

EXPERT ADVISORY BOARD - BRIEFING AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

“LEADING CURRICULUM CHANGE FOR SUSTAINABILITY - STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO QUALITY ENHANCEMENT”

Lead Organisation: University of Gloucestershire
May 2011

PROJECT FOCUS AND PURPOSE:

As the urgency of engaging effectively with sustainability agendas increases across society, the need to equip graduates to respond confidently to these issues is fast becoming a necessity. In their strategic plans, recognition schemes and funding awards, the UK Higher Education Funding Councils and the Higher Education Academy have shown commitment to sustainability through the core educational purpose of Higher Education (HE) – and recognition of the need to accelerate progress on this issue across the sector.

Leading Curriculum Change for Sustainability is a strategic project to bring learning for sustainability into the essential curriculum structures and routines of HE. Recent public reports have pointed to skills deficits in sustainability and the need for reorientation to improve graduate capabilities and expertise. The project seeks to integrate sustainability education principles within the systems that support quality enhancement in HE, to influence all subjects, the overall learning experience and graduate employability profiles.

This is the first major project to address this critical educational agenda strategically in the HE sector and is distinctive internationally in this respect. It involves a partnership of five HE institutions and is positioned at a critical moment of change for the sector. It is leading edge in its systemic approach, targeting emerging opportunities for innovation that can put sustainability more firmly on the educational map for HE:

- *Through central processes and practices of curriculum development in universities*
- *Within sector frameworks for quality enhancement and professional standards in HE*
- *By increasing understanding and sharing expertise for key academic roles and functions*

EXPERT ADVISORY BOARD ROLE:

The HE landscape for this project is highly complex and expert input is critical to the project's success, as expectations increase among students and external stakeholders about the quality, currency and relevance of HE provision. Specialist guidance is therefore essential, to help navigate drivers, influences and contexts for the future of HE, in order to maximise the value and impact of the project outcomes.

The role of the Expert Advisory Board is to provide an overarching steer on the terrain surrounding the project, to inform its sector level activities and development work. The remit of the Board is not intended to include advice on plans, implementation or evaluation of the five individual pilot projects in the partner institutions. Invitations are being extended to individuals who could support the project team in:

- **Translation of agendas** from diverse industry sectors, civic concerns and policy priorities.
- **Forecasting of trends** so the strategic direction of the project retains strength of focus.

This expert informants group is a vital component in understanding the environments that are influencing HE and the professional landscapes that future graduates will encounter. As HE is undergoing deep and rapid change to its funding base and strategic orientation, the Expert Advisory Board is critically important in helping to surface and explore pressing leadership issues around sustainability in this arena.



PROJECT ARCHITECTURE:

The project operates through three intervention arms – tackling different aspects of the HE sector:

- **Developing pathways for change in five universities:** action learning is being used to change educational practice across the partnership, with a dedicated project lead in each institution.
- **Building partnerships for progress at sector level:** consultation is being developed with the sector agencies responsible for standards and quality in HE and associated frameworks and processes.
- **Sourcing diverse stakeholder perspectives:** dialogues will take place with a range of expert advisers and key stakeholders, sourcing input from academic, professional and industry contexts.

The project targets the fundamental practices that assure and enhance the quality of teaching and learning in HE, to bridge potential innovation for sustainability into the ‘academic infrastructure’ and professional practice. The partner institutions are actively developing and comparing connections between sustainability and other priority strategic themes for HE such as employability, internationalisation and enterprise.

PROJECT LEADERSHIP:

The core team consists of a lead representative at each institution, with an additional Project Director based at the lead institution, the University of Gloucestershire. The profile accompanying this briefing outlines the University’s unique credentials and leading practice in the field of Education for Sustainability.

The team members have wide-ranging expertise across different academic subject areas as well as varied experience of working on significant sustainability education and research projects. The five partner institutions span the diversity of institutional types within the current HE sector: *Aston University, University of Brighton, University of Gloucestershire, University of Exeter and Oxford Brookes University.*

As Project Director, Professor Daniella Tilbury draws on her globally-recognised work in leadership, learning and institutional change for sustainability, which includes many significant awards and publications. She serves as Chair of the United Nations Global Monitoring and Evaluation Expert Group which advises on the assessment of global progress during the UN *Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)* and is the UK government nominated member of the UNECE Expert Group on ESD Competences.

COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD:

The Expert Advisory Board will be composed of invited individuals who can bring specialist advice from a range of sectors, roles and perspectives. This includes insight into student concerns, funding landscapes and policy contexts for the future of HE, as well as the place of sustainability agendas in the sector and the implications for academic leaders and managers. Representation is being sought from several areas:

- HE Vice-Chancellors, Chancellors and members of University Councils;
- Directors and CEOs of notable businesses engaged in sustainability agendas;
- Leaders of the national HE sector agencies in quality assurance and enhancement;
- Civic leaders involved in local and regional public engagement activities;
- Representatives of social and political concerns through charity and media work.



ROAD MAP AND PLANNED ACTIVITY:

The intention is that the Board will meet twice during the project lifecycle, in late autumn 2011 and spring 2012. These meetings will involve discussion, envisioning and reflection on key questions, such as:

Q: What are your expectations of what universities should be doing to support learning for sustainability and how would you like to see the sector responding to this agenda?

Q: What kinds of leadership skills and abilities will future professional graduates need, in order to tackle the sustainability challenges that different industries and societies are facing?

Q: Where are the drivers for sustainability in the landscape around HE - and how might they alter, as the HE resource base shifts and its approach to external collaboration changes gear?

Q: What are the implications of various sustainability enablers and obstacles in society, to guide improvements to the quality of university teaching and learning in this area?

The participation of the Board will be critical to the project and it is hoped that the process itself will have added value and interest for members, through sharing perspectives on these contemporary concerns. Project team members will join the process and capture the insights emerging from this important forum.

A summary report on the findings of the Board will be included within the final project outputs and will also provide a formal feedback channel to guide the thinking of the project team. Input from the Board will also contribute to the external evaluation mechanism for the project.

Board members will be consulted on all documentation emerging from the meetings and consent will be sought prior to any use of these outputs within the project team or for public dissemination.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Project Director: Professor Daniella Tilbury dtilbury@glos.ac.uk 07917 895800

Project Manager: Dr Alex Ryan aryan@glos.ac.uk 07812 731258

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Lifecycle: Project commenced October 2010 – duration 2 years until September 2012

Website: <http://insight.glos.ac.uk/sustainability/hefcelgmquality>

