

## **Annex D: Issues for consultation and response form: sustainable development**

1. This is the electronic response form for the consultation document 'Sustainable development in higher education' (HEFCE 2008/18).
2. Responses should be e-mailed to [sustainabledevelopment@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:sustainabledevelopment@hefce.ac.uk) by **Friday 5 September 2008**.
3. We will publish an analysis of responses to the consultation. Additionally, all responses may be disclosed on request, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. The Act gives a public right of access to any information held by a public authority, in this case HEFCE. This includes information provided in response to a consultation. We have a responsibility to decide whether any responses, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. We can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. This means responses to this consultation are unlikely to be treated as confidential except in very particular circumstances. Further information about the Act is available at [www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk).

### **Respondent's details**

**Are you responding:**      • On behalf of an organisation  
(Delete one)

<b>Name of responding organisation/individual</b>	Ecodesign Centre Wales (EDC)
<b>Contact name</b>	Simon O'Rafferty
<b>Position within organisation (if applicable)</b>	Ecodesign Researcher / Education Liaison
<b>Contact telephone number</b>	+44(0)29 2066 0147
<b>Contact e-mail address</b>	<a href="mailto:simon@edcw.org">simon@edcw.org</a>

## Consultation questions

(Boxes for responses may be expanded to the desired length)

**Consultation question 1:** Do you agree that our vision (paragraph 21) is still appropriate and that the proposed objectives are sufficient to achieve this vision?

Broadly speaking the vision is still relevant and purposeful. The emphasis on skills and knowledge remains crucial to the success of the strategy and this has to be reflected and supported with capacity building activities (in the broadest sense). EDC would like to emphasise that skills for sustainable development (SD) are only relevant in the context of the values and perspective of individuals carrying those skills.

It is not clear how the suggested “shared vision” is being translated into shared action. EDC understands the complexities and heterogeneity of the HE sector in the UK but hopefully this strategy can lead to a shared framework for action.

**Consultation question 2:** Is the proposed action plan fully aligned with, and sufficiently complete to deliver, the vision?

EDC believes that many of the proposed actions are very timely although we have concerns about the capacity to deliver the actions in a joined-up way.

The strategy should tackle the perceived and real barriers to adoption of SD in curricula and HEI strategy documents. Arguably some of the barriers are culturally engrained and beyond the scope of HEFCE activity.

The monitoring and evaluation activities highlighted in Support Role 3 should take an active research approach. This should facilitate greater cohesion with the strategy and more active learning for overcoming the barriers.

The issue of momentum and scaling-up of projects needs to be addressed. The generalisation of findings from individual projects should drive the mainstreaming of the successful projects and activities. HEFCE should pay due consideration to maintaining momentum and motivation in areas of success.

The strategy should aim for greater resilience in the system of delivery. For example, the apparent dependence on highly enthusiastic key individuals to drive through SD adoption should be addressed. This can be addressed through timely, context specific and staff driven capacity building activities.

The managerial and procurement activities remain important but represent “low-hanging fruit” and should support a strategy that aims to be forward thinking and challenging.

**Consultation question 3:** Which actions should take priority?

EDC believes that capacity building at all levels of delivery should be a priority. EDC sees individual level capacity building as enhancing critical-reflection, awareness and skills to change behaviour. Greater access / freedom to undertake Continued Professional Development (CPD) individually or collectively needs to be supported. Importantly we recognize that having the right information and skills does not automatically contribute to action. Departments and Schools and will need to find ways to collectively embed new thinking into course design and teaching methods. This activity again will need to be supported and appropriately resourced.

EDC also believes there should be greater integration of the HEI and other actors with the regional innovation system such as small and medium enterprises (SMEs), social enterprises and non-governmental organisations. These activities are already underway in some areas but SD isn't always integrated in the activities in a robust manner.

HEFCE need to prioritise the higher risk activities because the "low hanging fruit" such as managerial and procurement activity already have a viable business case.

**Consultation question 4:** Do you feel that there are any other sustainable development activities which HEFCE could help support?

HEFCE should give higher priority to innovative measures that facilitate interdisciplinary research, course design and teaching methods.

**Consultation question 5:** Are there any other ways in which you feel HEFCE could help promote sustainable development, in particular the non-environmental elements of the agenda? Views expressed need not be in the form of fully worked-up ideas.

HEFCE should facilitate the transfer of ownership of the SD agenda across all levels of HEIs. For example, there are significant linguistic barriers to SD adoption and it has been suggested that within a framework of SD principles each organisation should be able to define what SD means in their context. When teaching staff are comfortable with their personal perspective and understanding of SD they will be in a better position to adopt it in their teaching.

The strategy could facilitate the development of co-operative platforms for the sharing of knowledge and experiences. HEFCE should think creatively about how this can be achieved outside the confines of committees and managerial meetings.

**Consultation question 6:** Should there be a sector strategy for carbon management? If so what should it look like?

Carbon management isn't an area of expertise for EDC but we would fully support a carbon management strategy that is delivered on a competitive basis with binding agreements. The measure should encourage continual development and innovation.

HEFCE should look to methods of knowledge and experience transfer from those HEIs that may be within the scope of the Carbon Reduction Commitment to those outside.

EDC feels that any carbon management system would be more meaningful to the overall strategy if supported by active and reciprocal communication activities with staff and

students. For example, there may be cultural change limitations within a carbon management system that depends on imposed passive technological solutions e.g. passive ventilation systems.

**Consultation question 7:** Could the sector reduce carbon emissions earlier than the government target for 2050, for example 60 per cent by 2030-2040? How should we deal with interim targets?

Carbon management isn't an area of expertise for EDC and therefore we are unable to comment on this.

**Consultation question 8:** Do you have any other comments on the strategy or action plan?

EDC believes the delivery of the strategy should be supported by activities and mechanisms that display various degrees of risk and innovation. EDC would fully endorse a strategy that takes a design-led approach to development and delivery. By design-led we suggest a strategy that focuses on people, systems and meaningful change.

Re: Point 41: While EDC agree that adoption of SD should respect individual institutions needs, aspirations etc EDC also believes that SD needs to be overarching with the principles fully embedded in every aspect of each institution – SD should not be an add-on activity.