



L-Università
ta' Malta

Faculty of Education
Centre for Environmental
Education & Research

Faculty of Education Sustainability Policy





Contents

Foreword Dean, FoE	4
References	4
Foreword Director, CEER	5
Strategy Coordinator Dr Censu Caruana	6
Introduction	7
A holistic and wide-ranging policy	8
Way forward	8
Administrative Support	9
Communication and Marketing	9
Students	10
Implications for FoE of student needs	10
Communication and Marketing (Courses and students)	11
Academics	12
Recommendations	13
Administrative Staff	14
Link to courses	15
Opportunities	16
Advocacy	17
External Advocacy	17
Appendix	18
Short-Term Recommendations	19
Medium-Term Recommendations	23
Long-Term Recommendations	25

Foreword | Dean, FoE

This publication is the first step for the Faculty of Education (FoE) in its path towards becoming an environmentally sustainable Faculty. This document seeks to equip all of us, as members of this Faculty with an understanding of what it means to be an environmentally sustainable teaching and learning organisation. This is a first step towards a green transitioning, through developing competences, as members of this Faculty, in "critical thinking, initiative-taking, respecting nature and understanding the impact everyday actions and decisions have on the environment and the global climate" (European Commission – Press release. Brussels, 14 January 2022).

This mission fits well with the faculty's move to the new location, namely the Sustainable Living Complex (SLC) through which we continue to help our educators learn and engage with sustainable goals. Through these first steps we seek to put sustainability at the heart of education. All members of this Faculty will seek to offer opportunities to understand and take action for environmental sustainability, to protect the future of our planet.

Through this proposal we are seeking to put environmental sustainability at the core of our programmes. In order to ensure that education at all levels contributes to the green transition, we want to provide all those who interact with our faculty with access to a high-quality, inclusive education. We also want to be advocates for sustainable development within the University of Malta by making sure that our mission, our governance, and the way we manage our facilities and resources are all sustainable. We seek to encourage and support a systematic approach to sustainability through our research, teaching and learning, active involvement of students, academic and administrative staff, management of our building and

use of our resources and finally through establishing partnerships with stakeholders within the local and wider communities. As a faculty we will continue to mobilise national and European funds and seek to internationalise our services, in particular through international collaborations with developing countries.

In our plan for the next four years the faculty will place a strong focus on the green transition in its programmes. We will seek to prioritise those areas that develop the green competences and skills, future oriented curricula and planned approaches to sustainability (European Commission – Press release. Brussels, 14 January 2022).

As a faculty we will seek to work on the four competence groups related to sustainability (Bianchi, G., Pisiotis, U., Cabrera Giraldez, M. GreenComp. 2022), namely: embodying sustainability values (valuing sustainability, supporting fairness and promoting nature), embracing complexity in sustainability (through systems thinking, critical thinking and problem framing), Acting for sustainability (through political agency, collective action and individual initiative) and finally Envisioning sustainable futures (by promoting futures literacy, adaptability and exploratory thinking).

In becoming a sustainable organisation, we require a shift in mindset and behaviour. We must continue to promote equity and justice and ensure that our relationship with the environment is put at the heart of all our endeavours. We should continue to empower our learners and ourselves to think holistically and be able to question the dominant worldviews out there. As members of this Faculty we need to continue to be a light of hope, seek to be action oriented as to empower our students to take action individually and with others to transform our society.

PROF. COLIN CALLEJA
Dean, Faculty of Education

References

Bianchi, G., Pisiotis, U., Cabrera Giraldez, M. GreenComp (2022). The European sustainability competence framework. Bacigalupo, M., Punie, Y. (editors), EUR 30955 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg; ISBN 978-92-76-46485-3, doi:10.2760/13286, JRC128040.
European Commission – Press release. Brussels, 14 January 2022

Foreword | Director, CEER

In the current changing world, the need for sustainable practices has become more crucial than ever. As we face sustainability challenges and strive for a better future, it is essential for teams to come together and work towards sustainability collectively. The Centre for Environmental Education and Research (CEER) actively fosters collaborative efforts and through its expertise aims to help create powerful forces that drive positive change.

By harnessing the power of collaboration CEER aims to create ripple effects that can extend beyond individual entities and organisations, and echo outwards in pursuit of a sustainable world. CEER aims to improve the quality of life of local communities and acts to empower citizens with the necessary tools to bring about sustainability. This can be achieved by increasing opportunities for participation and collaboration, as well as through high level research that can inform current and novel situations.

One way in which research can be effectively applied to current sustainability challenges is through the formulation of sustainability policies that use grounded research to identify and prioritise sustainability goals and offer a vision as a guide towards sustainability. One such policy at the University of Malta was developed by CEER for the Faculty of Education (FoE) through working together

in synergy to draft, develop and implement the strategy. It is a policy that through the active participation of all stakeholders focuses on two major aspects of life: Education and Sustainability. Following the research and analysis phase in 2022–2023, the current policy was drafted and is now being published as a report.

The policy outlines the FoE's commitment to sustainable development and provides a framework for integrating sustainability into its decision-making processes. By implementing this sustainability policy the FoE aims to achieve a balance between meeting present needs while preserving resources for future generations in an equitable manner.

