

October 2006

# Policy context – Scotland

Roadmap of sustainable development and education in  
Scotland, October 2006

For the Higher Education Academy

## Policy contexts across the UK

### Background

In order to be effective in the support of sustainability literacy in the UK it is important to understand the different policy contexts in each of the constituent countries. All four have different educational and sustainable development frameworks, which impact on dissemination strategies. This research maps the policy and capacity landscape in order to assist HE Academy staff to negotiate barriers and take advantage of policy openings.

### Roadmap of sustainable development and education in Scotland, October 2006

This public policy roadmap shows key organisations and roles in respect to post-16 education and sustainable development in Scotland. It should be read in conjunction with the document entitled 'UK educational bodies and activities', which shows the organisations and remit included here.

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Forum for the Future - the sustainable development charity - works in partnership with leading organisations in business and the public sector. Our vision is of business and communities thriving in a future that is environmentally sustainable and socially just. We believe that a sustainable future can be achieved, that it is the only way business and communities will prosper, but that we need bold action now to make it happen. We play our part by inspiring and challenging organisations with positive visions of a sustainable future; finding innovative, practical ways to help realise those visions; training leaders to bring about change; and sharing success through our communications.

[www.forumforthefuture.org.uk](http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk)

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## 1. Sustainable development policy

### a. International

In December 2002, resolution 57/254 on the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and UNESCO was designated as lead agency for the promotion of the Decade. The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development began on January 1 2005 and aims to promote education as a basis for a more sustainable society and to integrate sustainable development into education at all levels and all areas of life including communities, the workplace and society in general. More details can be found on UNESCO's website:

[www.portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=27234&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://www.portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=27234&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

### b. European

Under the leadership of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) a regional strategy was prepared to facilitate the introduction and promotion of education for sustainable development in Europe. The strategy was developed through a participatory process involving governments, international organizations, NGOs, academic community and other stakeholders. Noting the diversity in the region, the strategy had been made flexible enough, so that its implementation can be adapted to each country's priorities, specific needs and circumstances. This instrument allows implementing a comprehensive approach, seeking to strengthen cooperation on ESD at all levels within the region. It is a contribution to, and in line with, the DESD Draft International Implementation Scheme and should be used as a foundation for the regional implementation of the Decade. The Strategy was adopted at the UNECE meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 18 March 2005.

### c. UK

The UK-wide 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 quality of life of future generations.

The UK Government and Devolved Administrations launched their new Strategic Framework, *One future - different paths*, on 7 March 2005. This was launched in conjunction with the UK Government's strategy for sustainable development *Securing The Future*: [www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy/index.htm](http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy/index.htm)

The framework document sets out common goals and challenges and is an affirmation that, although we have devolved government, we will work to common goals without compromising the strengths, which our diversity of approach offers. It comprises:

- A shared understanding of sustainable development
- A common purpose outlining what we are trying to achieve and the guiding principles we all need to achieve it
- Our sustainable development priorities for UK action, at home and internationally; and
- Indicators to monitor the key issues on a UK basis

The framework demonstrates our commitment to work together wherever we live in the UK to meet our shared goals and is supported by separate strategies for each administration. The strategies will include further priorities and be supported by additional measures and indicators.

[www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy/framework-for-sd.htm](http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy/framework-for-sd.htm)

#### d. Scotland

Environmental Justice is at the heart of the devolved administration, embraced by the First Minister Jack McConnell. The Scottish Executive has embedded SD into its policy frameworks. The initial letter of guidance 2004-2005 specifies:

'In the Partnership Agreement, the Executive outlined its commitment to creating a Scotland that delivers sustainable development, that puts environmental concerns at the heart of public policy and secures environmental justice for all Scotland's communities. HEIs are major businesses, which can have an impact on their environment and their local communities. Institutions should be encouraged to work towards the development of strategies aimed at raising awareness of sustainability amongst staff and students and encouraging best practice in matters of procurement, energy efficiency and waste management.'

