the tourism curriculum in the United Kingdom at undergraduate level, in order to illuminate the diversity of provision, before presenting some of the definitions of the term 'sustainable

---

*Graham Busby has worked at the University of Plymouth for ten years, during which time he has been programme manager, pathway co-ordinator, and responsible for sandwich placements. Previously, he worked for three colleges and three tourism companies. He has published papers on media-induced tourism and heritage tourism.*

tourism' in order to compare with student conceptions. The curriculum for the University of Plymouth B.Sc. degrees in Tourism Management (TM), International Tourism Management (ITM), Adventure Tourism Management (ATM) and Ecotourism is then discussed, identifying aspects that can be said to inculcate attitudes towards sustainable tourism. Results of a survey of final-year students are presented and compared with the normative module content. At this point, verbatim comments from students recorded whilst on twelve-month sandwich placement are also utilised. Finally, student recommendations as to how the curriculum can be modified in order to improve awareness and learning are recorded.

## **Tourism studies in higher education: the British perspective**

The first tourism undergraduate programmes were launched in Britain in 1986. For entry in Autumn 2003, 978 courses incorporating 'tourism' in their title are provided by 145 institutions ([www.ucas.ac.uk](http://www.ucas.ac.uk)); many of these are Higher National Diploma (HND) or Foundation Degree (FD) programmes run by colleges of further education rather than universities. The fact is, tourism as an area of study in higher education has burgeoned over the last decade (Airey and Johnson, 1998; Busby and Fiedel, 2001), mainly because such programmes are comparatively low cost to resource (Busby, 2001). Table 1 illustrates the variety of degree titles.

---

---

Golf Tourism (University of Abertay Dundee)
Adventure Tourism Management (Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies)
Mathematics and Tourism Studies (Bolton Institute)
Tourism and Leisure Studies with Religious Studies (Canterbury Christ Church University College)
Tourism Management with Landscape Design (University of Gloucestershire)
English and Creative Writing with Tourism Management (University College Chichester)
Biology and Tourism (University of Derby)
Third World Development with Tourism (University of East London)
Performing Arts and Tourism and Heritage Management (King Alfred's College, Winchester)
Ancient History with Cultural Tourism (University of Wales, Lampeter)
Sport Tourism (University of Luton)
Tourism Management (University of Plymouth)

---

**Table 1: Examples of first degrees incorporating Tourism in the award title**

Curriculum design undoubtedly affects the student experience with different curriculum framings resulting in students graduating with a range of 'perspectives, attitudes and competences' (Tribe 2002a:340). Graduates with a tourism management degree may well look at a business proposition from a different perspective to that of an ecotourism graduate, particularly given some sandwich placement experiences (Busby et al., 1997; Busby, 2002). In his review of research trends in tourism education, Tribe (2002b) observes that a consideration of community/stakeholder input is particularly relevant in the curriculum. This leads to a short discussion of what the term 'sustainable tourism' should incorporate.

## **The concept of sustainable tourism**

Amongst the first academics to discuss the relationship between tourism and sustainable development were Mathieson and Wall (1982) who emphasised the diverse environmental, economic and social structures. In other words, the concept is about local communities as much as natural resources (Curtin and Busby, 1999; Page and Dowling, 2002). Furthermore, sustainable tourism management is not a value-free concept, a point seldom mentioned in the literature (Bramwell, 1996).

This is not the place to debate the great variety of definitions, suffice to say, the term sustainable tourism is operationalised as any consideration in the curriculum of environmental protection and/or enhancement and local population involvement. Henry and Jackson (1995) suggested the aspects of sustainable tourism which should be considered in the curriculum and Table 2 illustrates these. At the conceptual level, cultural theory would incorporate a community's cultural interests whereas, at the policy level, this would mean identifying indigenous cultural strengths. It is very much a normative model and is considered, in its entirety, to be more applicable to specific taught postgraduate programmes, such as the MA Tourism and Social Responsibility, offered at the College of St Mark and St John (Plymouth).

Allied to the issue of social responsibility, Tribe (2002c:310) observes that sustainable tourism is actually a 'subset of ethical tourism' and, significantly, possesses a 'developing set of defined core values'. An investigation of this dimension is not considered here although such research is to be recommended.