This Faculty of Education sustainability policy, developed through CEER expertise, is a success story that will serve as an inspiration and provide practical insights into how other faculties or institutions may make significant contributions towards a sustainable future. I am thrilled to invite you on this journey of collaboration and ownership to work for sustainability. Let us pave the way for a more sustainable future together. This policy offers more than just a glimmer of hope that sustainability can be achieved in Higher Education Institutions... it offers an actual path.

PROF. MARK C. MIFSUD
Director
Centre for Environmental Education & Research

Strategy Coordinator | Dr Censu Caruana

Agenda 2030 is about ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Achieving such a decent life for all on a healthy planet has been distilled into 17 goals, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and 169 targets. Three of these targets are about Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

4.7 *By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.*

12.8 *By 2030 ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.*

13.3 *Improve education, awareness raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning.*

In a nutshell, it is recognised that without education, sustainable development cannot be attained. This puts a lot of responsibility on higher education faculties and centres and given that all the indications are that the SDGs will not be attained, this puts more pressure on such educational institutions to scale up their efforts and align their mission with the urgency of the situation.

A couple of years ago, the Dean of the Faculty of Education (FoE) Professor Colin Calleja, approached the then Director of the Centre for Environmental Education

and Research (CEER), Professor Paul Pace, with the idea of kickstarting a process of "greening" within the Faculty of Education. At that time, the idea of establishing strategies for green and resource-efficient campuses was gaining traction across Europe and globally. CEER gladly accepted to assume a coordinating role in such a process, and initial discussions quickly pointed to the direction of going for a wide-ranging participative sustainability policy.

This is very much in line with recent development within ESD that privilege the whole-institution approach, which basically strives to mainstream sustainability into all aspects of an institution, in this case, the FoE, which necessarily requires revisiting its internal operations and external relationships. The first such action was a research project to provide a snapshot of the current reality and aspirations of the main FoE stakeholders, conducted through three surveys amongst academic staff, administrative staff, and students, respectively. The results of these surveys were documented, analysed, and discussed, and a number of recommendations emanating from such results were enlisted. Each of these recommendations has been categorised as either short-term, medium-term, or long-term. This document is the final product of the research phase.

The research phase will now give way to the implementation phase and is intended to be a living and dynamic document. It aspires to unleash the transformative potential of ESD at the Faculty and eventually influence the whole university. We cannot be leaders if we teach sustainability but act otherwise. It is about individual and collective engagement with the SDGs and taking a stronger and more visible role regarding our nations and the globe's future. It is about creating a new university culture that aligns with the vision of a decent life for all on a healthy planet. It is about moving out of our comfort zone, "unlearning" the status quo and a business-as-usual approach and re-imagining a different campus.

DR CENSU CARUANA
Strategy Coordinator
Centre for Environmental Education & Research

The CEER Research Team was composed of:

Dr Vincent Caruana (Strategy Coordinator)

Prof. Mark C. Mifsud

Prof. Paul J. Pace

Introduction

The Faculty of Education's (FoE's) Sustainability Policy is positioned within the following frameworks:

- 1** The University of Malta's strategic priorities – in particular Strategic Theme 7 which states: “The University of Malta is committed to delivering on sustainability reflecting the principles of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainability considerations will be mainstreamed across all functions including administration, teaching and research, and will be facilitated by a dedicated committee reporting directly to the Rector. Strategy, guidelines, assessment, data infrastructure, projects management, communication, awareness, training, teaching, research and outreach will be stepped up with a view to making the University a living laboratory of good sustainable practice”.
- 2** The *Futures of Education*¹ initiative, which aims to address educational responses to increasingly disruptive technological change, economic inequality, and planetary fragility; the reframing of teaching & learning to strengthen human capabilities and flourishing; and the governance of data, knowledge, and education.
- 3** The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Furthermore, SDG 4.7² aims to “ensure that by 2030, all learners will acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development”.
- 4** The Global Action Programme (GAP)³ and its follow-up “ESD for 2030”⁴, which aims to generate and scale up action in all levels and areas of education and learning to accelerate progress toward sustainable development. The ESD for 2030 roadmap outlines actions in five priority action areas: policy, learning environments, building capacities of educators, youth, and local-level action.

¹ <https://www.unesco.org/en/futures-education>

² <https://indicators.report/targets/4-7/>

³ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246270>

⁴ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802.locale=en>

A holistic and wide-ranging policy

Since its inception it was envisaged to be a wide-ranging and holistic policy that encompasses the following four dimensions:

1 Education

(Education for Sustainable Development; Global Citizenship Education; Preparing for challenges in implementing the SDGs; Capacity Building; & Mobilising young people)

2 Research

(Research on the SDGs; Interdisciplinary & transdisciplinary research; Innovations & solutions; National & local implementation; & Capacity building & research)

3 External Leadership

(Public engagement; Cross-sectorial dialogue & action; Policy development & advocacy; Advocacy for sector role; and Demonstrating sector commitment)

4 Operations & governance

(Governance & operations aligned with SDGs; Incorporate into Faculty policy)

Way forward

The way forward proposed in this discussion document is based on the analysis of three questionnaires, sent respectively to Students, Academics and Administrative/support staff. Necessarily, some of the recommendations emanating from such an analysis are implementable in the short term, while others are more suitable for medium to longer term implementation. These recommendations are gathered under their respective headings in the Appendix. Some recommendations require further research.

