

Response from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

● Revised education for sustainable development (ESD) guidance

3. If ESD is not already designed into your curriculum, does the guidance encourage you to do so?

Not applicable

4. Does Section 1 ('Education for Sustainable Development: What is it and why is it important?') provide readers with the information needed to gain an understanding of ESD and convey its importance?

Yes

5. Does Section 2 ('Designing education for sustainable development') provide you with the information you need to position sustainability within your curriculum?

Yes

6. Do the reflective questions in Section 3 ('A toolkit to inform the ESD process') cover the relevant aspects of curriculum design?

Yes

7. Will Section 3 be useful to both experienced staff and those new to education for sustainable development when designing courses and modules?

Yes

8. Do you think the resources in Section 4 are useful?

Yes

b. Can you suggest any that should be added?

There are a wealth of resources and good practice that have been developed by geographers (see for example those published in the Journal of Geography in Higher Education).

We welcome the emphasis in the document on simulation. Just as one example, this disaster management simulation game, has been highly effective with students: <https://www.stopdisastersgame.org/>.

Our key point, though, is that any resources will need to be regularly updated. This section of the report should be dynamic or should link to a repository that is.



9. Do you have any other feedback that has not been covered within these questions, for example, the length of the document, accessibility of language?

We welcome the QAA revised guidance for Education for Sustainable Development. We support the refresh, noting Geography’s leading role in this area previously and currently, especially in supporting critical engagement with Sustainable Development Goals. We commend the approach to inspire, inform and enable Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to be designed into and across-curricula and the role of ESD in empowering learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions. In this context we welcome the recognition of the importance of ESD for, not just about, sustainable development and the importance of values, as well as skills and attributes, and how these will drive lifelong capabilities. We also welcome the centrality of the student voice and the passion and commitment of young people to a more equitable and just world now, and in the future.

The importance of geospatial and environmental ‘big’ data [sets and skills] is not adequately reflected. This is important both for solving problems, considering futures, and addressing sustainable development, but also in improving students’ employability prospects in this fields in the future. Spatial thinking is crucial to building understanding and the development of these skills needs to be at the core of ESD. We believe the understanding of data and development of appropriate skills to critically analyse, interrogate and visualise issues and challenges data are not given full enough attention in the document.

We also want to highlight the role of learned societies and PSRBs, at the interface of higher education and professional practice, as a highly relevant source of information, advice and networks of support in the development and delivery ESD. These bodies should be referenced more explicitly amongst other key stakeholders.

We welcome how the document ends with defined and specific competencies, but some in the community suggest that the word capabilities may provide a better framing. Capabilities and more consistent with the underpinning premise that ESD provides lifelong skills for an increasingly complex world.