

Proposal for MSc Learning for Sustainability

Response to validation panel

This paper highlights the responses of the programme to the panel's conditions and recommendations.

Conditions

Condition 1
Documentation should be amended to set out the aims for each individual course, ensuring and explaining how they interact, and contribute to the overall goals of the programme. This will strengthen the coherence of the overall rationale for the programme.
This has been addressed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• amending and clarifying the aims of new and revised courses as necessary• adding a new section to the proposal: 1.4 Programme Coherence
Condition 2
Provide a rationale for the choices of programme/course content.
As above
Condition 3
Ensure there is consistency in the documentation's presentation and detail e.g. course titles, credit ratings for individual courses.
This has been addressed

Recommendations

Recommendation 1
That greater account be taken of the sustainable development context at local, national and global level.
This is addressed in new and revised courses as appropriate. In particular see the courses Introduction to Learning for Sustainability and Ecosystems for Educators.
Recommendation 2
That there be greater exploration of the sustainable education discourse and literature, including local references e.g. the University of Edinburgh as a transition university and the contribution of Scotland to this debate.
This is addressed in new and revised courses as appropriate. In particular see the course Introduction to Learning for Sustainability.
Recommendation 3
Ensure there is sufficient coverage of strategy and change management in educational contexts.
This is addressed in the course Introduction to Learning for Sustainability.
Recommendation 4
Provide a breakdown of the weighting and attribution of marks for all parts of assessments. (Some but not all course descriptors currently include this information)
This is addressed.

Recommendation 5
Further explanation be given for the rationale and use of course rotation and further consideration be given to the practical issues that this may raise.
This is addressed in the final paragraphs of Section 1.2 and in Sections 1.5 and 1.6.
Recommendation 6
There should be greater clarity on why and how the programme will attract international students. The documentation should be amended to explain how the programme will work in practice for both international students and other students who are not full-time teachers.
This is addressed in the final paragraphs of Section 1.2.
Recommendation 7
The documentation should be amended to demonstrate more clearly the links between theory and actual practice in the classroom.
This is addressed in new and revised courses as appropriate. Education for Environmental Citizenship is an existing course; the descriptor has therefore not been revised. However the course organiser confirms these links are the normal practice in the course.
Recommendation 8
Give consideration on how to develop students' ability to engage with both quantitative and qualitative literature and research.
As noted in the proposal, students are encouraged to take The Sources of Knowledge, which introduces these issues, early in their studies. The courses Introduction to Learning for Sustainability and Ecosystems for Educators have been revised to include this in their learning outcomes.
Recommendation 9
Investigate the possibility and desirability of students being able to take courses offered elsewhere in the School, College or University as options within this degree programme.
This has been carefully considered by the programme team. While this may have benefits for particular students, on reflection, it is felt that to do so would negatively impact on the carefully conceived coherence of the programme.

Recommendation 10

Consider the development of strategic partnerships. For instance strong partnerships could be built with local authorities and this would have the added advantage of increasing awareness of the programme and its benefits.

The importance of such partnerships is recognised by the programme team. Developing formal strategic partnerships at the earliest stages of a new programme is notoriously difficult. The intention therefore is to build partnerships organically, in particular through the school and programme team's existing strong relationships with a wide range of relevant organisations. The team expects further opportunities to arise, particularly with the employers of part-time students. Students' dissertation projects are expected to provide a particular focus for the development of such partnerships — see Section 1.4 Programme Coherence, sub-section: Masters.

Recommendation 11

Ensure that assessment criteria for all courses are explicit.

This is addressed in new and revised courses as appropriate.

Recommendation 12

Incorporate formative feedback within programme and course documentation.

This is addressed in all courses as appropriate.

Recommendation 13

Ensure that all courses conform to School requirements for teaching hours.

This is addressed in all courses as appropriate.

Recommendation 14

Consider programme organisation and course requirements in regard to entry and exit awards (e.g., if an MSc student exits with a PgCert they must have the right course credits)

This issue is common to all such programmes. Students' attention will be drawn to these requirements and the implications of this; they will be encouraged to take account of this in their course choices.