The focus of this document is **action**. Taken together such actions will enable the FoE to be a true change agent. Through its members' own practices as individuals and through its institutional practices the faculty will actively be seen as practicing what it preaches.

Administrative Support

- 1** The successful implementation of such a policy requires time and human resources. While CEER is willing and able to continue coordinating such a process, it does not have the human and administrative resources to follow up on the day-to-day implementation.
- 2** It is important that the FoE identifies a dedicated (preferably full-time) Research Support Officer (RSO). This person will act as a contact point between CEER and the FoE. One of the first tasks ought to be the scheduling, calendaring, and follow-up of all the short-term agreed recommendations.
- 3** Ask for a grant in order to take a systematic approach to green the faculty and help concretize and make operable the strong support towards adopting this Sustainability Policy. One can make use of the Internal Research Grants Programme call and/or the Erasmus + programme. Once a dedicated RSO will be working on this, one of its assigned tasks could also be the drafting of such a project proposal.
- 4** The FoE sustainability policy can serve as a pilot project for the whole of the university, and the RSO, while initially linked to the faculty, would eventually support the whole institution approach at the university.

Communication and Marketing

- 1** A common thread among the three questionnaires was the ambiguity regarding how committed the FoE is towards Sustainability.
- 2** Clearly there is a need for a communication strategy in conjunction and in parallel with the implementation of the Action Plan. This is a continuous action, relevant in the short, medium, and long-term.
- 3** The communication and marketing strategy will help give a brand and identity to the FoE (and eventually the UM) as a Green Campus where sustainability is part of its core identity and where students and staff are fully aware of this. This will also be the brand and identity in the eyes of the "general" public.

Students

Specifically, regarding students, the following recommendations emanate from the questionnaire.

- 1** Few students have participated in sustainability issues on campus, and those that did have mostly been involved in soft (light green) issues such as recycling. Opportunities need to be created for involvement in more radical issues (dark green/red) that tackle the causes of the current sustainability challenges rather than the symptoms. One possibility is to choose a theme per year, which will act as the focus for that year. This can help- create a balanced outlook when one considers the various pillars of Sustainable Development (SD). As a short-term goal, such themes ought to be identified, possibly as part of a participative approach, and then scheduled and calendared.
- 2** Students have asked for more optional courses and student projects related to sustainability. As a short-term goal, such courses need to be identified and presented as possibilities within the curricula. This exercise is best done once the options for mandatory courses are exhausted. It needs to be recognized that optional courses do not guarantee the student entitlement to ESD as stipulated in the SDGs, and therefore the medium-term goal ought to be to provide compulsory modules to all students.
- 3** Students have asked for more volunteering opportunities. As a short-term goal, such opportunities need to be identified and promoted. As a medium-term goal, one ought to consider to what extent such opportunities can be accredited towards the relevant course undertaken.

Implications for FoE of student needs

- 1** A number of points mentioned by students need an action response from the FoE. Overall, students feel that sustainability is not well covered in our courses. Furthermore, the university is on the same level as an NGO, when it comes to where students obtain their information, in spite of at least some being full-time students. 3/4 of respondents would like to participate in more activities related to sustainability, with around 60% asking for both more content in the course and more volunteering opportunities. Furthermore, some students are under the misconception that the main hindrance to mainstreaming sustainability lies in the "long-term effects being too long term". Clearly, there is a need to wake up to the effects already being felt and experienced. More than 3/4 asked for more "approaches to education for sustainable development" (Q18) – a clear ask for changes in the curriculum or the courses of study.
- 2** The FoE needs to study and act immediately on the best ways to respond to such identified needs. While the sample of students was too low to allow for generalizations, the indications are clear. The curriculum taken as a whole is not fully updated to reflect today's sustainability challenges.

- 3** As a short-term action point the Dean needs to take leadership in identifying the best immediate way forward from a curricular perspective. In principle, basic ESD should be available to all, and optional modules ought to address more particular aspects or specialisations.
- 4** A short to medium-term action point could be implementing an iterative process, where every year a number of modules are self-audited, with the support of CEER where necessary, to update the course descriptions to reflect better today's sustainability challenges. This can be done in the same way that every year a number of modules are chosen for student evaluation. The whole cycle will ideally be conducted over a period of 3 – 4 years.
- 5** Students clearly asked for more approaches to education for sustainable development. In practice, this might require a needs analysis to add more modules where possible, as well as expand ESD within the Themes module. Furthermore, ESD can be infused as a cross-curricular theme among the already existing themes.

Communication and Marketing COURSES AND STUDENTS

- 1** The infusion of sustainability issues across the curriculum assumes the communication regarding such infusion. We are not at this stage yet, as the curriculum review from a green, fair, and sustainable point of view, has not taken place in earnest.
- 2** Yet this process, once kickstarted, needs to be accompanied by a marketing and communication plan. As is, students are very unsure to what extent sustainability features within their courses and still obtain most of their information on such issues through NGOs. This is a medium-term goal since the necessary spadework still needs to be done.