---

---

**Concepts/philosophies**

- political values/ideologies
- eco-philosophy and environmentalism
- planning theory
- social theory
- cultural theory
- economic theory
- management theory

**Policy orientations**

- ecological policy
- cultural development
- economic development
- managerial policy

**Skills/competencies**

- environmental interpretation
  - cultural interpretation
  - sustainable management and planning practices
- 
- 

Source: Henry and Jackson (1995)

**Table 2: Sustainable tourism, levels and the curriculum**

## University of Plymouth tourism-related curricula

The various tourism-related degrees are outlined here. To avoid tedious consideration of modules, Table 3 is provided in order to outline differences between TM, ITM, and ATM degrees. Modules shown in italics are available as optional choices to those pursuing the B.Sc. Tourism Management award. ITM students have slightly less choice: the language modules are compulsory. Similarly, ATM students are required to take the stage three Leadership and Expedition modules. Given that just three students are registered for the Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) degree, the module requirements are not discussed here, apart from emphasising the dominance of hospitality modules in the award. For purposes of clarification, stages one and two equate to the first and second year of study whilst stage three is the third year for those not taking a placement and the fourth for those so embarked.

---

---

<b>Stage 1 Autumn semester</b>	<b>Spring semester</b>
Tourism and the Environment	Tourism Studies 2
Tourism Studies 1	Tourist Behaviour

---

---

Financial Management 1	The Tourism Industry
Information Technology	European Business Environment
Front Office Services	Accommodation Services
<i>Introduction to Hospitality</i>	<i>Gastronomy</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>Language</i>
<hr/>	
<b>Stage 2 Autumn semester</b>	<b>Spring semester</b>
Tourism Planning and Management	Tourism Research Methods
Quantitative Methods	Marketing
Financial Management 2	Human Resource Management
<i>Cornish Tourism</i>	<i>European Tourism</i>
<i>Project Management</i>	<i>Culture and Commodity</i>
<i>Accommodation Management 1</i>	<i>Accommodation Management 2</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>Language</i>
<hr/>	
<b>Stage 3 Autumn semester</b>	<b>Spring semester</b>
Honours Project (dissertation)	Honours project (dissertation)
Tourism Case Study	Contemporary Issues in Tourism
<i>Financial Management 3</i>	<i>Integrating Case Study</i>
<i>Business &amp; Organisation Strategy</i>	<i>Quality Management</i>
<i>Adv Res Methods &amp; Tourism Forecasting</i>	<i>Expedition</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Conference &amp; Event Management</i>
<i>Sustainable Tourism</i>	<i>International Hospitality Management</i>
<i>Tourism and Crime</i>	<i>Language</i>
<i>Language</i>	

**Table 3: University of Plymouth B.Sc. Tourism Management**

Teixeira and Baum (2001:90) concluded, as a result of their discussions with a number of UK tourism-teaching staff, that the B.Sc. in Tourism 'is seen as a more general intellectual enquiry', that is, it draws on a range of disciplines. This is true of the previous named awards but less so for Ecotourism. At the University of Plymouth, the B.Sc. Ecotourism degree is backed by a substantial science staff base and, accordingly, the module profile looks significantly different to the aforementioned degrees. Table 4 illustrates those differences, emphasising the science-based modules.

<b>Stage 1 Autumn semester</b>	<b>Spring semester</b>
Tourism and the Environment	Ecological Processes
Tourism Studies 1	Tourist Behaviour
Physical Environment	The Tourism Industry
Information Technology	Animal Ecology
<i>The Diversity of Life on Earth</i>	<i>Plant Surveying</i>
<i>Ecological Physiology</i>	<i>Plant Identification</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>Animal Identification</i>
	<i>Tourism Studies 2</i>
	<i>Language</i>
<hr/>	
<b>Stage 2 Autumn semester</b>	<b>Spring semester</b>
Habitats UK	Habitat Management Planning
Conservation Law, Policy & Planning	Habitats International

