Education for Sustainable Development at University of Bristol: Delivery Framework in support of University Strategic Commitments

Professor Chris Preist - University Academic Director of Sustainability

Leadership and Strategic Commitment

The University of Bristol Strategy has Embedding Sustainability as a [cross-cutting theme](#). This includes the following commitment, which focuses on Education and the Student Experience:

Future citizens
Make sustainability a core competency of a Bristol education by mobilising our curriculum, our student experience and our partnerships in support of the development of tomorrow's global citizens.

Because:
Knowing how to live and work sustainably will be an essential skill for all future graduates and will be an absolute expectation of a world-class university education.

In support of this, the University of Bristol has the following objective:

- Integrate *discipline-relevant sustainability education* into the learning outcomes and experience of *every* University of Bristol student.

This is incorporated into the [Global and Civic Engagement Priority of the Bristol Futures Curriculum Framework](#).

Prime responsibility for leadership and oversight of delivery against this objective lies with the University Academic Director of Sustainability. This post (50% FTE) is currently held by [Chris Preist](#), Professor of Sustainability and Computer Systems. He reports on progress through bi-monthly meetings with the PVC for Education, quarterly updates to the University of Bristol Sustainability Monitoring and Implementation Group, annual updates to the University of Bristol Education Committee, and on-request updates to the University Executive Board, Senate and Council.

Delivery Framework for Integration into each Undergraduate Degree Program

Over a period of 3 years, we are working with each of the 27 academic schools to assess what sustainability education is in place in each undergraduate degree programme, and support further integration of discipline-appropriate educational content. We document both existing and future proposed content, for internal university use and potentially external use at the discretion of the school. We review progress against future commitments yearly.

The focus is on identifying *meaningful* opportunities for integration appropriate to students in a given discipline, as opposed to bolting on generic sustainability content.

We operate in a flexible way adapting to the differing needs of each school. The briefing we give to schools regarding our typical process is as follows:

1. **Initial Meeting**

For us to understand the context in which you are working: your discipline, your students and their futures, constraints you are working with and wider expectations. We provide an overview of what we are doing, discuss plans and any concerns you might have. This meeting is best conducted with the Program Director, the School Education Director and any other interested/involved staff members.

2. **Review of Existing Content – Initial Baseline Mapping of what is in place.**

We will conduct a review of unit catalog and any other materials you give us access to, to identify units likely to already include relevant content. We will contact Unit Directors for more info where needed, and write this up for review by you and discussion. In this we will explore the reasons for inclusion of the existing content, and document this. If you have a Student Sustainability Champion, we will encourage and support them to conduct sessions with students regarding their current perceptions and wishes for the degree program.

3. **Review and Identify new opportunities**

We will conduct a workshop of 1-2 hours to meet with the Program Director and interested Unit Directors and other interested staff to generate ideas about what more might be included, where in the syllabus, and why. Ideally this would be as part of one of your usual meetings, such as Education Committee or Department/School Meeting, as opposed to an additional meeting. If you have a Student Sustainability Champion, they are also invited to attend.

Based on this, we create an initial writeup and share this with you all, encouraging Unit Directors (particularly those not present) to review and suggest more options.

We then meet with the Programme Director/School Education Director to review this and to prioritise which, if any, opportunities should move forward.

We document these plans in conjunction with you, and add them to the School Climate Action Plan.

4. **Document the programmes engagement/'story' in a way which can be shared with the student community.**

We will produce a draft, and then review it with you and revise based on your comments.

5. **Review and Feedback**

Support and feedback will be gathered throughout, but particularly at this stage. What works well, and what could be improved? Does the format of the documentation we use allow you to express what is unique to your discipline appropriately? Have you found the process to be helpful and worthwhile, or just a 'tick box' exercise?

6. **Check-in on progress**

Update Climate Action Plan and program documentation.

Assessing Progress

Assessment of effectiveness of integration is conducted qualitatively for each School, taking into account disciplinary needs and priorities. It includes:

- What is it key that every student understands regarding the relationship between the discipline and different aspects of sustainability? How is this integrated into compulsory teaching, through examples, case studies, content, assessment?
- How does the programme provide relevant context from beyond the discipline to allow students to understand the wider picture into which their understanding might fit?
- What options – both disciplinary and interdisciplinary – are available for students who want to study aspects of sustainability more deeply?

The Education for Sustainable Development team act as a catalyst, encouraging and supporting conversations between staff responsible for a given degree programme as to how best to further integrate sustainability content. The team also provides external expertise and resource to help generate and shape such content when schools choose.

To reduce burden on academic staff, this process is conducted at a time and pace of each school's choosing. It often is timed to coincide with other curriculum enhancement and programme redesign activities.

Reporting of progress against this target uses the following Performance Indicators:

- Number of Degree Programs which have passed through the Education for Sustainable Development team assessment and content generation process.
- Percentage of University of Bristol students who have sustainability meaningfully integrated into their course in a discipline appropriate way.
- Absolute number of University of Bristol students who attend dedicated units on (an aspect of) sustainability as part of their education.

In addition, qualitative feedback on both process and content is gathered from both staff and students, and reviewed to allow continual improvement of how we work.

Progress – both against the above performance indicators and more generally - is monitored and reviewed regularly by the PVC for Education and Sustainability Monitoring and Implementation Group.