Embedding sustainability within the curriculum at Gray’s School of Art

Josie Steed – Senior Lecturer & Sustainability Lead
Lorraine Amies – Career Consultant
What we shall look at today:

• Background & how we got together
• Emerging stronger
• First-hand opinions
• Outcome
• Impact
• Summary
• Any questions?
Background & how we got together
Josie Steed

• Senior Lecturer & Design Researcher for Knowledge Exchange

• School Lead for Education for Sustainable Development

• External funded arts and humanities research projects focus that on sustainability as a core priority
Lorraine Amies

• Careers Consultant with responsibility for: School of Computing; Gray’s School of Art and Scott Sutherland School of Built Environment & Architecture

• Increase in students seeking ‘sustainable jobs’

• MSc Career Guidance & Development
  • ‘Understanding the impact of the UN Sustainable Development Goals on graduates’ career decision-making’
Emerging Stronger
Enhancing the learning experience at RGU

- Enhance the future learning experience at RGU
- QAA ‘Resilient Learning Communities’
- ‘RGU purple is the new green’
Gray’s 4 Pillars
Teaching & Learning Plan

Critical Creative
- questioning and problem solving
- makes links with ideas, technology, people, and shared problems
- identifies problems, innovates
- resourceful not wasteful

Enterprising Professional
- actively looks for opportunities
- innovates alongside others
- pursues and connects ideas with key professionals
- business aware and proactive

Collaborative Partner
- builds strong team-working skills and understanding of people
- connects with others to grow ideas
- shares ideas and build networks
- understands own skills and strengths

Socially Engaged Contexts
- connects ideas to world concerns (e.g., health, environment, community)
- looks to find sustainable working approaches
- involves ‘others’ in the creative process
Considerations
First-hand opinions
Staff survey & interviews

3. Do you think that the UN Sustainable Development Goals are relevant to your programme/course?
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
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4. Do the UN Sustainable Development Goals play a part in your programme/course developments?
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
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8. Do you think that there is a need for staff development on SDGs to support student/curricular developments?
   
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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Impact of SDGs on graduates' career decision making

- 67% of respondents state that an understanding of sustainability will be important to employers
- 46% of respondents would seek guidance from their university careers team with only 27% using academic staff
- 100% say that sustainability is important to them personally
- 27% state that SDGs are relevant to their programme of study
- Only 13% of respondents are aware of the part SDGs play in their course
- Not everyone really understands what sustainability is
- Relate to their own profession
- Awareness of positive impact on workplace skills
- Companies are looking for sustainability accreditation attached to their brand
- Looking for graduates to bring sustainability knowledge into their business

- Support in understanding how SDGs are relevant to their future career
- Demand sustainability but no depth of understanding

- Pocket delivery from academics
- Careers teams can utilise market knowledge to show sustainability in action

- School wide availability of resources on sustainability
- Define the school mission so there is a common language
Student Questionnaire

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Define the school mission so there is a common language

School wide availability of resources on sustainability

Careers teams can utilise market knowledge to show sustainability in action

Pocket delivery from academics
Student Focus Group

1. Are you aware of the UNSDGs?
2. Do you think that the UNSDGs are relevant to your course?
3. Have you had any projects/information that involved the UNSDGs through your course?
4. Is sustainability something that is important to you personally? Why?
5. Do you think that there is a need for student resources on the relevancy of the UNSDGs?
6. What future skills within the sustainability agenda do you feel you will need post Gray’s?
Focus Group Findings
Taking ownership of the SDGs

Images designed by Mairi Clarke, Communication Design, Robert Gordon University, 2022
Critical & Contextual Studies

CCS Judith Winters Research

Judith Winter focuses on cross-disciplinary approaches, art and environment, ‘designs for life and trans disciplinary studio and environmental practice. Judith co-authored with the anthropologists: Dr Rachel Harkness and Cris Simonetti.

An experimental script - Concreted Speak published by Chicago Press entitled: Future Remains (2018) - that emerged from a research event at the Nelson Institute's Centre for Culture, History and Environment with the Rachel Carson Centre for Environment and Society LMU Munich, the Deutsche Museum and the Environmental Humanities Laboratory at the KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm.

https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/bookchicago/Fboz27213130.html

The invitation to this event came after an authored text below in Parallax 76 (2015)

https://repository.uchicago.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11534/511377/Liquid%20Rock%20Gathering%20Flatening%20Curing.pdf?sequence=1

The research and interest is used in environmental anthropology in teaching.
Achieving Net Zero: Iain Morrison

With the wealth of information in the press and online regarding Net Zero and how it can be achieved in the coming years in the UK, this project will develop a range of information graphics led posters to explain the challenges ahead for the existing power sources the UK has access to.

The posters will be created over 2022/23 to raise public awareness of the UK’s commitment to meeting net zero emissions targets by 2050 and also open up discussion and improve social impact through communication to allow the public to fully consider the long-term implications.

The project is a collaboration between Iain Morrison from Gray’s School of Art and Professor James Njoguna and Jemima Reynolds from the National Subsea Centre and School of Engineering, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen.

To find out more please visit - https://www.achievingnetzero.uk/
Painting

'The Anthropocene'

Emma Geddes’s work embraces transdisciplinarity across Painting, Fine Art, Environmentalism, and Material Science to produce Art Research. Her work dismantles and sustainably reassembles the ‘Image’. Her current work ‘The Anthropocene’ integrates seaweed-based bioplastics within Fine Art. By embedding the biodegradable and marine-degradable bioplastics with site-specific pigments Emma creates ‘Bioplastic Images’. This enables her to challenge traditional notions of site-specificity within Fine Art practice whilst generating Material Narratives which scrutinise the landscape of the Anthropocene.

Visit Emma’s work here
Definition

Education for sustainable development at Gray's focuses on equipping students with a deep understanding of Ethical, Environmental & Social priorities underpinned by the School’s 4 pillars: Critical, Creative, Enterprising Professional, Collaborative Partner and Social Engagement needed to work and live in a way that safeguards people, planet and profit.

Sustainability at Gray’s empowers every member of the Gray’s community to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future.
ILSR 2022

• Josie asked to lead on ILSR (Institutional Led School Review) for Sustainability
• Influence ILRS 2022 strategy document embedding sustainability within Gray’s curriculum
RGU Sustainability Agenda

Policy Futures in Education
Employability
In summary
Conclusion

• Mutual interest in supporting students with their career development and goals
• Opportunity to influence wider RGU Emerging stronger
• Project outcome influenced by students and academics
• Wider impact on university community
Any questions?

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Thank you