Quantitative Methods	Tourism Research Methods
<i>Tourism Planning &amp; Management</i>	<i>Animal Monitoring</i>
<i>Project Management</i>	<i>Culture and Commodity</i>
<i>GIS and Land Use</i>	<i>Habitat Restoration</i>
<i>Recreation Management</i>	<i>Field Trip</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>Language</i>
<b>Stage 3 Autumn semester</b>	<b>Spring semester</b>
Honours Project	Honours Project
Environmental Assessment & Auditing	Biodiversity Conservation
Sustainable Tourism	Culture and Community
<i>Tourism and Crime</i>	<i>Representations of Rurality</i>
<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Sustainable Agriculture</i>
<i>Adv Res Methods &amp; Tourism Forecasting</i>	<i>Zoo Conservation</i>
<i>Relations with Nature</i>	<i>Expedition</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>Language</i>

**Table 4: University of Plymouth B.Sc. Ecotourism**

Specific Ecotourism modules are not reviewed here; it would be tedious to discuss every possible element featuring aspects of sustainable tourism on each module. Page and Dowling (2002) build on Fennell's (1999) analysis of fourteen different definitions for ecotourism and nature tourism, suggesting that students will find it useful in ascertaining the key variables which distinguish the dichotomy. This is mentioned here because Fennell's comparisons indicate that the Plymouth B.Sc. Ecotourism certainly does address all the possible principles selected in the definitions.

In their first semester, all students consider the relationship between the commercial activity of tourism and the wider world via the Tourism and the Environment module. Several chapters in Page et al. (2001) were written to underpin this module and to reinforce key aspects. Also at stage one, the Tourism Industry module specifically considers the role of multinational tour operators and their impacts on locales. The question of sustainability and destinations is reviewed, together with certain ethical issues, using research conducted by staff (Curtin and Busby, 1999). According to Čavlek (2002), the impact of tour operators on development has been left out of university level education; not so with the Plymouth degrees – and, it is believed, with most in the UK.

Tourism Planning and Management, at stage two, has strategy analysis as one of the assessed elements; this offers students the choice of considering what policies are in place in their specific local area tourism strategy. If, for example, they review how the strategy incorporates community development, it can be argued that they are considering managerial policy in Henry and Jackson's (1995) schema.

At stage three, students may take the Sustainable Tourism module, but what must be emphasised is the degree of freedom to take the concept further on two other modules, that of Contemporary Issues in Tourism and the dissertation. To provide one example from Contemporary Issues, some students in 2001/2 individually considered whether small-scale tour operators are perceived to act in a more sustainable manner than large-scale ones. For one student, the extent of primary research into the practices of small tour operators vis à vis large ones led her report for this module (Dutton, 2002), to be posted on the [www.tourism-2002.com](http://www.tourism-2002.com) online conference in December 2002. By definition, elements of Henry and Jackson's schema are incorporated within these modules.

## Methodology and findings

In order to ascertain student perception of the curriculum, the final-year cohort for the academic year 2002/3 ( $n=61$ ) were requested to complete a confidential questionnaire. All responded; however, the

limited overall cohort size and intra-cohort differences, in module terms, prevented statistical analysis. The three respondents registered for a Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) degree study relatively few Tourism (TOUR-coded) modules; this will become apparent later. Unfortunately, the Ecotourism degree is only in the second year of operation and, therefore, there are no respondents for this data collection exercise.

All questions were ‘open’ and had previously been piloted with two B.Sc. Tourism Management graduates – one who is now working for a national tourist board and the other who, having worked in the industry, is now teaching at another British university. As a result of their comments, a question relating to prerequisites for sustainable tourism was included. The first three open questions attempted to elicit the individual’s views by asking for a description of the term ‘sustainable tourism’, what keywords are involved and, finally, for a definition.

The fourth question students were asked to comment upon was “Are there any prerequisites (or necessary foundations) for sustainable tourism?” From the 38 Tourism Management students, this elicited 29 responses; indeed, there appears to be polarisation between a clear understanding of the question and the nine who appeared to have no cognisance. This was both surprising and disappointing – and raises further questions. Whilst only one respondent referred to the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment, most considered there was a need for relevant government policy, local strategies, educated participants and, vitally, consensus amongst stakeholders. Nine of the direct-entrant students made comments; the most relevant stating that “it is an adaptive paradigm – there needs to be common agreement on what sustainable tourism actually is”.

