



SRS in learning and teaching discussion notes

SRS Staff and Student Workshop, Wednesday 13th April 2016

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the main discussion points from the SRS in learning and teaching table which was part of the SRS Staff and Student Workshop. Facilitator: Shirley McLauchlan plus Liz Cooper

Importance of embedding SRS in L&T:

- Students who don't have a holistic perspective of SRS are at a disadvantage in their careers
- Sustainability output not measured in CO2 but in educated minds

Ways of doing this – existing practices and ideas for developing this further:

- Range of SRS courses already exist at the university in lots of Schools
- Recognition that many students come to university already knowing a lot about SRS, e.g. Scottish students who have followed Curriculum for Excellence at school
- IAD already do some work on sustainability, but could integrate SRS into PG Certificate in Academic Practice – training for new academic staff
- Online SRS training for all staff good idea (under development) – some say should be compulsory
- Need to get academic leadership on board
- Need to create interdisciplinary degrees to truly equip students to embed sustainability throughout lives/careers – but questions of who owns the degrees, which Schools, where does the money go, etc.
- Joining the dots e.g. Living Lab projects to link student courses to energy monitoring, practical experience linking to academic theory, for positive SRS impact

Challenges:

- Different students and staff have different levels of knowledge – hard to know what level to pitch courses/training at
- Need to embed SRS in everyday thinking and practice across institution – lots of inertia, people doing things in unsustainable ways just because that is the way they have always been done
- Opportunities for embedding SRS vary a lot depending on disciplines
- In some disciplines, students care more about sustainability than lecturers
- But in others, students work on sustainability projects in courses, but produce a lot of waste in their practices e.g. art school studios and seem disinterested in sustainability in practice



- Ethics of teaching: too many students taken on? Number of students taught doesn't match number of jobs available? International students paying high fees and subsidising home students? Question of democracy in L&T? Discussion about whether the growth agenda (of the University) should be questioned – more and more students, not enough graduate jobs, increased carbon emissions etc.
- Debate about internationalisation and learning opportunities it provides versus carbon

Staff need to practice what they preach:

- Need a continued dialogue critiquing university policies and practices
- Lots of talk about practical SRS issues/behaviour in all 3 sessions – partly because people want to voice practical things that frustrate them (like computers being left on overnight, lab equipment being left on when not used, theses being printed single sided using lots of paper, etc.), or because there is an assumption that people already know about SRS, so the focus needs to be more on the changing practices rather than the teaching (but this assumption is questionable)
- All need to practice what they preach – but could constant critique of staff practices put people off teaching SRS courses if it will bring more attention to their own practices/behaviours?
- Proposal for a forum for students (and staff) to query staff behaviours, existing practices and policies etc. that appear unsustainable – safe space to raise concerns

Further communications points:

- Communicating opportunities/courses/events to students – use class reps network, and get lecturers to mention initiatives in class, rather than by email
- Issue with SRS events etc. taking place in central area every time, Kings Buildings students not able to attend, or not even aware – need more focus on other campuses