Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

QMU QUALITY FRAMEWORK

Sustainability in the curriculum

QMU framework: Guidance for teams and panels participating in validation and review

Introduction

Sustainability is at the core of QMU's strategic vision and the University takes a joined up approach to the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development. This means that our sustainable thinking and practice extends beyond the immediate campus environment to our research activities, curriculum development and leadership training. This paper provides guidance to panels and teams participating in validation and review on the following:

- **Context:** Why is sustainability important?
- **Definition:** What does sustainability mean for QMU and individual Programme Leaders?
- **Graduate Attributes:** How do the Graduate Attributes link to QMU's sustainability agenda?
- **Documentation:** What should be included in the documentation presented for validation or review?
- **QMU Model for embedding sustainable development into the curriculum:** What are the links between the student experience, the campus, research, knowledge exchange and accredited training?
- **Checklist for validation and review events:** What should the panel look for and what kind of questions might usefully be explored with the team at the event?
- **Support for programme teams:** What help is available?
- **University Development:** How can the validation or review process be used to help embed sustainability at QMU?

Context

"To integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning" is the overarching goal of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. There is an urgency to raise awareness and stimulate debate among staff and students at QMU: in Scotland, there is a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 42 per cent by 2020. Sustainable development is about more than climate change and protecting the environment: it is also about building better communities; ensuring society is fair and equitable; and working to improve health and well being (Scottish Government 2010).

Following the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence, students will commence their studies with a greater level of critical engagement with topical issues such as equity, lifestyle and climate change. They will expect to build effectively on this experience at QMU.

The Higher Education Academy vision for Education for Sustainable Development is that institutions and subject communities develop curricula and pedagogy that enhance graduates' capabilities to contribute to sustainable and just societies (Higher Education Academy 2012).

Definition

There are many different interpretations of sustainability and its dimensions. The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the lives of future generations. QMU has agreed on the following definition which embraces environmental, societal and economic considerations that support development and improved quality of life:

Education for sustainable development (ESD) seeks to raise awareness and understanding of the issues relating to sustainable development, social responsibility and corporate accountability: to help us learn how best we can participate in building stronger, safer, healthier communities and developing a sustainable economy; how best we can reduce our impact on the environment; and how best to cultivate skills and attributes which help us contribute to a just and equitable society.

Approaches to sustainability are discipline specific and each programme team and panel should consider education for sustainable development in context.

Graduate Attributes

QMU graduate attributes include those which aspire to produce graduates who:

1. Conduct themselves professionally and ethically, respecting the diversity of others;

2. Have the capacity to help build a socially just and sustainable society, striving for high levels of social, ethical, cultural and environmental conduct;

3. Are mindful of their role as global citizens, contributing positively to society at local, national or international levels.
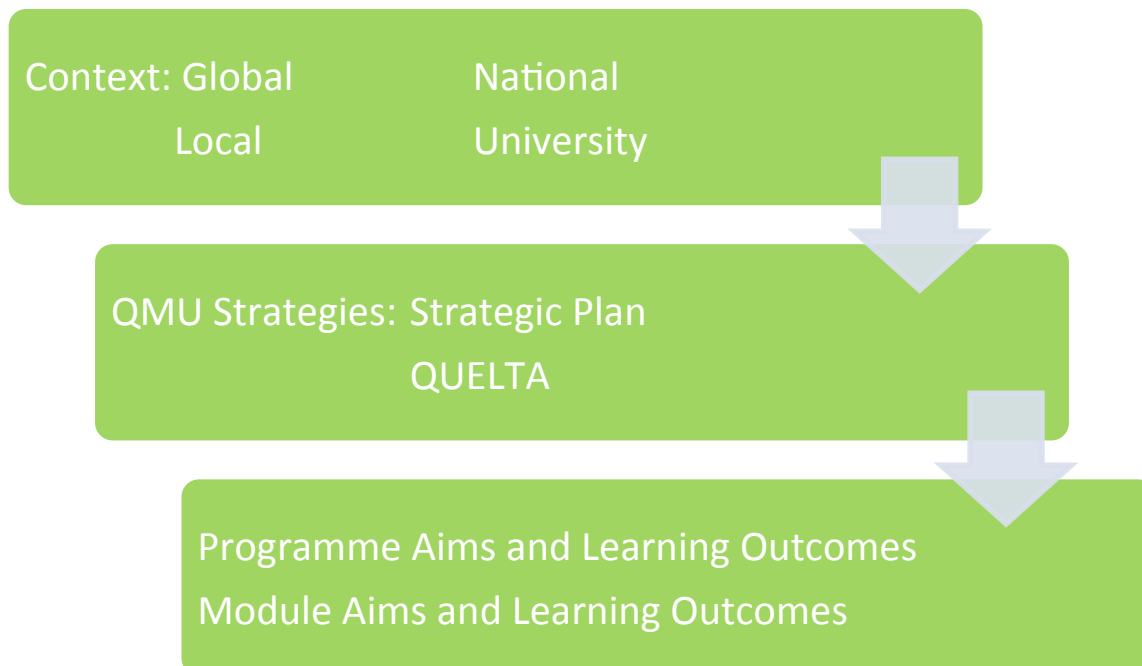
Documentation