Refreshingly, all but one of the ATM students considered there to be prerequisites; their responses fell broadly in line with the others. What is pertinent here is to consider the Likert score provided by these students in response to Statement 1 (see Table 6). Finally, none of the HTM students considered there to be prerequisites, more a case of food and hospitality modules being studied in place of tourism ones in previous years than anything else. Nonetheless, it is surprising.

Those students who have been at the university from the first year were asked to identify which modules in stages one and two provided some sort of perspective on sustainable tourism development. The results are shown in Table 5 and, as would be expected, most students recognised that the Tourism and the Environment module provided a foundation. However, only four of the Tourism Management students considered the Tourist Behaviour module to be relevant; this raises a number of questions, particularly whether the linkages should be made more explicit at such an early stage in the curriculum. The most relevant stage two module, Tourism Planning and Management, was cited by only twenty-three students (61 per cent) which runs counter to author expectations because the emphasis on the strategy assessment was considered likely to raise awareness of impacts.

<b>Award title</b>	<b>TOM</b>	<b>TOM D/E</b>	<b>ATM D/E</b>	<b>HTM</b>
n = 61	38	12	8	3
Tourism and the Environment	28*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tourist Behaviour	4	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tourism Planning and Management	23	N/A	5	N/A
Culture and Commodity	6	N/A	N/A	N/A

N/A not applicable, i.e. not studied.

\* A further eight students referred to “Sustainable Tourism” although this is not the correct module title.

TOM Tourism Management – on campus from year 1

TOM D/E Direct entrant to final year from HND at a college

ATM D/E Adventure Tourism Management from college HND

HTM Hospitality and Tourism Management

**Table 5: Modules providing a perspective on sustainable tourism development – at stages 1 and 2 – according to student respondents**

Every Autumn since 1997, students on a twelve-month sandwich placement have been mailed a brief questionnaire in order to ascertain what they have learned, including identification of the transferable skills acquired. Some of this data pertains to sustainable tourism as the following verbatim comments illustrate. Whilst the questionnaire is confidential, some students provide written comments that allow identification of the sector they are employed in. In response to the question “what have you learned?” two different students on placement with airlines in 1999/2000, provided these verbatim comments:

“Importance of a sustainable business plan. Defining sustainable development and stating its importance for airlines. Environmental concerns i.e. built, natural and social.”

“Because of the current economic climate of the airline industry today (i.e. rising fuel costs, carrying capacity well exceeding demand, reduction in premium passengers etc), particularly in the larger airlines with many aircraft, the need for effective/sustainable business planning...”

Frequently, the students on placement make comments that do not specifically refer to sustainability but, nonetheless, indicate tangential relationships. For example, a student working with a regional tourist board in 1997/8 stated that one of the things s/he had learned was:

“A good knowledge of the variety and diversity of organisations involved in using tourism to improve the local economy on a regional basis.”

## Discussion

The data collection did not ascertain student names (the same applies to the ongoing placement research) since it was considered that the confidentiality would eliminate ‘subject bias’ (Robson 1993:67), that is, respondents would not state what they thought would please this author. The University of Plymouth Ecotourism degree stands apart from the other awards because of the emphasis on scientific content; there is no doubt that these graduates should be significantly more aware of the issues relating to sustainable tourism development and this will be assessed when the first cohort reaches stage three (2004/5). This conforms to an international comparison from Coetzee (2002) who suggests that ecotourism and adventure tourism awards are most amenable to sustainable tourism being embedded in the curriculum in South Africa.

With the Plymouth TM, ITM and ATM degrees, there is every intention of producing graduates with sound vocational skills – what Tribe (2001:444) terms ‘implicit adherence to business values’ – although the normative module content and student comments indicate that the concept of sustainable tourism still features in the curriculum. To assess specific perceptions of the curriculum, students were asked to rank deconstructed components on a five-point Likert scale. The results are shown in Table 6.