Academics

- 1 There is strong support towards adopting a Sustainability Policy and towards infusing sustainability in one's teaching. Furthermore, there are a number of academic staff that are currently involved or who have been involved in sustainability projects and initiatives. While overall positive, one can also note that not all share an understanding of the importance of ESD in the education of individuals and for the operations of the faculty. On the other hand, the actual commitment of the FoE towards sustainability and the actual research inputs of the FoE on sustainability are perceived as not so strong. The long-term aim is to bridge this gap between where we want to go and the current state of affairs. In the short-term, FoE staff need to be briefed and engaged on the results of the research around this policy, as emanating from this document.
- 2 The faculty in general is perceived as not having provided CPD to enhance teaching and research on Sustainability. This can be addressed during the first year of the implementation of this policy. Organize an internal CPD on teaching and research on sustainability. This CPD can be tailored to the responses of staff to the question: "What kind of support do you need to address Sustainable Development issues in your teaching and research? CEER can coordinate this CPD. The CPD can also deal with some of the perceived weaknesses emanating from the research, including as pertaining to broader institutional practices at the university, the provision of guidance with respect to curriculum, coordination issues, business, and bridging theory and practice. This will also build on current perceived strengths, including the existing expertise within the FoE and CEER and the overall strong commitment to social justice through education.
- 3 One reflection appropriate for CPD or staff meetings is as follows: a) How can more Optional courses fit into the current structures? How will they be promoted? & b) Can we identify a milestone within the FoE that will be celebrated (e.g., through a publication) and give it a focus on sustainability? How can student work be included?
- 4 Another option is to organize a course along the lines of the Course Designing, Delivering, and Evaluating Online Study Units already offered at the university. Because of the preparatory work required, this is a medium-term goal.
- 5 There are various aspects where the FoE is perceived as being somewhat at the centre, including as pertaining to involvement in community-based outreach in sustainability, involvement in international cooperation pertaining to sustainability, providing students with opportunities to further their responsibility towards sustainability, and encouraging students to consider sustainability in their careers. All such aspects can be worked upon and improved; however, they need coordination.
- 6 As a short-term action point the FoE can identify or make a call for coordinators or focal points on community-based outreach in sustainability and the involvement in international cooperation pertaining to sustainability. These foci will act in coordination with CEER. If the FoE does adopt the thematic approach, such actions pertaining to say community-based outreach will be in line with the priority theme of the particular year. Such focal points can include academics, students, and admin staff.

- 7 The faculty needs to provide students with more opportunities to take responsibility for the environment. This can easily be accommodated through the thematic approach. One suggestion is to have the different departments within the faculty take a lead at different points during the year. Alternatively, different departments can focus on specific SDGs pertaining to the chosen theme.
- 8 In general staff did not find dealing with SD as problematic, yet a few expressed the wish to be part of a group working on SD, and quite a few asked for sharing of approaches to education for sustainable development. Such grouping would need to be set up, and a reflection is needed on the best way to go about doing them. One possibility would be to organize bi-monthly (every two months) FoE circles (on the lines of WIPS).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 There is a clear ask to participate more in research on issues concerning sustainability. We need to find suitable avenues for this. One way could be through an Erasmus + project. Also, through celebrating a milestone with a specific publication with a focus on sustainability, that will "carve" the faculty's commitment to sustainability.
- 2 Different staff members have asked for different forms of support to address Sustainable Development issues in their teaching and research. Irrespective of the numbers that asked for such support, this support ought to be given. In the case of forms where only a couple or so asked for such support, one-on-one mentoring can be provided. CEER can be tasked to offer such support.

Administrative Staff

The administrative staff is somewhere in the middle regarding to what extent they feel that FoE is committed to sustainability, involved in community-based outreach and service related to sustainability, involved in international cooperation related to sustainability challenges; and providing students with opportunities to further their responsibility towards sustainability. As observed also among the academic staff there is an overall agreement regarding FoE adopting a Sustainability Policy and Strategy. As with academic staff, the long-term goal is to ensure that the actual commitment of the FoE is perceived as and in actual fact represents the green, fair and sustainability aims of the FoE. The overall participatory culture – which can be further strengthened as a short-term goal – can provide the necessary foundation to bridge the gap between where the FoE is currently perceived and where it ought to head. The willingness to adapt and improve for more sustainability was clearly expressed and emphasized.

