

online help (profile@uwe.ac.uk) and through tutorials and instructions on the website.

10. START USING PROFILE NOW!

Profile is fully operational (this will be the third year we have been using it with our students) and can be used almost immediately. It is proved highly stable, robust and scalable.

11. IT'S FREE!

Did we mention that using PROFILE is free?! For this reason alone it should appeal to your Resource Managers. All products arising from FDTL-funded projects are made available free to HEIs under the terms of HEFCE.

12. IT'S BETTER THAN FREE!

What could be better than free? Well, we can help you produce the forms needed for PROFILE. If you have your current forms in Word and can produce web-forms using Microsoft FrontPage, Macromedia Dreamweaver and the like, then you just produce the web-forms and upload them. If you don't know how to use html editors we can provide tutorials or even convert the forms for you. Of course, our resources are not limitless! The scale of our assistance in producing web-forms may be limited by demand.

If you would like to know more about PROFILE e-portfolios, then contact profile@uwe.ac.uk and we can arrange a meeting or demonstration. You can view some help pages on www.profile.ac.uk and there is even a Personal Development Planning (PDP) link on the Profile homepage if you are interested in how Profile can be used to support PDP.

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EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

What is sustainable development? The World Commission Report "Our Common Future", commonly known as the Brundtland report, defined sustainable development (SD) as: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

With the recent publication of the UK Government's sustainable development strategy "Securing the Future", in which education plays an important role, and the DfES sustainable development action plan for Education and Skills, in which HEFCE has noted that it will "signal to the university sector that ESD requires development" SD is becoming an issue for Higher Education (HE).

The Centre for Bioscience recently conducted two surveys of SD and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the biosciences in both HE and the employment sector. Our aim was to establish a baseline of knowledge of, and practice of, ESD in bioscience departments and to inform the Centre for the planning of future activity in ESD.

The URL for the on-line survey was sent to our bioscience representatives, thirty-three completed the survey and respondents were from a wide range of departments including: Biological Sciences, Agriculture, Anatomy, Biomolecular Sciences, Pharmacology, Plant Sciences, Physiology, Life Sciences and Food Sciences.

In the HE sector 73% of those who responded had a good understanding of the term "sustainable development" and 82% thought that it was "very important" or "quite important" for young people to have an understanding of SD (Figure 1). 80% thought that HE had a role to play in developing societal understanding of SD.

Respondents thought that HE could contribute to the understanding of SD in a variety of ways:

- "Two routes; firstly education, secondly research"
- "Create awareness of the problems"
- "Setting a model of practice as an organisation"
- "Contextualise and integrate SD with existing subject material"

However, while 43% of respondents believed SD should be a compulsory part of curricula, there were a greater number of respondents (51%) who were unsure or positively against its compulsory inclusion. Some respondents suggested that HE could contribute to a greater understanding of SD through good practice over both whole institutions and within departments. But only a fifth of respondents were aware of an institutional strategy for SD and nearly half of institutions had no strategy in place.

The majority of respondents believed that ESD was relevant to their discipline, but some respondents saw SD as totally unrelated to their subject:

- "Sustainable development is not an issue for students in pharmacology"
- "In my particular area of Biochemistry I do not see how SD can be easily applied"

23% of respondents thought that all graduates ought to have a general awareness of SD issues and could be included as part of the "general education aspects" of a degree:

- "It should be integrated into all courses, not just biosciences"



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- “Graduates are likely to be opinion formers of the future, they should be aware of the issues and repercussions”
- “We must at least ask the question as to what impact this or that activity has or could have on SD. This will get trainees/students at least thinking along the right lines.”

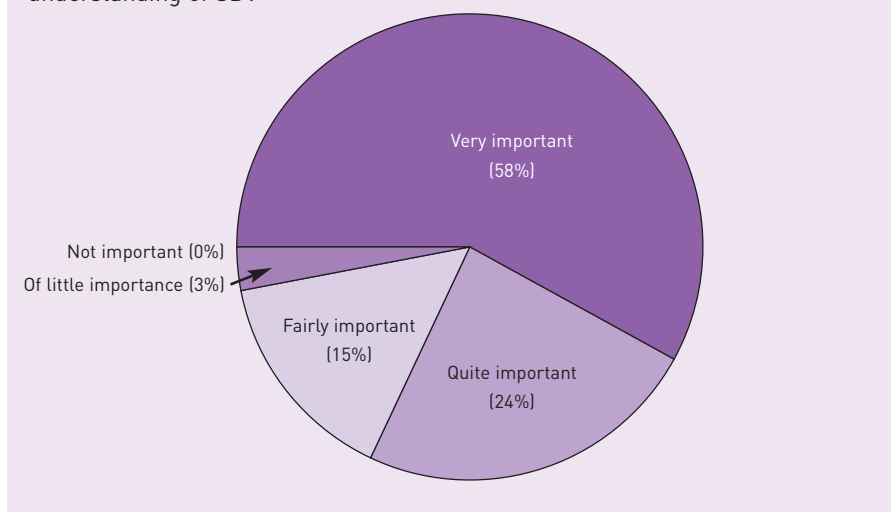
A wide variety of SD issues were already being taught on a number of courses, either integrated into modules or as specific SD modules. Where SD was not already taught broad themes, such as environmental, social and economic aspects were suggested for inclusion in curricula. Other departments within some respondents' institutions were known to be teaching SD and over half of respondents said that they would consider, or are at present, using staff from other departments to teach SD to bioscience students.

Over half of the respondents felt that they and their colleagues had the knowledge and skills to teach SD. Yet one of the biggest barriers to teaching SD was seen to be staff knowledge. Training or resources for staff were suggested as a way of increasing teaching, but only a fifth of respondents used, or were aware of, specific SD learning resources. Other barriers seen to be preventing SD teaching were an already full curriculum and budget constraints.

The second questionnaire was sent to a range of companies or organisations that employ bioscience graduates, in order to gauge their opinions on SD. Responses were received from seven organisations and respondents had a wide range of job titles, including research scientist, business manager and HR advisor.

86% of respondents said their company had a policy or position statement relating to SD and 71% of those surveyed thought that it was “very important” or “quite important” for the graduates they employed to have a broad understanding of the concept of SD. Employers suggested that knowledge of national and international SD issues and key and current SD issues would be useful for graduates to have. All respondents thought that in the future graduates would need specific skills / knowledge

Figure 1 How important do you think it is for young people to have some understanding of SD?



in relation to SD and 71% stated that employing graduates with a good understanding of SD would improve their efficiency, competitiveness or effectiveness.

Of the companies surveyed, 86% provided in-house training for their employees about SD, in most cases this training was for specific issues related to the company.

The full ESD and SD in the biosciences report is available at: <ftp://www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/esd/esdreport.pdf>

REFERENCES

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 Securing the future – The UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy. See: <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy/uk-strategy-2005.htm>
 DfES Sustainable development action plan for Education and Skills. See: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/aboutus/sd/docs/SDactionplan.pdf>

(All accessed 22/4/05)

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THE CHANCE FOR YOUR STUDENTS TO WIN £250

“How does the experience of your course compare with any expectations you may have had?”

The competition is open to all UK HE students (postgraduate and undergraduate) studying for a degree in a pure or applied bioscience. The winning entry will receive £250 and will be submitted into the Higher Education Academy competition, with the chance of winning first prize of a laptop computer.

The winning and shortlisted entries will be published on the Centre’s website.

Further information, including criteria, guidelines for the essay, and an electronic application form (on which all essays must be submitted) are available from: <http://www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/opportunities/essay06.htm>

Closing date for entries – 17th February 2006