Award title	TOM	TOM D/E	ATM D/E	HTM
n = 61	38	12	8	3
Statement 1	1.7	1.9	2.5	2.7
Statement 2	3.1	3.2	3.1	3.3
Statement 3	3.6	3.2	3.6	2.7
Statement 4	2.6	3.0	2.1	2.3

Statement 1: The tourism degree I am undertaking provides me with an understanding of the term 'sustainable tourism development'.

Statement 2: The concept of sustainable tourism development is embedded in all of the TOUR coded modules.

Statement 3: There is too much emphasis on commercial aspects of tourism in the TOUR coded modules.

Statement 4: The practices of British tour operators do not help sustainable tourism development.

Response categories –

Strongly agree (1) Agree (2) Not sure (3) Disagree (4) Strongly disagree (5)

**Table 6: Likert scores for student perception of the curriculum**

The highest score for statement 1 (“The tourism degree I am undertaking provides me with an understanding of the term ‘sustainable tourism development’”), came from the TM students who had been present on campus since the first year. The lowest score, not surprisingly, came from the three HTM students who have studied fewer tourism-specific modules than their counterparts. Statement 2, concerning the embedding of the sustainable tourism concept in all modules elicited a surprisingly uniform score – and the concept is not present in all modules. At this point, it is salient to note that students who have undertaken a twelve-month placement usually have an additional perspective on the concept, as Tribe (2002c) has recognised.

With regard to statement 3, and ignoring the three HTM students, the responses from the TM and ATM students were remarkably consistent; there was polarisation within the two TM cohorts between ‘not sure’ (21) and ‘disagree’ (23) whereas none of the ATM individuals stated ‘not sure’. Why were the latter group so emphatic? Three agreed and five disagreed with the statement. It was considered that statement 4 would provoke a degree of uncertainty since there are many tour operators committed to sustainable practices. The results are interesting, therefore, because many students clearly believe that British tour operators do not help sustainable tourism development – only two individuals added text with the following comments: “the point could be argued” and “it depends on which operator” [is under consideration].

When asked to identify as many authors as possible associated with the concept, students appear to have selected those for books rather than journals as Table 7 illustrates. For example, John Swarbrooke’s text is probably what students are remembering. There appears to be a reasonable level of undergraduate awareness of key texts although it is, perhaps, concerning that the ATM and HTM respondents cite so few.

Student recommendations for enhancement of sustainable tourism as a concept in the curriculum were as follows. Of the TM students who had been on campus since stage one, 21 made recommendations or suggestions; perhaps not surprisingly, seven individuals considered more field trips would be useful – incidentally, the Ecotourism degree features a compulsory Borneo expedition. Only one TM student recommended the use of guest lecturers; given that there is currently a programme of such speakers across the stages, this would indicate either that existing speakers are considered sufficient or that students do not identify with particular individuals recognised for their subject expertise and who are ‘accessible’ (existing guest speakers are drawn from within England and not just locally).

Two TM students thought that the stage three Sustainable Tourism module should be made compulsory. Other comments suggested the use of more case studies (2); more elaboration in stage one modules (1); further examples of policy and regulation (1); greater coverage within the Tourism Planning and Management module (1), and the opinion that the concept is already well integrated within the curriculum (3). Only two of the TM direct-entrant students made comments – a reflection, possibly, that not being on campus for stages one and two precluded a real overview of the curriculum. One thought that sustainable tourism should not be further incorporated whilst the other considered that there should be a compulsory module in stage two or three.

Three ATM (direct-entrant) students believe that more field trips would enhance the concept, one suggested the use of local case studies, one thought there should be a compulsory module and another that it “needs to be taught in the earlier years of the course to get a good understanding”. The latter

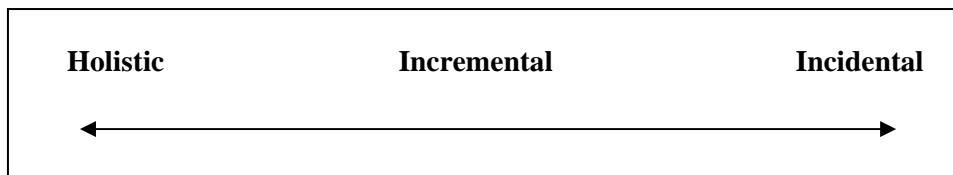
point is salient since direct-entrants may have had little or no association with the concept on their HND or FD programmes at other institutions. With regard to the HTM students, the following comment is particularly relevant: “not coming from a tourism background, I do not have the necessary knowledge to answer the question”. This raises the issue of whether a degree programme that attempts to integrate both tourism and hospitality modules is attempting too much.

