

Baselining the Future ESD Framework

1. Introduction

ESD is the process of equipping students with the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes needed to work and live in a way that safeguards environmental, social and economic wellbeing, both in the present and for future generations.

Through UCL's teaching and research, we have the opportunity to have a global impact on sustainable development by educating our 40,000 students, and the wider community, on the sustainability challenges of our times. We are asking how far has UCL gone to embed sustainability into education and what should it do next?

2. Aims

- To develop a baseline of UCL's current approach to ESD.
- To identify areas for improvement in the curriculum.
- To develop an ESD framework similar to the NUS Responsible Futures, but specific to UCL.
- To contribute towards the UCL 2034 strategy's principal theme of addressing global challenges.

3. Current Activities

Sharing best practice with other institutions

From August 2017, UCL has been mapping their current approach to ESD. So far, research has been conducted into the approach of 25 UK Universities and comparing their approach with ours. As part of the research, an individual from each University was contacted to learn more about ESD in their institutions through a survey and an interview. In addition, we are collecting data on the best ESD initiatives offered by Universities to find out how UCL could measure the success of its own ESD initiatives. Currently, UCL only does so by recording student numbers.

Baselining

UCL's formal curriculum was reviewed using a sample of 19 undergraduate programmes from the most populous departments. Sustainability concepts within the economic, environmental and social themes were identified and the strength of the sustainability content was graded. Discussions are being held with academic members of staff to find out more about the programmes, learn about their views on ESD and ask how it could be developed in UCL's curriculum.

4. Key Findings

i. UCL offers a wide range of sustainability-related extracurricular and professional development opportunities.

An example of an ESD initiative is UCL's Global Citizenship programme. It offers strands directly related to environmental sustainability including Global Environmental Justice. Another example is the sustainability induction, with 38 departments providing this to their students this year.

ii. The strength of the sustainability content in modules with sustainability concepts varies and many of these modules contain concepts from more than one theme.

Half of the modules were found to have sustainability concepts, 20% of which contained an overlap between the themes. The strength of the sustainability content in these modules varies, suggesting that there is an opportunity to increase the amount of sustainability included in the programmes.

iii. Internal academic members of staff would benefit from training to help identify opportunities for integrating ESD in their courses.

By discussing the UN's 17 goals for sustainable development, members of staff were able to see the link between sustainability and their courses. Holding discussions has allowed UCL to communicate with staff about ESD, but there is an opportunity to do further work in this area.

Proposed Mechanism for Measuring and Reporting

Module descriptions were used to identify the sustainability content present within the chosen programmes. They were analysed for sustainability concepts from the themes economic, environmental and social.

Economic	Environmental	Social
GNP/Productivity	Policy/Administration	Demography/ Population
Resource use/Exhaustion (materials, energy, water)	Products and services (include transport)	Employment/ Unemployment
Finances and SD	Pollution/Accumulation of toxic waste/Effluents	Poverty
Production/ Consumption patterns	Biodiversity	Bribery/corruption
Developmental economics	Resource efficiency/Eco-efficiency	Equity/Justice
	Global warming/Emissions/Acid rain/Climate change/Ozone depletion	Health
	Resources (depletion, conservation) (materials, energy, water)	Social cohesion
	Desertification/Deforestation/Land use	Education
	Ozone depletion	Diversity
	Alternatives	Cultural Diversity/ Social cohesion
		Labour/Human rights

The grading system used to determine the strength of the sustainability content in each module is shown below.

- 0: There is no sustainability content.
- 1: There is some element of sustainability.
- 2: A significant amount of the course is about sustainability.
- 3: The course is fundamentally about sustainability.

Limitations of the mechanism:

- The review relies on the accuracy of module descriptions.
- The sample of 19 programmes do not represent the whole curriculum.
- Only undergraduate programmes were considered.
- Requirements for the modules are not considered.

These limitations will be addressed in the future by using a more qualitative and in-depth investigation into the modules. For example, this could involve interviewing more module leaders and undertaking surveys with students. The module pre-requisites will also be taken into account. To obtain results that reflect the whole curriculum to a greater extent, a larger sample size that includes both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes will be analysed.