Desk review

- Existing research on student attitudes and skills
- Relevant policy

Online survey

- 5763 first year respondents
- Update since 2010 review

- 1552 first year respondents
- 1641 second year respondents
Key findings
Aspirations for skills in SD

• Students think sustainability skills increase their ability to perform well in their course

• Overwhelmingly skills in sustainable development are seen as valued by employers

• Wider, core skills seen as more important/relevant than sustainability specific skills

• Preference for improving employability skills over deepening subject knowledge changes throughout the university career
Understanding and influence of SD

- Understanding of SD as a concept is good, although focused on the environmental dimension.

- The majority of students reporting conducting sustainability skills at least sometimes.

- University action on SD is important to some students in selecting an institution but not a deciding factor.
HE curriculum and SD

• Majority think that universities should **actively incorporate and promote sustainable development**.

• Existing course content should be reframed rather than additional courses or modules.

• The majority of respondents would **sacrifice £1000** from salary to work in a responsible company.

• This trend is reduced at a sacrifice of **£3000**
Recommendations
Understanding sustainable development

• Improved understanding is needed of student and employer demands for SD to gain foothold and importance within the curriculum

• Understanding further the mismatch in definitions of SD between students and academics/policy-makers will be key when developing curricula, mechanisms and resources for delivery
Delivering sustainable development

• Resources should be made available to those delivering curricula to improve the baseline skills and knowledge of students in Higher Education.

• Senior management support within universities is essential for example through a national forum to support and progress holistic thinking and delivery of SD.
Wider recommendations

• Students focus more on employability through their university career emphasising the need to secure business and professional organisation support.

• Predictions of growth in the ‘green economy’ and the levels of graduate employment highlight the necessity of SD skills.

• An important need exists to understand the impact of tuition fees on student aspirations and expectations of the role of higher education.