



Call for Good Practices – Submission Form

1. Contact details:

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2. Summary of the Good Practice (up to 150 words):

This project focuses on the need for large scale curriculum change in Higher Education institutions to assist students in meeting the sustainable development challenges of the 21st century. It brings the field of Education for Sustainability into strategic dialogue with the processes for assuring and enhancing the quality of HE courses in the UK.

The project is led by the University of Gloucestershire and funded by the UK Higher Education Funding Council for England. It involves collaborative work across five HE institutions to achieve strategic changes in academic practice, as well as interaction with key agencies in the HE sector.

The project aims to improve understanding and to provide clear strategic guidance for HE institutions and stakeholders about the place of sustainability in the future of university education.

3. Keywords: education for sustainability, quality assurance, curriculum reform, quality enhancement, leadership, organisational change, sustainable development

4. Categorize the good practice according to the thematic lines:

Curricula Innovation and Learning Processes

Research

Social and Community Engagement

Institutional Management and Operations

5. Title:

LEADING CURRICULUM CHANGE FOR SUSTAINABILITY: STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Full text of the Good Practice [Please note that Good Practices will be evaluated according to all the information received]:

6. Duration:

Starting date: October 2010

Active

Completed Date: _____



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7. Background (maximum 300 words):

This project takes forward the imperative for Higher Education to consider how forecasts for the economy, ecology and the future of our regional and global communities can be addressed in the context of university education. It is led by the University of Gloucestershire, in collaboration with Aston University, University of Brighton, University of Exeter and Oxford Brookes University.

In the UK, as in many countries worldwide, HE institutions are engaged in ground-breaking sustainable development research and promote good practice in corporate sustainability, but progress on the curriculum has been far slower. Demand among students appears to be increasing as employers need graduates who can respond to sustainability challenges in all professional and business contexts.

The *Global Progress Report* on Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2009) pointed to the need for thematic, strategic effort in HE to drive pedagogic change and build momentum worldwide. This project tackles the need to act strategically within the HE sector, to improve graduate skills and capabilities for sustainability across academic and professional subjects.

Education for Sustainability (EfS)/Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is aimed at reorienting curricula to meet these aims. However, there are complex issues for senior managers and academic leaders seeking to embed sustainability within the learning opportunities provided by HE institutions. There is a distinct need in the UK and internationally for guidance on the integration of sustainability within mainstream academic practice, so that EfS principles fuel innovation across course offerings.

Every HE institution, regardless of its profile and mission, uses common mechanisms to maintain the quality of its provision. These processes of quality assurance and quality enhancement have been recognised as a strategic arena for EfS in the HE sector. The UK is recognised for its leading practice in this area and the project will use this context to examine issues and opportunities in progressing EfS through processes of quality assurance and enhancement.

8. Objectives (maximum 100 words):

The project seeks to improve institutional leadership and sector dialogue, with multiple outcomes to accompany the primary output, which is a practical and strategic guidance manual for senior managers. The project works at three levels:

- i) **INSTITUTIONAL - *changing academic practice in the five partner institutions***: to provide examples of teaching and learning development, using different approaches and entry points.
- ii) **SECTORAL - *building capacity and involvement at sector level***: dialogue with UK agencies, as well as perspectives from other stakeholders connected with HE provision.
- iii) **INDIVIDUAL - *engaging academic leaders and developers***: contributions from experts in the UK and overseas, on this strategic interface between sustainability and HE.

9. Description (maximum 500 words):

The project follows three phases of work:

Phase 1 – October 2010-February 2011:

Planning & Consultation – consultation with sector agencies and expert advisors, plans for pilot



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work within partner institutions, presentations at key forums.

Phase 2 – March 2011-April 2012:

Pilot Phase – developmental work within partner institutions, stakeholder consultation meetings, online seminar to share input and findings across the sector and more widely.