- 1 There needs to be in the short-term a clear policy on paper use and on digital communication, as the results indicated ambiguity in this respect.
- 2 A lack of awareness and a lack of action has been identified as weaknesses by some staff. A CPD organized in conjunction with CEER is a short term-action point to help increase awareness as well as investigate solutions and act.
- 3 Linked to the above on needs to plan for related Staff development opportunities in the medium term – possibly in conjunction with the Human Resources Department. In the short-term contact can be made with the Human Resource Department to outline this ask. Staff development can clearly tackle such mentioned issues as related to eco and fair procurement, as well as deal with other issues such as ethos and mindset. There is a demand for support with respect to: Information about actions that can be taken as an individual; Information about actions that can be taken as a group; and Information sessions about local and global sustainable development issues. This indicates that any CPD or other interventions can be focused on both personal and professional development. This CPD can if successful be extended to other UM offices in collaboration with HR.
- 4 A main issue that needs to be dealt with in the short to medium term is the question of fair, green, and ethical procurement. One first short-term action point is understanding any limitations within the system with respect to such procurement (restrictions and limitations imposed by third parties) and advocate and educate accordingly.
- 5 In the short term a guide for ethical procurement needs to be drawn up and adopted (Clear Eco and Fair Procurement policies)
- 6 In the short to medium term, we need to draw up a list of suppliers that broadly satisfy such guidelines (green fair and ethical procurement) and add them to the list of service suppliers.
- 7 Procurement is here understood to include the follow-up such as correct disposal. Any restrictions here need to be identified in the short term and solutions proposed.

- 8 In the short term we need to understand any barriers to Waste Separation at source and mitigate accordingly.
- 9 Linked to point 5 above, there is a perception that Eco and Fair procurement cause an increase in costs. This needs to be confirmed with hard data – including where applicable considerations such as planned obsolescence and quality (comparing like with like).

Administrative staff have expressed a wish to participate in: a) Volunteerism; b) Campus sustainability initiatives; and c) Staff Sustainability events such as a monthly Fair-Trade breakfast. Clearly such requested opportunities can be integrated relatively easily, including in the short term. These are not necessarily to be considered as specific to one category but can be integrated with other action points mentioned in this document. In other words, the FoE might opt for providing the same volunteer opportunity for academics, administrative staff, and students – this is very much conducive to and in harmony with the whole institution approach.

Other asks for support include Sharing of approaches to developing environmental and social responsibility; Updates on the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals; Opportunities to participate in university-based sustainable development projects; Opportunities to participate in community-based sustainable development projects; and Opportunities to participate in EU projects related to sustainability. Most of these can be integrated into already mentioned action points. Yet as a medium-term consideration the issue of specifically planning opportunities to participate in EU projects related to sustainability needs to be taken up in a proactive manner.

LINK TO COURSES

- 1 Administrative staff is often at the forefront with respect to dealing with students – an integrated approach between admin and academics needs to be further explored with respect to a common vision regarding sustainability.
- 2 One short to medium-term action point first step might be greater awareness of the courses and activities offered through the Faculty on ESD.

Opportunities

A number of opportunities have presented themselves over the past years and months. These opportunities have been identified independently and do not emanate from the results of the administered questionnaires.

- 1** The Sustainable Living Complex (SLC). We urgently need an update on this vis-à-vis both the Faculty of Education and CEER. Such an opportunity can easily become a threat if we are not fully aware of the developments, of the different points at which we can intervene, and of the extent through which we can go about attaining our Sustainability Policy aims through the potential of such a complex offers. This required an urgent action point in the short term.
- 2** The newly established relationship with the Malta Cooperative Federation (MCF). The potential here is two-fold: a) In including inputs from the MCF in our curricula; and 2) In setting up the necessary cooperative or social enterprise structure where applicable, e.g., the canteen management of the SLC. The former is a short-term consideration that requires awareness among FoE staff of this possibility, and someone from the administrative staff taking charge of this. The latter is a medium-term consideration that however needs remote preparation in the short term. Such short-term preparations can include a study visit to similar initiatives abroad which CEER can facilitate through Dr Vincent Caruana, who has expertise in the Social Enterprise area.
- 3** The Social Enterprise Act that was published on 22 February 2022 by means of Act No. IX of 2022, although it is not yet in force. This can provide the legal framework of any initiative as per above or otherwise that can gain from registration under such Act, once in force. In the short term, the Faculty of Education can meet up with the Business Incubator Takeoff at the university – which will eventually be tasked with supporting the FoE in practical manners such as drawing up a business plan.
- 4** The FEE Eco Campus is an award programme that provides a framework to guide higher education institutions on their sustainable journey and model sustainability as an integral part of campus life while involving staff, teachers, and the student body by empowering them to become forward thinkers and lead the way towards sustainable development. This process requires the active participation of students – however, this is not likely to happen if not catalysed from the “outside.” Once set in motion the FEE eco campus will be the natural complement to the FoE sustainability strategy and has the potential of lots of synergies, including through links to everyday activities and curriculum, and ties in with the operational requirements of a complex multi-use facility. As a short-term action point, it is recommended to set in motion the necessary inputs to catalyse the setting up of FEE Eco Campus. This might include meetings with KSU, contacting ex-Eco schools' students at the university, using Newspoint, using the FoE newsletter, involving MESD alumni, organizing info meetings, etc.