The Scottish Executive's commitment to sustainable development was reaffirmed in A Partnership for Better Scotland (2003). This sets out the goal of a Scotland that delivers sustainable development; that puts environmental concerns at the heart of public policy and secures environmental justice for all of Scotland's communities. Sustainable development has been a cross-cutting theme of the last two Scottish spending reviews.

The Scottish Sustainable Development Strategy - Choosing our Future (2005) highlighted the importance of learning for sustainable development

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/12/1493902/39032>

The Scottish Funding Council has been asked by the Scottish Executive to embrace and take forward sustainable development in all areas of tertiary education in Scotland. Objectives include;

- Education for sustainable development is integrated into the curricula
- The whole experience offered to learners contributes to the development of their sustainability literacy and citizenship skills, attitudes and behaviours.
- Universities and colleges have access to the highest quality materials, advice & support to enable them to embed education for sustainable development into their courses and the wider student experience
- The value of sustainability skills is understood and articulated by institutions, learners and employers.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/SustainableDevelopment/UNDecade>

Learning for our Future, Scotland's first action plan for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2006) published by the Scottish Executive, sets out a Scotland where education for sustainable development is integrated into the curricula for further and higher education.

*54 The Funding Council will work with institutions and bodies like the Higher Education Academy to encourage the development of generic cross-disciplinary modules in sustainable development and trans-disciplinary approaches to teaching and learning*

*50 The Council will assess the progress made by Scotland's universities and colleges and report*

*annually to the Executive, drawing on a wide range of information compiled at the subject and institutional level*

In addition staff support, professional development opportunities for staff and self-audit tools for institutions in assessing their own position and development needs in relation to sustainable development will be investigated.

The Council will work with employers, institutions and national bodies to establish a business case for the development of sustainability attitudes and behaviours required in the workplace.

The Council will assess the progress made by Scotland's universities and colleges and report annually to the Executive, drawing on a wide range of information compiled at the subject and institutional levels

Scotland's universities and colleges have a vital contribution to the UN Decade, in developing and managing their estates, in spreading knowledge to students and the wider community, supporting research that leads to more sustainable technologies or approaches and introducing education for sustainable development into curricula where appropriate. The Executive is working with the Funding Council to develop guidance and examples of best practice in all of these areas.

## 2. Education and education-related public policy

### a. Policy context

The Executive has recently set out - for the first time - a set of clear statements about the purposes of education in Scotland (up to 18 years old). Concepts of responsible citizenship and sustainability are at the heart of the vision for future education set out in [A Curriculum for Excellence](#).

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/ACE> (a consultation on this is currently underway). It shifts the balance of the curriculum from a highly content-based system to one, which concentrates, on outcomes for young people. It also identifies very clearly the potential contribution young people can make to debate and action on global and local issues. In short, giving greater emphasis to preparing young people to be citizens of the modern world. The characteristics of students leaving school having experienced this more rounded, multi-disciplinary education represents an opportunity for HE, in that they will be expecting (and hopefully opting for) a continuation of the same.

### b. Scope of higher education sector

There are 43 colleges and 20 higher education institutions in Scotland funded by the Scottish Funding Council. SFC is a NDPB of the Scottish Executive.

SEED is the Scottish Executive Education Department with responsibility for schools Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning SEETLLD has responsibility for Further and Higher Education. The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) is the body that distributes funding for teaching and learning, research and other activities in [Scotland's colleges and universities](#). SFC is a NDPB of the Scottish Executive

The accreditation body for schools and further education is the SQA with higher education the responsibility of the QAA.

### c. Further and higher education agenda

The Executive's vision and goals for lifelong learning in Scotland was set out in [Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life](#) (February 2003).

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/02/16308/17750>. It has a brief paragraph on ESD. The strategy sets out a vision for lifelong learning in Scotland to achieve "the best possible match between the learning opportunities open to people and the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, which will strengthen Scotland's economy and society". There is an emphasis on education for social needs as well as the economic and there are 5 people-centred goals to realise the vision. Lifelong learning is emphasised with the divisions between FE and HE being removed and the intention of a seamless ladder of educational opportunities being opened up

The Executive is about to conduct a consultation on the lifelong learning strategy.