Teams will embed sustainable development throughout the validation/review document. It is not necessary to include sustainable development education within every module. It is also not necessary to include aspects of sustainable development that do not apply to the Programme under consideration.
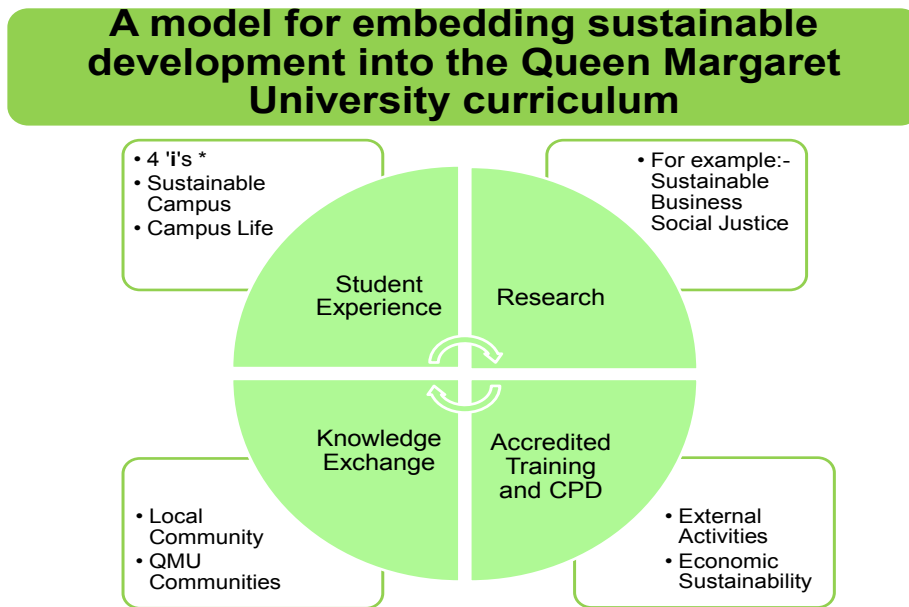
The following guidance may assist Programme/Review teams to explain the following key issues:

- How the Programme articulates with the QMU definition of sustainability (see above)
- How the Programme articulates with other key internal reference points such as the School Operational Plan; the generic Graduate Attributes, each of which has detailed objectives relating to sustainability; and the QELTA Strategy which states that QMU will systematically embed education for sustainable development throughout our learning and teaching as well as in the overall student experience
- Whether there are any discipline specific external reference points for sustainability, such as benchmark statements, and if so, how these have been used
- Which dimensions of sustainability are included or excluded and the reasons for this (including the benefits for employers and the wider community)
- Where sustainability is embedded in overarching Programme aims and outcomes
- Where sustainability is embedded in individual modules – consider the potential for greater impact in core modules
- How students are informed about the QMU and Programme commitment to sustainability
- How students are encouraged to engage critically with sustainable development
- How staff are enabled to support the delivery of education for sustainable development

This may be summarised in the following flow chart which begins with the context for addressing education for sustainable development, QMU strategies providing direction and with the interpretation and implementation at Programme and Module level.:

Context: Global	National
Local	University

QMU Strategies: Strategic Plan
QUELTA

Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes
Module Aims and Learning Outcomes

QMU Model for embedding sustainable development into the curriculum

A model for embedding sustainable development into the Queen Margaret University curriculum

- 4 'i's *
- Sustainable Campus
- Campus Life

Student Experience

Research

- For example:- Sustainable Business Social Justice

Knowledge Exchange

Accredited Training and CPD

- Local Community
- QMU Communities

- External Activities
- Economic Sustainability

* International, Industry Relevant, Inter-professional, Inter-disciplinary

Checklist for validation and review events

The following questions in the checklist for validation and review provide useful pointers for panels involved in validation and review:

- Is there evidence of an appropriate strategy for embedding education for sustainable development in the curriculum?
- Do students have sufficient opportunity to acquire the learning necessary for sustainable development practice?
- Does the Student Handbook provide sufficient guidance on sustainable development in the curriculum?

Support for Programme Teams

Members of the Sustainability Curriculum Working Group will assist validation and review teams with the process of embedding sustainable development into the curriculum. They can provide advice based on their experience of working in this area in recent years. Members are drawn from across the University including representatives from the Centre for Academic Practice.

There will also be relevant events advertised to encourage dialogue and facilitate change.

University Development

Panels are encouraged to identify aspects of good practice relating to sustainable development, which can be shared with other teams. Equally, where opportunities for strengthening sustainability in the curriculum are identified, it is open to the panel to make recommendations or set conditions. The Student Experience Committee, through the Sustainability Curriculum Working Group, will consider outcomes relating to sustainability at the end of each year to identify any trends and actions required on an institutional level.

References

Higher Education Academy 2012. *Education for sustainable development* [online] Available at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/education-for-sustainable-development [Accessed June 18 2012].

The Scottish Government. 2010. *Learning for change* [online] Available at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/312576/0098842.pdf [Accessed November 21 2011].

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