Phase 3 – May 2012-September 2012:

Analysis & Dissemination – completion of institutional pilot work, stakeholders dissemination event to finalise recommendations, production of final outputs.

Brief profiles of the sustainability interests of the project partners follow:

University of Gloucestershire (UoG) was the first English HE institution to achieve ISO 14001 for sustainability practice and it has sustainability as a strategic priority across the organisation. It has international expertise in education for sustainability and is known for its work in this area, to expand organisational capabilities, student learning, research, outreach and professional development. This is supported by its UNU *Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development* (www.glos.ac.uk/rce) and *International Research Institute for Sustainability* (IRIS). IRIS has international expertise in assessing progress in EfS; in professional practice and EfS; and leadership, governance and organizational change for sustainability (www.glos.ac.uk/iris).

Aston University is expanding its sustainability strategies, with academic development in ESD linked to lifelong learning and employability, and to benefit local and regional communities through business engagement and knowledge exchange. It is embedding sustainability and ethics in different curricula, has a centrally funded inter-disciplinary *Centre for Sustainability and Innovation* and leads a lifelong learning consortium in *Sustainable Communities, Regeneration and Environmental Technologies*.

University of Brighton cross-references sustainability across its Corporate Plan 2007-2012 and has expertise in waste management, nanoscience-based pollution mitigation and built environment. The institution won the 2008 THES award for *Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community* and excels in university-community partnerships, with activities linked to accredited curricula. It will also engage with this project through its strong base in professional and teacher education.

University of Exeter has an international research profile that includes the interdisciplinary research theme *Climate Change and Sustainable Futures* and the *Environment and Sustainability Institute* in Cornwall. Its Environmental Sustainability Policy (2009) commits the university to providing students with opportunities to raise sustainability awareness and is working closely with them through the innovative approach 'Students as Agents for Change'.

Oxford Brookes University has developed approaches to ESD in subjects as diverse as arts, religious studies and tourism, and has a strong research profile via the *Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development*. It is developing student volunteering opportunities geared to sustainability and gives particular attention to strategies for internationalisation across its distinctive modular curriculum.

10. Results (maximum 200 words):

Completion Date: September 2012



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The findings will provide guidance based on comparative practice across a diverse and representative group of institutions, providing case study exemplars of efforts to embed ESD within their academic infrastructure.

The primary output will be a practical and strategic guidance manual for senior managers and all stakeholders connected with this agenda in professional and educational sectors.

Associated outputs will include capacity-building activities to promote change for other HE institutions and stakeholders, engaging with sector agencies (e.g. the UK Quality Assurance Agency and Higher Education Academy) to increase awareness and engagement.

The project lessons and recommendations will be designed to assist those in senior roles and to meet the pressing need for dialogue on these critical educational issues for the 21st century.

11. Innovative aspects (maximum 100 words):

This project is at the leading edge of national and international efforts towards sustainability in HE, as the need for guidance on embedding EfS into mainstream academic practice has grown rapidly. It tackles the implications at the institutional level and at the sector level, taking a systemic approach and using action learning to promote dialogue and change.

The project team is distinctive, involving different types of HE institution, stages of engagement with curriculum change in EfS, aspects of curriculum development, and subject areas.

Distributed approaches to leadership underpin the project design, which engages collaboratively to connect internal and external drivers for EfS, and works with strategic, themed approaches, to encourage co-operative effort on the agenda.

12. Recommendations to other institutions/organisations (maximum 100 words):

Recommendations will be forthcoming as the project concludes.

During the project cycle, the team is gathering materials and expertise related to this field and would be keen to hear from colleagues both in the UK and overseas who may have:

- i) examples of interesting practice, reports and studies, that could be shared and/or showcased in connection with the project activities and outputs.
- ii) interest in staying in touch with news about the project, including invitations and opportunities to join dialogue and dissemination activities.

Optionally, please let us know whether the Good Practice has created any partnerships:

Yes

No If no, please specify the willingness of partners collaboration

Yes Type of partners desired:

No