Advocacy

- 1 Such a policy necessarily has an advocacy aspect. Innovations often lead to resistance. Such advocacy needs to be positioned both internally to the faculty and within the University as well as externally.
- 2 Dialogue meetings will most probably be required with such departments as procurement and events. This ought to be seen as educational interventions from our part. As a short-term action point, we require the setting up of an exploratory meeting with the procurement gatekeepers to explain our commitment to green and fair procurement as part of our wider policy. Same might be necessary with the events section.
- 3 As a medium to long term goal, the FoE will commit itself to ethical procurement wherever possible and feasible, and to only hold events (workshops, conferences, etc.) that reflect good practice in low impact and zero carbon, and where such events become the default and not the result of specific negotiations per event. Where reducing is not possible, carbon offsetting might be required. As a short-term action point, one can establish a relationship with organizations involved in tree-planting and/or afforestation, which can benefit from such carbon off-setting.
- 4 The issue of remote working and its link to sustainability ought to be further studied as a short-term action point and use made of the appropriate channels to further strengthen the availability of this option – in line with the UM's strategic objectives.

External Advocacy

- 1 The faculty needs to engage more with joint advocacy in relation to sustainability. Even with respect to advocacy, different departments within the faculty can take a lead at different points during the year, or within the framework of the SDGs they will be focusing on.
- 2 Linked to the above, the FoE needs to identify current structures that already exist, within which the FoE can be more active and more vocal.
- 3 As a short-term goal, the FoE can identify key international days and issue public statements related to such days.
- 4 While the above is predictable, the FoE needs to find a fast and effective way how to issue statements that respond to unpredictable happenings in society. Designing a framework for such a procedure is a short-term action point.

Appendix

17

**SHORT-TERM
RECOMMENDATIONS**

21

**MEDIUM-TERM
RECOMMENDATIONS**

23

**LONG-TERM
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Short-Term Recommendations

- 1** It is important that the FoE identifies a dedicated (full-time) Research Support Officer (possibly with administrative support) that can support this process. This person will act as a contact point between CEER and the FoE.
- 2** Opportunities need to be created for the involvement of students in more radical issues (dark green/red) that tackle the causes of the current sustainability challenges rather than the symptoms. One possibility is to choose a theme per year, which will act as the focus for that year. This can help- create a balanced outlook when one considers the various pillars of SD. As a short-term goal, such themes ought to be identified, possibly as part of a participative approach, and then scheduled and calendared.
- 3** Students have asked for more optional courses and student projects related to sustainability. As a short-term goal, such courses need to be identified and presented as possibilities within the curricula.
- 4** Students have asked for more volunteering opportunities. As a short-term goal, such opportunities need to be identified and promoted.
- 5** The FoE needs to study and act immediately on the best ways to respond to student needs – while the sample of students was too low to allow for generalizations, the indications are clear. The curriculum taken as a whole is not fully updated to reflect today's sustainability challenges. As a short-term action point, the Dean needs to take leadership in identifying the best immediate way forward from a curricular perspective. In principle, basic ESD should be available to all, and optional modules ought to address more particular aspects or specialisations.
- 6** An iterative process where every year a number of modules are self-audited with the support of CEER where necessary, to update the course descriptions to reflect better today's sustainability challenges. This can be done in the same way that every year a number of modules are chosen for student evaluation. The whole cycle will ideally be conducted over a period of 3 – 4 years.
- 7** There is strong support for adopting a Sustainability Policy and infusing sustainability in one's teaching. On the other hand, the actual commitment of the FoE towards sustainability, and the actual research inputs of the FoE on sustainability, are perceived as not so strong. In the short-term, FoE staff need to be briefed and engaged on the results of the research around this policy, as emanating from this document.
- 8** The faculty in general is perceived as not having provided CPD to enhance teaching and research on Sustainability. This can be addressed during the first year of the implementation of this policy. Organize an internal CPD on teaching and research on sustainability. This CPD can be tailored to the responses of staff to the question: "What kind of support do you need to address Sustainable Development issues in your teaching and research? CEER can coordinate this CPD.

- 9 One reflection appropriate for CPD or staff meetings is as follows: a) How can more Optional courses fit into the current structures? How will they be promoted? & b) Can we identify a milestone within the FoE that will be celebrated (e.g. through a publication) and give it a focus on sustainability? How can student work be included?
- 10 As a short-term action point, the FoE can identify or make a call for coordinators or focal points on community-based outreach in sustainability and the involvement in international cooperation pertaining to sustainability.
- 11 Some academic staff asked for sharing of approaches to ESD. Such grouping would need to be set up, and a reflection is needed on the best way to go about doing them. One possibility would be to organize bi-monthly (every two months) FoE circles (on the lines of WIPS).
- 12 Different staff have asked for different forms of support to address Sustainable Development issues in their teaching and research. Irrespective of the numbers that asked for such support, this support ought to be given. In the case of forms where only a couple or so asked for such support, one-on-one mentoring can be provided. CEER can be tasked to offer such support.
- 13 The overall participatory culture amongst administrative staff – which can be further strengthened as a short-term goal – can provide the necessary foundation to bridge the gap between where the FoE is currently perceived and where it ought to head.
- 14 There needs to be in the short-term a clear policy on paper use and on digital communication, as the results indicated ambiguity in this respect.
- 15 A lack of awareness and a lack of action have been identified as weaknesses by some administrative staff. A CPD organized in conjunction with CEER is a short term-action point to help increase awareness as well as investigate solutions and act.
- 16 One needs to plan for related Staff development opportunities in the medium term – possibly in conjunction with the Human Resources Department. In the short-term contact can be made with the Human Resource Department to outline this ask.
- 17 A main issue that needs to be dealt with in the short to medium term is the question of fair, green, and ethical procurement. One first short-term action point is understanding any limitations within the system with respect to such procurement (restrictions and limitations imposed by third parties) and advocating and educating accordingly.
- 18 In the short term a guide for ethical procurement needs to be drawn up and adopted (Clear Eco and Fair Procurement policies)
- 19 In the short to medium term, we need to draw up a list of suppliers that broadly satisfy such guidelines (green fair and ethical procurement) and add them to the list of service suppliers.
- 20 Procurement is here understood to include the follow-up such as correct disposal. Any restrictions here need to be identified in the short term and solutions proposed.