The Executive's review of Scotland's Colleges can be found at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/UniversitiesColleges/17135/RSC>

The funding of learning in FE colleges has recently been a priority and is now over £0.5 billion for the first time. This has resulted in rising enrolments to study for further and higher qualifications in colleges.

### d. Initiatives in the higher education sector

The Scottish Executive is funding the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges in Scotland to deliver a Campus Sustainability Programme (CaSP), which was launched at a national conference in November 2005. This sector-led initiative will provide a peer-to-peer training and capacity-building network to raise the performance of the sector. Initially targeting waste management, travel plan developments and energy and water efficiency improvements. Further topics to be covered will include sustainable procurement, sustainable construction and campus biodiversity along with general support for ESD. EAUC will provide a 'one stop shop' for expertise and advice on embedding sustainability issues into institutional practices in Scotland.

The SFC is to support world-class research into climate change and other areas of environmental concern with funding of £6.5 million. An award has been made to a group of researchers in 9 HEIs forming the Scottish Alliance for Geosciences, Environment and Society (SAGES). Participating universities contributions will bring the total investment to £22 million.

New research centres have been established at:

- Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability
- Edinburgh/Heriot-Watt Centre for Carbon Storage Research
- UHIMI Environmental Science Capacity

SFC recently consulted on its draft corporate plan. This is currently with ministers for their approval:

The actions set out in Learning for our Future come after the Funding Council conducted a baseline survey of teaching and learning (Forster 2005). This assesses how extensively sustainable development topics are embedded into the curriculum in colleges and universities. This found broad recognition of SD at the level of institutional mission. Some examples of SD in courses were identified. There are no institutional strategies for embedding SD in courses. Apart from specialist

environmental courses, there is no evidence that employers seek graduates with SD knowledge and that students seek SD in courses. Some senior managers believe that a wide range of influences on course content are appropriate, including influence from central management.

A number of courses and modules have SD as the principal subject matter. St Andrews has an MA/BSc degree in SD. Some universities run first-year cross-disciplinary modules open to all students, including 'Sustainability, Society and the Environment' at Edinburgh and 'Sustainability: ensuring our common future' at St Andrews. This has come about as a result of pressure from student groups in these two universities.

The SFC are currently putting papers to the Learning and Teaching committee of Universities Scotland to instigate ways in which a process can be agreed to support universities in developing ESD. The challenge is to develop the most effective models.

There is a national curriculum for FE. The SQA are currently writing guidance on ESD modules to give clear guidance to curriculum managers. In addition new duties have been developed on the way colleges manage their estates.

The links between college and community are being stressed with the concept of 'Spaces for Learning'. At Lauder College, future students will be learning about sustainable construction in an exemplar sustainable building.

A Higher Education Review was commenced in 2002:

[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/library/06854fc203db2fbd0000010a73c700c7/sfc\\_02\\_06\\_c.html](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/library/06854fc203db2fbd0000010a73c700c7/sfc_02_06_c.html)

The remit of the review is to *"identify how the Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department's investment in the delivery of HE can most effectively maximise the personal, social and economic benefits of teaching and research over the medium to longer term, and support a culture of challenge, innovation and partnership in and beyond higher education institutions"*. The outcome of this review will be published shortly and will reinforce key messages in relation to the lifelong learning agenda:

- Flexibility and relevance in the development and delivery of provision;
- Greater collaboration within and across sectors; and
- Diversity within a coherent strategic framework.

Underpinning these messages is the need to focus on the changing requirements of learners, to be responsive to the demands of employers, to recognise achievement, to provide information on - and improve - route-ways for progression and to maintain quality.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). For more information see:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/UniversitiesColleges/16640/7807>

Wider participation in lifelong learning can be expected to enable people to become more aware and knowledgeable about environmental issues and the ways in which they might lead a more sustainable lifestyle. In 'Meeting the Needs, Priorities, Actions and Targets for sustainable development in Scotland' (April 2002), the Scottish Executive sets out the national vision for

sustainable development. Increased levels of knowledge and skills are the means of developing innovative solutions to the problems of sustainable development. In particular, this strategy is relevant to the Executive's sustainable development indicator on people as a resource in the workplace.