Green Academy: curricula for tomorrow

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Background to Green Academy

An institutional change programme in partnership with the National Union of Students (NUS) and Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC).

Primary aim to help universities strategically embed ESD into the student experience, with an initial focus on the curriculum.

Project teams had to comprise of academics, senior management (Pro-Vice Chancellors), estates managers, and students to ensure an appropriately holistic approach to ESD.
Background to Green Academy

Two HEA led formal team-leader meetings (February & May 2011)

Programme teams two & a half days residential meeting (March 2011)

Independent guidance from expert ‘critical friends’

Institution validation visits (February 2012)
Green Academy Institutions

University of Bristol
Canterbury Christ Church University
Keele University
University of Nottingham
University of Southampton
Swansea University
University of Wales Trinity Saint David
University of Worcester
In a strong position prior to Green Academy - >6000 students engaged in sustainability activities, Cabot Institute, ISO14001

Opportunity to explore embedded institutional approach for ESD

G.A. programme enabled the development of a more radical approach than originally planned

The Bristol approach seeks all students to have access to sustainability experience

Funded staff and interns to support subject areas in embedding sustainability in all curriculum areas (2 (of 6) faculties in progress)

Enabled external benchmarking and clarity regarding the strategic role of ESD in the Bristol context
• Sustainability now part of the new Strategic Plan – ‘commitment to a whole-university approach where students and staff understand the need for a sustainable future’.

• Implementing a funded ‘Futures Initiative’ forming 16 Curriculum Development projects to work on multi-disciplinary wicked problems through development centres and 1:1 mentoring

• Emphasis on a positive focus for the future through critical and creative reflection aligned to academic discipline and involving student partnerships in learning

• Green Academy has provided a model and catalyst for curriculum development in education for sustainable futures
Numerous sustainability initiatives already in place including a ‘Hub’, PVC for Environment and Sustainability, a sustainability module for all 1st years, SD focused UG & PG programmes – but little integration or coherent strategy

Sustainability in the new Mission Statement, Vision, & Strategic Aims

Sustainability now one of the 3 key themes of an institution-wide curriculum review

Proactive G.A. team developed a ‘multi-strand’ vision to inserting ESD in all programmes, co-curriculum, PG training, CPD

Education and student experience now a stronger part of the sustainability agenda
• Progression of ESD from supportive statements to practical action

• Networking opportunities with other participants and the critical friends allowing time and space to work on a shared vision for embedding ESD in the curriculum

• Establishment of ESD as a ‘Grand Challenge’ giving access to funding & support

• ESD as shared understanding rather than agreed definition

• ESD added to the Nottingham Advantage Award

• Sustainability literacy now viewed as an important graduate capability
• Historic, but fragmented engagement with sustainability
• Participation in G.A. was intended to bring together disparate activities into a coherent sustainability strategy focused on practice
• Events enabled engagement with other institutions & critical friends
• Developed the sustainability plan during the residential event
• Use of partner competitor institutions for project leverage
• Funding for a full-time G.A. programme assistant
• Vision that emerged is for sustainability to be at the CORE of the institution
• Core mission ‘delivering for a sustainable Wales, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally’.

• Commits to engaging all students with sustainability concepts and issues in an appropriate context through learning and enhancing their employability.

• Each Faculty to offer one new UG and one new PG sustainability related course from 2013.

• Sustainability to be embedded into 15% of all students’ experiences by Autumn 2013.

• To be delivered through all faculties under the INSPIRE brand: Institute for Sustainable Practice, Innovation and Resource Effectiveness.
• Participation in a sector-wide cross-institutional knowledge exchange project, with insights of the critical friends

• Increased student participation through the SU and student societies

• Development of a sustainability focused curriculum and modules at the residential meeting

• Development of new academic programmes – Jan 2012 a new curriculum with a Sustainability “Elective” study path for students from any programme

• Guidance of sustainability beyond just environment and facilities

• Sustainability as a cross-institution offer to students
Outcomes of Green Academy

• The focus on the positive nature of the ‘challenges’, not the traditional negativity of sustainability ‘problems’

• Recognition of the difficulty of tackling sustainability through traditional pedagogy – the need to work collaboratively and imaginatively (e.g. through wicked problems)

• Value of engaging students as change agents

• The role of critical friends
Outcomes of Green Academy

- Dissemination in national and international conferences, including the World Symposium on Sustainability in Universities (parallel event to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development)

- Development of an informal ESD change management network where the participants have exchanged ideas and resources

- The value of a collegial approach focused on knowledge and practice sharing, driven by friendly competition
Thank you for listening

Any questions?

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HEA Academic Lead Education for Sustainable Development
• Sustainability now part of the new Strategic Plan – ‘commitment to a whole-university approach where students and staff understand the need for sustainable development’.

• Implementing a funded ‘Futures Initiative’ forming 12 Curriculum Development Centres to work on multi-disciplinary wicked problems

• Emphasis on a positive focus for the future

• Green Academy has provided a model and momentum to sustainability education