- 21** In the short term we need to understand any barriers to Waste Separation at source and mitigate accordingly.
- 22** There is a perception that Eco and Fair procurement cause an increase in costs. This needs to be confirmed with hard data – including where applicable considerations such as planned obsolescence and quality (comparing like with like).
- 23** Administrative staff has expressed a wish to participate in: a) Volunteerism; b) Campus sustainability initiatives; and c) Staff Sustainability events such as a monthly Fair-Trade breakfast. Clearly, such requested opportunities can be integrated relatively easily, including in the short term.
- 24** Administrative staff is often at the forefront with respect to dealing with students – an integrated approach between admin and academics needs to be further explored with respect to a common vision regarding sustainability. One short to medium-term action point first step might be greater awareness of the courses and activities offered through the Faculty on ESD.
- 25** The Sustainable Living Complex (SLC). We urgently need an update on this vis-à-vis both the Faculty of Education and CEER. Such an opportunity can easily become a threat if we are not fully aware of the developments, of the different points at which we can intervene, and of the extent to which we can go about attaining our Sustainability Policy aims through the potential of such complex offers. This required an urgent action point in the short term.
- 26** The newly established relationship with the Malta Cooperative Federation (MCF). The potential here is two-fold: a) In including inputs from the MCF in our curricula; and 2) In setting up the necessary cooperative or social enterprise structure where applicable, e.g. the canteen management of the SLC. The former is a short-term consideration that requires awareness among FoE staff of this possibility, and someone from the administrative staff taking charge of this. The latter is a medium-term consideration that however needs remote preparation in the short term. Such short-term preparations can include a study visit to similar initiatives abroad which CEER can facilitate through Dr Vincent Caruana, who has expertise in the Social Enterprise area.
- 27** The Social Enterprise Act that was published on 22 February 2022 by means of Act No. IX of 2022, although it is not yet in force. This can provide the legal framework of any initiative as per above or otherwise that can gain from registration under such Act, once in force. In the short term, the Faculty of Education can meet up with the Business Incubator Takeoff at the university – which will eventually be tasked with supporting the FoE in practical manners such as drawing up a business plan.
- 28** As a short-term action point, it is recommended to set in motion the necessary inputs to catalyse the setting up of FEE EcoCampus. This might include meetings with KSU, contacting ex-Ecoschools students at the university, using Newspoint, using the FoE newsletter, involving MESD alumni, organizing info meetings, etc.
- 29** As a short-term action point, we require the setting up of an exploratory meeting with the procurement gatekeepers to explain our commitment to green and fair procurement as part of our wider policy. The same might be necessary with the events section.

- 30** Where reducing is not possible, carbon offsetting might be required. As a short-term action point, one can establish a relationship with organizations involved in tree-planting and/or afforestation, which can benefit from such carbon off-setting.
- 31** The issue of remote working and its link to sustainability ought to be further studied as a short-term action point and use made of the appropriate channels to further strengthen the availability of this option – in line with the UM's strategic objectives.
- 32** As a short-term goal, the FoE can identify key international days and issue public statements related to such days.
- 33** While the above is predictable, the FoE needs to find a fast and effective way how to issue statements that respond to unpredictable happenings in society. Designing a framework for such a procedure is a short-term action point.
- 34** Clearly there is a need for a communication strategy in conjunction and in parallel with the implementation of the Action Plan. This is a continuous action, relevant in the short, medium, and long term.

