*Consultation response to be submitted to Sue Rigby, Vice Principal Learning and Teaching* [*Sue.Rigby@ed.ac.uk*](mailto:Sue.Rigby@ed.ac.uk)

The University’s Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability welcomes the development of a new Learning and Teaching Vision for 2020 for the University of Edinburgh, in light of a changing world, global challenges, and a rapidly changing world of work for graduates. In response to the [consultation on the six-point vision](http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Projects/Consultation%20on%20University%20Vision%20for%20Learning%20and%20Teaching%20Aug%202014.pdf), the Department offers the following comments:

1. **A portfolio approach for a complicated and unpredictable future:** we welcome further options for students to choose courses from outside their programmes, to encourage a breadth of knowledge and skills. We encourage the promotion of courses on understanding sustainability, social justice and ethics to students in all disciplines. The department welcomes the work of the Steering Group set up by Senatus Learning and Teaching Committee and convened by Pete Higgins toward developing two credit-bearing online courses on SRS issues, led from Moray House and GeoSciences respectively, and due to be rolled out in semester 2 of 2015/16, and to be available to all students. It is important for graduates to understand the wider systems in which their specific disciplines or professions operate, and to be able to critically assess the contributions they are making to society. In this light, the University and EUSA have participated in the NUS Responsible Futures pilot scheme which facilitates benchmarking student learning about social responsibility and sustainability in the curriculum and informally.
2. **Giving students agency to create their own learning –** we support students having more choice, and being encouraged to take more control of what they want to learn, and how they want to learn. [Higher Education Academy and NUS UK-wide surveys](http://www.nus.org.uk/en/greener-projects/greener-research/attitudes-and-skills-for-sustainable-development/) consistently show that sixty per cent of students want to learn more about sustainability, and that eighty per cent want their institution to actively incorporate and promote sustainable development. There needs to be easier mechanisms for these requests from students to be integrated into curricula and wider learning opportunities.
3. **Extend learning beyond the traditional knowledge-centred course** – we strongly support student learning in the community – through placements, projects, and collaborations with third sector organisations, social enterprises/business, and the public sector. All students should have opportunities to gain credit for learning off-campus. The SRS Department currently provides opportunities for projects and placements within the university looking at SRS issues, in external organisations, and in university supply chains. We aim to encourage the University to operate as a Living Lab – facilitating student and academic research into operational issues, using student learning to help the institution become more sustainable and more socially responsible.
4. **Every student a researcher or practitioner** – we would encourage also the option of students being both researchers and practitioners on graduation – being committed to reflective practice, and understanding the consequences of their choices when in the world of work.
5. **Course design for 21st century learners** – we favour active learning approaches over passive learning in lectures, encouraging greater interaction between students, between students and staff, and between different disciplines.
6. **Focus on multiple learning styles and learning for life** – we welcome the intent to ensure all students take at least one online course, as this opens up possibilities for learning alongside students in local communities and also in other parts of the world, exchanging perspectives and striving to solve global problems together. We would add that staff should also be encouraged to take online courses on sustainability and ethical issues, both on joining the university and periodically.

We look forward to hearing about and participating in the implementation of the new Vision, and hope that sustainability and social responsibility themes will be implicit throughout.

Liz Cooper

Research and Policy Manager

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