

BARGAINING OBJECTIVE **3**

Curriculum

BACKGROUND

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the global community for the next 15 years (2015 - 2030) include Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) goals. UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 states:

By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

United Nations (2020) <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata?Text=&Goal=4&Target=4.7>

Where we are focusing on embedding climate education in the curriculum, it is important both content and pedagogy are included in these transformational goals. ESD aims to implement and embed pedagogies that will ensure learners are not only equipped with the knowledge and understanding of climate change and sustainability challenges, but that they are also equipped with the skills, competencies and attributes to apply their knowledge. Where only content is included we run the risk of heightening 'climate or eco-anxiety' among our students without enabling them to develop a means of tackling the challenges we face.

Worldwide, just 6% of people attend university, but university educated individuals make up 80% of the world's leadership positions (UNESCO, 2019). With the GND we have an opportunity to turn education into a force for good, whereby future graduates can become part of the solution.

Progress on embedding ESD across the curriculum is very patchy. Research with higher- and further education students by the NUS and SOS-UK (2020)¹ has highlighted that:

- 91% say their place of study should actively incorporate and promote sustainable development.
- 83% would like to see sustainable development actively incorporated and promoted through all courses.
- 65% say sustainable development is something they would like to learn more about.





However, the progress that has been made is very uneven between each sector of education as well as within each institution. Lack of support from the government despite signing up to the Paris climate agreement and the UN's SDGs has been a major factor. We need to see our tertiary education institutions held to account, through policy, that they will contribute towards the transition for a GND both operationally and across all curricula.

The Higher Education Academy (now Advance HE) and Quality Assurance Agency have developed comprehensive guidance for incorporating ESD into higher education teaching and learning. It aims to ensure students:

- consider what the concept of global citizenship means in the context of their own discipline and in their future professional and personal lives
- have democratic and participatory learning approaches that are modelled. Teaching, learning and assessment activities are linked to real-life concerns.
- think about issues of social justice, ethics and wellbeing, and how these relate to ecological and economic factors
- develop a future-facing outlook, learning to think about the consequences of actions, and how systems and societies can be adapted to ensure sustainable futures.

For climate change to be brushed over in our education is a fundamental flaw in our education system and suggests a lack of commitment to future generations – our generation. There cannot be large-scale change in our dependence on fossil fuels nor the creation of a circular economy without adequate changes in the way young people are being educated.

The idea of compulsory climate education and improved 'climate literacy' is not a particularly recent ask, in fact the Chapter 36 of the 1992 Earth Summit highlights the need to 'reorientate the education system towards sustainability. And yet, 28 years later this is still distant for the majority of young people on the planet, with some noticeable exceptions such as Finland. The need for climate justice has never been more urgent, and yet much of our generation remains dangerously uneducated on the impacts of climate change. It is time to Teach the Future. Written by Sophie Price, 16-year-old campaigner at Teach the Future.

CLIMATE PROOFING THE CURRICULUM

Every part of the curriculum should be 'climate proofed' with a lens for climate justice inclusive of further education, it falls far short of what is needed. The Government and external agencies must shoulder some of the blame for this. Removing 'sustainability' from the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework has not helped. Neither has the reluctance of awarding bodies to address this sufficiently in their qualifications. Where institutions are providing professional body accreditation for their education provisions, those awarding bodies need to take responsibility for incorporating climate change and sustainability competencies into their learning outcomes.





CLIMATE THEMED LEARNING WEEKS

In February 2020, UCU in conjunction with the National Education Union, called for its first climate themed learning week which sought to coordinate schools, colleges and universities to incorporate some element of climate learning into not only the curriculum but wider aspects of the institutions' functions such as catering and IT services. This approach would allow employers to pilot what they feel may be a radical approach to transforming the curriculum for the GND. It is envisaged that these learning weeks encourage all involved to develop ESD competencies in relation to climate and that a holistic approach is taken to activities, initiatives and events. The website is now an on-going resource of climate curriculum and ideas: <https://ctlw.web.ucu.org.uk/>

SUPPORT FOR STAFF

Supporting staff to make this transition is multi-faceted. In order to achieve positive buy-in from educators and staff in tertiary education institutions employers need to make provisions for: Staff development and training Teacher training courses do not prepare teachers to teach about the climate emergency and ecological crisis so many teachers state that they do not have sufficient knowledge to confidently teach about it beyond the current minimum curriculum specification. In Scotland, learning about the climate emergency and ecological crisis is a compulsory part of teaching training courses but not in the rest of the UK. This is an issue that needs to be tackled both within institutions and in national education policy to ensure educators at all levels have an appropriate toolkit of knowledge, skills, competencies and confidence to embed climate learning in the curriculum.

STAFF RESOURCE AND CAPACITY FOR INITIATING CURRICULUM CHANGE

There is a workload issue associated with this. Employers cannot expect staff to make major changes to their lesson plans and schemes of work without the necessary resources. If employers are serious about wanting buy-in from staff on ESD they must provide appropriate support. UCU is offering a CPD programme for greening the curriculum. Updates on courses can be accessed here:

<https://cpd.web.ucu.org.uk/about-ucus-cpd-programme/>

UNION LEARNING REPS (ULRS)

If the branch has appointed a ULR this will be an issue where co-ordination is needed. The ULR could start the process of formulating the claim by requesting a state of play report from academic heads.

RANKING SYSTEMS/CATEGORIES

In this guide UCU has referenced the People and Planet University League. There are other ranking systems for the university sector. For example, the Times Higher Education global ranking against the UN SDGs also has a league table system. However, both UCU and NUS believe that ranking systems should be used to encourage institutions to improve rather than making institutions compete against each other. In line with this approach the Climate Change Commission in the newly published 'Road Map for FE' talks about three categories: 'Emerging', 'Established' and 'Leading'.





UCU reps in each institution will need to use their own assessments when making a performance judgement as to whether to use ranking systems as part of their bargaining approach.

https://www.timeshighereducation.com/rankings/impact/2019/overall#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/undefined

DEMANDS

- Implementation of Education for Sustainable Development across all of the curriculum.
- Implementation of ESD across all aspects of institutional practice including research.
- Quality CPD and training for staff to prepare them for climate proofing their courses.

NEGOTIATORS' RESOURCES

- UCU's climate themed learning week teaching resources: <https://ctlw.web.ucu.org.uk/>
- Greener Jobs Alliance climate action modules: <http://www.greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/courses/>
- SOS-UK Responsible Futures supported change framework and accreditation programme: <https://sustainability.nus.org.uk/responsible-futures/about>
- SOS-UK For Good supports dissertations, placements and projects that progress environmental, social and economic sustainability: <https://forgood.nus.org.uk/>
- SOS-UK Global Goals Teach In is a campaign to put the SDGs at the heart of education: <https://sustainability.nus.org.uk/sdgteachin>
- SOS-UK research reports on education and climate: <https://sustainability.unioncloud.org/our-research/our-research>
- Teach the future is a youth-led campaign to urgently repurpose the entire education system around the climate emergency and ecological crisis: <https://www.teachthefuture.uk/>
- ILO Skills for a greener future: A global view. December 2019: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_732214.pdf

THIS GND QUICK GUIDE provides an overview and entry point to engaging with one of six UCU Green New Deal demands for universities and colleges. To access the full GND bargaining and negotiation framework, click here: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/11326/Green-new-deal-bargaining-guide--model-claim/pdf/green-new-deal_bargaining-guide_jan21.pdf

To discuss this further, seek advice on progressing this demand or other aspects of the GND, and to use the model claim and letter, contact environment@ucu.org.uk