Finally, it is suggested that all tourism degrees in the UK can be encompassed within the continuum shown in Figure 1. Utilising Plymouth degrees as examples, the holistic approach is manifest through specific curriculum design, such as the B.Sc. Ecotourism whereby the sustainability concept truly permeates the entire award. The incremental approach is exemplified by the B.Sc. Tourism Management whereby, several years after inception of the award the module Sustainable Tourism was validated; this gives an overt emphasis on sustainable issues and, it is argued, builds on the stage two Tourism Planning module. An incidental approach is difficult to exemplify at the University of Plymouth for it requires a wider range of module choice than students are presented with; essentially, it applies in situations where widely differing combinations are studied, thereby reducing the likelihood of serious study of sustainable tourism. It is argued that a B.A. Tourism and Performing Arts, by definition, cannot address the complex issues of sustainability in significant depth.

<b>Author/s</b>	<b>TOM</b>	<b>TOM D/E</b>	<b>ATM D/E</b>	<b>HTM</b>
Swarbrooke	23	7	2	0
Croall	22	0	0	0
Mowforth and Munt	10	3	2	0
Krippendorff	4	0	0	0
Frances Brown	4	2	0	0
Middleton	4	1	0	0
Butler	4	0	0	0
Sharpley	3	0	0	0
Page et al.	3	0	0	1
Urry	2	0	0	0
Williams and Shaw	2	0	0	0
Font and Tribe	1	0	0	0
Hunter	1	1	0	0
Murphy	1	0	0	0
Honey	1	3	0	0
Eber	1	0	0	0
Tourism Concern /WWF	1	0	0	0
Tarlow	1	0	0	0
Pearce	1	0	0	0
Bramwell	1	2	0	0
Dowling et al.	1	0	0	0
Newsome et al.	1	0	0	0
ETB (Principles)	1	0	0	0
Ap	1	0	0	0
Dann	1	0	0	0
Cooper et al.	1	1	3	0
Lea	1	0	0	0
Inskeep	0	4	1	0
Agarwal	0	3	1	2
Weaver	0	2	0	0
Doswell	0	2	1	0

Cater	0	2	0	0
Lane	0	1	0	0
Fennell	0	1	0	0
Stabler	0	1	0	0
Hall	0	1	0	0
Yale	0	1	1	0
Forsyth	0	1	0	0
Lundberg	0	0	1	0

**Table 7: Number of students citing authors associated with sustainable tourism (students could cite as many as they wished)**



**Figure 1: Approaches to sustainable tourism within UK tourism degrees**

## Conclusion

This case study has suggested that local community aspects, besides environmental ones, are comprehensively addressed in Plymouth's undergraduate programmes. There are a number of modules, delivered by staff with a variety of backgrounds, which have been shown to embed some aspect of sustainable tourism. The Likert scores and identification of authors, in the main, indicate that students have a reasonable understanding of the concept. Given the large number of relevant journal articles, and length when compared to books, it is not surprising that authors of books are to the fore.

Whilst student comments are more or less as expected, those from direct-entrant individuals suggest that there may be less attention given to sustainability on Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees. Given that only the Ecotourism degree has been specifically designed to incorporate issues of sustainability, it is pleasing that most students reach their final year with a reasonable level of awareness. This case study begins to address the dearth of research concerning sustainable tourism as a concept within UK curricula, identified by Flohr (2001), especially at the undergraduate level.