Medium-Term Recommendations

- 1** Ask for a grant in order to take a systematic approach in greening the faculty and help concretise and make operable the strong support towards adopting a Sustainability Policy. One can make use of the Internal Research Grants Programme call and/or the Erasmus + programme.
- 2** Students have asked for more volunteering opportunities. As a medium-term goal, one ought to consider to what extent such opportunities can be accredited towards the relevant course undertaken.
- 3** It also needs to be recognized that optional courses do not guarantee the student entitlement to ESD as stipulated in the SDGs, and therefore the medium-term goal ought to be to provide compulsory courses to all students.
- 4** An iterative process where every year a number of modules are self-audited with the support of CEER where necessary, to update the course descriptions to reflect better today's sustainability challenges. The whole cycle will ideally be conducted over a period of 3 – 4 years.
- 5** Students clearly asked for more approaches to education for sustainable development (ESD). In practice, this might require a needs analysis to add more modules where possible, as well as reintroduce ESD as one of the themes in the Themes module. Furthermore, ESD can be infused as a cross-curricular theme among the already existing themes.
- 6** The infusion of sustainability issues across the curriculum assumes the communication regarding such infusion. Once this process is kickstarted, it needs to be accompanied by a marketing and communication plan. As is, students are very unsure to what extent sustainability features within their courses and still obtain most of their information on such issues through NGOs. This is a medium-term goal since the necessary spadework still needs to be done.
- 7** One option regarding CPD is to organize a course along the lines of the Course Designing, Delivering, and Evaluating Online Study-Units already offered at the university. Because of the preparatory work required, this is a medium-term goal.
- 8** The faculty needs to provide students with more opportunities to take responsibility for the environment. This can easily be accommodated through the thematic approach. One suggestion is to have the different departments within the faculty take a lead at different points during the year. Alternatively, different departments can focus on specific SDGs pertaining to the chosen theme.
- 9** There is a clear ask to participate more in research on issues concerning sustainability. We need to find suitable avenues for this. One way could be through an Erasmus + project. Also, celebrating a milestone with a specific publication with a focus on sustainability, will "carve" the faculty's commitment to sustainability.

- 10 One needs to plan for related Staff development opportunities in the medium term – possibly in conjunction with the Human Resources Department. In the short-term contact can be made with the Human Resource Department to outline this ask.
- 11 Staff development can clearly tackle such mentioned issues as related to eco and fair procurement, as well as deal with other issues such as ethos and mindset. This indicates that any CPD or other interventions can be focused on both personal and professional development. This CPD can if successful be extended to other UM offices in collaboration with HR.
- 12 A main issue that needs to be dealt with in the short to medium term is the question of fair, green, and ethical procurement. One first short-term action point is understanding any limitations within the system with respect to such procurement (restrictions and limitations imposed by third parties) and advocating and educating accordingly.
- 13 In the short to medium term, we need to draw up a list of suppliers that broadly satisfy such guidelines (green fair and ethical procurement) and add them to the list of service suppliers.
- 14 Regarding administrative staff, as a medium-term consideration the issue of specifically planning opportunities to participate in EU projects related to sustainability needs to be taken up in a proactive manner.
- 15 Administrative staff is often at the forefront with respect to dealing with students – an integrated approach between admin and academics needs to be further explored with respect to a common vision regarding sustainability. One short to medium-term action point first step might be greater awareness of the courses and activities offered through the Faculty on ESD.
- 16 The newly established relationship with the Malta Cooperative Federation (MCF). The potential here is two-fold: a) In including inputs from the MCF in our curricula; and 2) In setting up the necessary cooperative or social enterprise structure where applicable, e.g., the canteen management of the SLC. The latter is a medium-term consideration that however needs remote preparation in the short term.
- 17 As a medium to long term goal, the FoE will commit itself to ethical procurement wherever possible and feasible, and to only hold events (workshops, conferences, etc.) that reflect good practice in low impact and zero carbon, and where such events become the default and not the result of specific negotiations per event.
- 18 Linked to joint advocacy in relation to sustainability, FoE needs to identify current structures that already exist, within which the FoE can be more active and more vocal.
- 19 Clearly there is a need for a communication strategy in conjunction and in parallel with the implementation of the Action Plan. This is a continuous action, relevant in the short, medium, and long term.

Long-Term Recommendations

- 1** The FoE sustainability policy can serve as a pilot project for the whole of the university, and the RSO, while initially linked to the faculty, would eventually support the whole institution approach at the university.
- 2** There is strong support for adopting a Sustainability Policy and for infusing sustainability in one's teaching. On the other hand, the actual commitment of the FoE towards sustainability, and the actual research inputs of the FoE on sustainability, are perceived as not so strong. The long-term aim is to bridge this gap between where we want to go and the current state of affairs.
- 3** As with academic staff, the long-term goal is to ensure that the actual commitment of the FoE is perceived as and in actual fact represents the green, fair, and sustainability aims of the FoE.
- 4** As a medium to a long-term goal, the FoE will commit itself to ethical procurement wherever possible and feasible, and to only hold events (workshops, conferences, etc.) that reflect good practice in low impact and zero carbon, and where such events become the default and not the result of specific negotiations per event.
- 5** The faculty needs to engage more with joint advocacy in relation to sustainability.
- 6** Clearly there is a need for a communication strategy in conjunction and in parallel with the implementation of the Action Plan. This is a continuous action, relevant in the short, medium, and long term.

Published in 2023

© Faculty of Education and Centre for Environmental Education & Research, University of Malta

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the authors and the publisher.

This publication should be cited as follows:

Caruana, V., Mifsud, M., & Pace, P. (2023). *Faculty of Education Sustainability Policy*. Faculty of Education, University of Malta.





L-Università
ta' Malta

Faculty of Education

University of Malta,
Msida MSD 2080,
Malta

📞 +356 2340 3058

✉️ educ@um.edu.mt

um.edu.mt/educ

Centre for Environmental Education & Research

University of Malta,
Msida MSD 2080,
Malta

📞 +356 2340 3202

✉️ ceer@um.edu.mt

um.edu.mt/ceer