

Sector Impact Assessment Form

Name of policy/initiative/project	Sustainable development in higher education: 2008 update to strategic statement and action plan.
1. What are the aims of this policy/initiative/project?	To update our 2005 strategy 'Sustainable development in higher education' and produce a new action plan for 2008 to 2010. This action plan aims to make significant progress towards achieving our 10-year vision set out in our 2005 strategy: 'Within the next 10 years, the higher education sector in this country will be recognised as a major contributor to society's efforts to achieve sustainability – through the skills and knowledge that its graduates learn and put into practice, and through its own strategies and operations.'
2. At what stage of the development process is this SIA being undertaken?	The original SIA (first undertaken during the development of consultation) has been revised post consultation as part of development of final strategy and action plan for publication.
3. Do existing data sources enable us to provide evidence of impact? If not, how should we best gather evidence?	<p>HEFCE's 2006 to 2011 strategic plan includes a key performance target (KPT) that by 2008 aims 'to develop a baseline assessment of how the HE sector contributes to the sustainable development of society, and to demonstrate progress in this area by 2011.' We undertook a strategic review of sustainable development in higher education (HE) in 2007 to measure a baseline of sustainable development activity in the sector. This showed that institutions are undertaking a variety of sustainable development activity but that the momentum needs to continue and increase. We plan to undertake another strategic review in 2010-11 to demonstrate progress, and where possible estimate the impact of this sustainable development policy. In many cases it will not be possible to measure the impact of our sustainable development strategy in isolation as many factors are helping drive increased activity in this area.</p> <p>In the 2008 update to the HEFCE strategic plan for 2006 to 2011¹ we revised our KPT relating to sustainable development. Our new KPT 15 is: 'to finalise during 2008-09 in consultation with stakeholders a revised strategy for sustainable development in HE, which features a realistic target for carbon reductions which are sufficient to ensure satisfactory progress towards the government targets of reducing carbon emissions by 60 per cent against 1990 levels by 2050 and at least 26 per cent by 2020²'. We have commissioned work to measure a 1990 baseline, and develop this target and strategy. This forms part of the revised action plan, but it will not be possible to measure the impact of HEFCE's activities to reduce carbon emissions in isolation.</p>
Regulatory impact assessment	
4. Will this policy/initiative/project require HEIs to pay for or carry out additional work in response to our demands? If yes, please describe	Yes, HEIs will need to carry out additional work but HEFCE will adopt a non-prescriptive and enabling approach allowing institutions to choose which activities to undertake. All actions contained within the document are

¹ 'HEFCE Strategic Plan 2006-11 updated May 2008' (HEFCE 2008/15), available at www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications.

² This KPT was introduced before government target was increased to 80% and this now applies.

the additional work	<p>for HEFCE to undertake to support the sector in sustainable development. Some actions will involve working with sector bodies, but these will be agreed in advance.</p> <p>HEIs were invited to respond to a public consultation on the action plan. The consultation received 93 written responses, 57 of which were from HEIs.</p> <p>While demands placed on HEIs in relation to this sustainable development policy are relatively low, increasing pressure from Government and society may mean that these demands increase. A separate SIA will be undertaken on any specific policies resulting from this action plan, which will require HEIs to pay for or carry out additional work (for example, linking capital funding to environmental performance, Revolving Green Fund).</p>
5. If so, do the benefits of doing this to the delivery of HEFCE strategy, the HE sector, the HEI itself and others outweigh what we have asked HEIs to do? If yes please describe the benefits	The publication of this strategy and action plan will support the delivery of HEFCE's KPT number 19, and encourage institutions to engage with the sustainable development agenda. The consultation demonstrated that the benefits of this are diverse and depend on the activities undertaken, but include cost efficiencies, improved student and staff recruitment and retention, and marketing advantages.
6. How have you arrived at this judgement? Please refer to the results of consultation and other supporting evidence.	Institutions and sector bodies will make individual decisions on sustainable development activities to undertake. The consultation demonstrated that institutions already chose to undertake a variety of activity.
Equality and diversity	
7. Which individuals or groups are likely to be affected by this policy/initiative/project?	All individuals and groups are likely to be affected by this policy as everyone has a personal responsibility to contribute to a more sustainable society.
8. What is the likely impact on these groups (is it positive, negative or neutral)?	Equality and diversity is considered under the social aspect of sustainable development. Therefore, the impact is likely to be positive. For example, HEFCE is funding the project 'Urban Buzz' at University College London, which looks at building sustainable communities.
9. If negative, what actions have been taken to mitigate the effect?	No negative impacts have been identified as a result of this action plan. A separate SIA will be undertaken on any specific policies resulting from this action plan.
10. Can this policy/initiative/project be used to ensure and promote both equality and diversity? If so, how?	One of the areas of work in the action plan is to build capacity and disseminate good practice using existing funding initiatives, such as the LGM Fund. HEFCE is currently funding projects relating to equality and diversity to the value of £500,000 and further applications are encouraged.
Sustainable development	
11. What is the likely impact of this policy/initiative/project on sustainable development? Is it positive, negative or neutral?	Positive. The majority of consultation respondents agreed with our vision and objectives.
12. If negative, what actions have been taken to mitigate the impact?	No direct negative impacts have been identified. As part of our sustainable development strategy we should be aware of HEFCE policies which could have negative sustainable development impacts and assess these through the SIA process.

<p>13. How can this policy/initiative/project be used to create opportunities to support sustainable development? Please indicate how you have exploited these opportunities or why you have been unable to do so.</p>	<p>Yes, the aim of this policy is to promote sustainable development across the sector and work towards achieving our sustainable development vision. It was suggested at the consultation seminars and in the written responses that sustainable development should become HEFCE's fourth major objective, alongside teaching, research, and third stream activity.</p> <p>The strategic statement includes a commitment to continue to embed sustainable development throughout our strategic plan and this suggestion will be considered as part of the development of our next strategic plan in 2009-10.</p> <p>Through consultation it was commented that the action plan is heavily weighted towards environmental aspects, but there was general recognition that this is because these areas are better understood and often provide 'quick-wins'. Many suggestions were made for inclusion in the action plan, some were general areas or issues which the respondent thought needed addressing, and others were specific actions. Additional actions have been included where specific actions could be identified and it is appropriate for HEFCE to have a role, (for example, a new section on students). The action plan is not intended to be a static document, setting out everything which HEFCE plans to do in relation to sustainable development. However, it should portray our key plans and commitment to promoting sustainable development within the HE sector. We will continue to try and identify appropriate actions in other areas.</p>
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Certification by Director

This is a fair assessment of the impact of this policy/initiative/project on the HE sector, taking into account the regulatory burden imposed. The policy/initiative/project has been appropriately designed to meet our equality obligations and promote equality and diversity and sustainable development.



Signed

Date 2 March 2009

Summary

The main impacts arising from this assessment are the positive outcomes across the environmental, social and financial facets of sustainable development. Regulatory burden impact is expected to be low, with most of the actions contained within the document being for HEFCE to undertake to support the sector in sustainable development. HEIs will need to carry out additional work, but HEFCE will adopt a non-prescriptive and enabling approach, allowing institutions to choose which activities to undertake. Separate SIAs will be undertaken on specific policies resulting from this action plan.