As a final observation, the Association of Tourism in Higher Education (ATHE) Guideline Number 10 'Integrating Sustainability into the Undergraduate Curriculum: Leisure and Tourism' became available after this paper was written. It is, therefore, reassuring to note that the first, second and final year Plymouth modules strongly accord with the recommended three 'levels of sustainability teaching' (Eber, 2003:8). In terms of good practice, all curriculum teams should consider module content in the light of the ATHE Guideline. In many cases, much can be achieved with minor modifications to degree programmes.

---

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Sustainable Tourism Development and the Environment conference, Chios, Greece, 2-5 October 2003.

## References

- Airey, D. and Johnson, S. (1998) *The Profile of Tourism Studies Degree Courses in the UK: 1997/98*. National Liaison Group Guideline No. 7, London: NLG.
- Bramwell, B. (1996) Sustainable tourism management education in Europe. *Tourism Management* 17(4), 307-310.
- Busby, G., Brunt, P. and Baber, S. (1997) Tourism sandwich placements: an appraisal. *Tourism Management* 18(2), 105-110.
- Busby, G. (2001) Vocationalism in higher level tourism courses: the British perspective. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 25(1), 29-43.
- Busby, G. and Fiedel, D. (2001) A contemporary review of tourism degrees in the UK. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 53(4), 495-516.
- Busby, G. (2002) Tourism sandwich placements revisited. In B. Vukonić and N. Čavlek, (eds.) *Rethinking of Education and Training for Tourism*. Zagreb: University of Zagreb, 213-230.
- Čavlek, N. (2002) The influence of vertically integrated travel concerns on education and training in tourism. In B. Vukonić and N. Čavlek, (eds.) *Rethinking of Education and Training for Tourism*. Zagreb: University of Zagreb, 411-418.
- Coetzee, W. J. L. (2002) Ecotourism development – principles and content for this instructional offering. In B. Vukonić and N. Čavlek, (eds.) *Rethinking of Education and Training for Tourism*. Zagreb: University of Zagreb, 111-119.
- Curtin, S. and Busby, G. (1999) Sustainable destination development: the tour operator perspective. *International Journal of Tourism Research* 1(2), 135-147.
- Dutton, S. (2002) Small equals sustainable? [www.tourism-2002.com](http://www.tourism-2002.com) online conference, November-December.
- Eber, S. (2003) *Integrating Sustainability into the Undergraduate Curriculum: Leisure and Tourism*. Guideline Number 10, Guildford: Association of Tourism in Higher Education.
- Fennell, D. (1999) *Ecotourism: an introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Flohr, S. (2001) An analysis of British postgraduate courses in tourism: what roles does sustainability play within higher education? *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 9(6), 505-513.
- Henry, I. and Jackson, G. (1995) Sustainable tourism management: a conceptual framework and implications for tourism education. In G. Richards (ed.) *European Tourism and Leisure Education: Trends and Prospects*. Tilburg: Tilburg University Press, 233-244.
- Hunter-Jones, P. (1997) Paper presented at The Environment Matters Conference, Glasgow Caledonian University, April (title not available). Cited in D. Leslie (1998) Conference Report, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 6(4), 339-342.
- Mathieson, A. and Wall, G. (1982) *Tourism: economic, physical and social impacts*. Harlow: Longman.
- Page, S. J. and Dowling, R. K. (2002) *Ecotourism*. Harlow: Pearson.
- Page, S. J., Brunt, P., Busby, G. and Connell, J. (2001) *Tourism: A Modern Synthesis*. London: Thomson.
- Robson, C. (1993) *Real World Research*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Teixeira, R. M. and Baum, T. (2001) Tourism education in the UK: lesson drawing in educational policy. *Anatolia* 12(2), 85-109.
- Tribe, J. (2001) Research Paradigms and the Tourism Curriculum. *Journal of Travel Research* 39(4), 442-448.
- Tribe, J. (2002a) The philosophic practitioner. *Annals of Tourism Research* 29(2), 338-357.
- Tribe, J. (2002b) Research trends and imperatives in tourism education. *Acta Turistica* 14(1), 61-81.
- Tribe, J. (2002c) Education for Ethical Tourism Action. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 10(4), 309-324.
- [www.ucas.ac.uk](http://www.ucas.ac.uk) Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. Viewed on 5 March 2003.