

## University of Brighton

### Education for Sustainable Development

#### Guidance Notes for Schools and course teams

##### 1.0 Context

The 2007-12 Corporate Plan states that during 2007-12 the university will *“adapt the curriculum so as to increase the preparedness of Brighton graduates to operate in a complex global context, with an understanding of sustainable development”* so that by 2012 it will have *integrated sustainable development and global learning perspectives into new courses, where appropriate, as they are developed and into present curricula as courses are reviewed”*.

This commitment not only reflects the priority given to this topic by government, professional bodies and a wide variety of employers but also a broader desire by large sections of the University community to make a more positive contribution to society and the environment now and in the future.

Sustainable Development is a broad and contested term. The University’s Sustainable Development policy uses the definition of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), *‘Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’*. It is recognised that a variety of contrasting approaches could be adopted to meet this objective and there is no intention that the University’s policy should be used to promote particular ideologies or viewpoints within the curriculum..

Instead the University’s approach to education for sustainable development is to enable all University of Brighton students and graduates to make a positive and reflective contribution to society and the environment. The aim is not to outline what their views should be but to develop (within the context of their subject) the knowledge, values and skills which will allow them to understand the impact of their personal and professional lives on the environment and on society, and to contribute to and influence future debates and decisions.

##### 2.0 Key Principles

The following principles are considered to be the basis for education for sustainable development:

- A broad appreciation of the environmental, social, political and economic dimensions of the relevant discipline/profession and an understanding of what sustainability means in that context
- Critical thinking and problem solving – developing students’ ability to ask questions and challenge conventional/unsustainable ideas, to handle debate and reach compromise;
- Participatory – valuing shared decision making, collaborative learning and awareness of how one’s actions impact upon others;
- Values driven – ethical decision making, respecting different values, knowledge and opinions;

- Inter-disciplinary and holistic – developing students’ ability to consider complex issues from a variety of perspectives at the same time, taking environmental, social, political and economic factors into account;
- Temporal and spatial awareness– consideration of the impact of the present on the future and of the interconnections between local and global developments
- Locally relevant – highlighting local issues, priorities and contexts and exploring linkages to broader global issues.
- Action-oriented – bridging the gap between theory and practice

### 3.0 Basic Requirements

This guidance recognises that education for sustainable development may appear more directly relevant to some subjects than to others. However, there are some baseline expectations which apply to every course and School:-

- The general abilities and awareness associated with the key principles are those that we should expect of any University of Brighton graduate whatever their discipline;
- All courses should enable students to develop those abilities through requiring them to explore topics, appropriate to the discipline, which stimulate debate, contest conventional thinking and illustrate interdisciplinary and participatory approaches. This could be developed further by encouraging appropriate forms of community and social engagement, either through modules or via individual volunteering;
- Where professional bodies or significant employers (e.g. NHS) have clear policies associated with sustainable development, these should be integrated into the curriculum to ensure graduates are suitably prepared for their selected vocation;
- Programme Specifications should briefly describe how the key principles associated with education for sustainable development are reflected within the curriculum;
- Validation and Periodic Review events should explore how the course has integrated sustainable development into its content/structure paying particular attention to the needs/expectations of professional bodies and employers ;
- The School should clearly articulate its own sustainable development action plan so that staff and students can understand how we aim to put principles into practice (see the Sustainability Strategy of the School of Nursing and Midwifery as an example of good practice);
- There should be opportunities and support for staff to debate and explore the concept of sustainable development within their own discipline and to share effective practice and ideas for incorporating the key principles within the curriculum.

More information about the principles and practice of education for sustainable development, and examples of how it is already being integrated into the curriculum in many subject areas, can be found at <http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/clt/ESD/>