

Education for Sustainable Development
An evaluation of taught course modules at the London School of Economics
Academic year: 2013/14



2011/12 review undertaken by Frank Eagles.

Updated for 2013/14 by Isabel Gardiner
Property and Space Management Assistant
Estates Division

Introduction and aim

This audit exercise has involved examining the content of every undergraduate and postgraduate course module at the London School of Economics and Political Science that has been available to students in the 2013/14 academic year. Each course has been examined for evidence of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). This is an update of the audit undertaken in the 2011/12 academic year.

2011/12 An evaluation of taught course modules at the London School of Economics

In 2011/12 an audit was carried out to evaluate the number of taught course modules that contained evidence of ESD. The 2011/12 audit found that out of 1024 undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses available, 124 were found to contain ESD. These 124 courses consisted of 36 undergraduate courses (out of 295 undergraduate courses in total) and 88 postgraduate courses (out of a total of 729).

The majority of courses containing ESD were in qualitative subjects and were assessed by an unseen exam and an assessed essay.

The departments that had the highest proportion of courses containing ESD were Anthropology, Geography & Environment, International Development and Philosophy. The Geography & Environment department contained the majority of courses that had an ESD content greater than 60% and the majority of courses with 100% ESD content.

The departments that had no courses containing ESD content were Finance, Information Systems, International History, Management Science, Managerial Economics and Strategy and Mathematics.

Just under half (54) of the 124 courses containing ESD were half unit courses (meaning they run only in the Michaelmas or Lent term).

LSE 100

LSE100 is a course, created specifically to ensure all LSE undergraduates receive training in key social science methodologies and to stimulate debate on major, contemporary issues such as climate change, population growth and the financial crisis.

The course contains Education for Sustainable Development and has been counted in this audit in the same manner as every other course however it does have two unique properties to note. Firstly, it is compulsory for all undergraduate students; this ensures that every LSE undergraduate will study ESD regardless of the degree subject they are studying. Secondly, unlike any other undergraduate course the course is taught in Lent term of year 1 and Michaelmas term of year 2.

Criteria

One of the obvious challenges in a task such as this is determining what exactly constitutes Education for Sustainable Development.

The general condition for recording a course as containing ESD in this audit exercise has been to ask the question:

‘Does this course directly address issues of environmental or social sustainability?’

As this audit is an update it will use the same methodology as the 2011/12 audit but will look at available courses for the 2013/14 academic year.

The data was collected between April and July 2014.

Methodology

1.1 For every individual undergraduate and taught Masters course, the Course Guide section of the current academic year Calendar was reviewed (appendix 1). The Calendar is described as 'a single resource for regulations relating to students and their study' and is published on the LSE website for use by LSE staff and students.

1.2 On each individual course guide, the Course content section was reviewed for evidence of environmental sustainability. The Course content section is a brief summary of the material covered throughout. It is generally between 5 and 30 lines long and covers all of the major lecture topics that a course will cover. It does not provide a week by week breakdown of material.

1.3 Upon review of this section, each course was placed into one of four categories: Y – The course content section explicitly references sustainable development

N – The course content section does not explicitly mention environmental or social sustainability

O – The course provides the student with the opportunity to study sustainability, should they choose to (e.g. A dissertation).

INV – The course section alluded to environmental or social sustainability but was unclear and required further investigation via 'Moodle'

At this point, the letters Y, N and O were entered in the 'Evidence of sustainability?' column of the departmental datasheet (appendix 3). INV was also entered temporarily at this stage, pending further investigation.

1.4 No further action was taken into the courses that were categorized either N or O.

1.5 For any course categorised Y, the course syllabus on Moodle was then consulted (appendix 2). The course syllabus provides a more detailed breakdown of content, enabling the proportion of the course relating to sustainability to be estimated as accurately as possible on the following basis: Number of lectures involving sustainability divided by total number of lectures in the course. The number of lectures and seminars or classes involving ESD could also be recorded in the datasheet.

At this stage the syllabuses of courses marked INV were consulted on Moodle in order to recategorise the course as either Y or N; steps 1.4-1.5 were then repeated for the courses depending on its category.

1.6 Details on the course assessment for category Y courses was obtained from the course calendar. The length (in minutes) of lectures, classes and seminars was obtained from either the syllabus itself or the 'Timetables viewed by module' section of the LSE website.

The critical element of this methodology was the review of the Course Content section of the guide (step 1.2). There is a clear risk at this stage of a misclassifying a course that does contain ESD as not containing ESD simply because there is no mention of it in the Course Content section. Ultimately the only way to be 100% accurate in the classification process would be to review the course reading lists and syllabuses for all 1118 courses; this method, whilst being more thorough would have been an impractical drain on time and resources. The decision to use the course content section was taken in order to balance the rigorousness and practicality of the process whilst maintaining a consistent approach to all courses.

Table 1, whilst not exclusive, details the key topics that were considered to be ESD topics. The starting point for the selection of topics was the Peer Review conducted by Dr Katherine Eames of Kingston University Sustainability Hub.

Table 1

Environmental sustainability	Social sustainability
Biodiversity	Behavioural change
Biofuels	Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
Carbon footprint/emissions	Education
Climate Change	Fairtrade
Conservation	Future Policy
Energy Efficiency	Health
Environment	Human Rights
Factor endowment	(In)equality
Global Warming	Population
Nature	Poverty
Renewable	Social justice
Waste	Social sustainability
	Sustainable employment
	Trajectories
	Wellbeing

Calendar Disclaimer (from the LSE Course Calendar Website)

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in the Calendar is correct and up-to-date at the time of publication. Circumstances may change subsequent to publication. The online version of the Calendar, which will be adjusted from time to time throughout the year, is the definitive version: in the case of differences between versions, the online version should be considered authoritative. The School reserves the right at all times to withdraw or alter particular courses and syllabuses, and to alter the level of fees.

Audit Data- Sorted by Academic Department

Table 2- Courses that explicitly reference ESD by Academic Department

Department	% of UG courses containing ESD (category Y)	% of PG courses containing ESD (category Y)	Overall % of courses containing ESD (category Y)	Of UG courses containing ESD (category Y), average %	Of PG courses containing ESD (category Y) , average %
Accounting	38	8	20	unclear	unclear
Anthropology	15	4	8	45	30
Economic History	18	21	21	9	20*
Economics	17	10	13	12.5	50
Employment Relations & Organisational Behaviour	17	11	12	100	55
European Institute	-	3	3	-	unclear
Finance	0	0	0	0	0
Gender Institute	-	24	24	-	46*
Geography & Environment	45	50	48	67	76
Government	8	5	5	20*	100*
Information Systems	-	0	0	-	0
International Development	-	41	41	-	84
International History	0	0	0	0	0
International Relations	21	7	11	11*	52.5

Department	% of UG courses containing ESD (category Y)	% of PG courses containing ESD (category Y)	Overall % of courses containing ESD (category Y)	Of UG courses containing ESD (category Y), average %	Of PG courses containing ESD (category Y) , average %
Language Centre	0	-	0	0	-
Law	3	4	4	unclear	46
LSE100	100	-	100	17	-
Management	-	4	4	-	100
Management Science	0	0	0	0	0
Managerial Economics and Strategy	0	-	0	0	-
Mathematics	0	0	0	0	0
Media & Communications	-	4	4	-	10
Methodology Institute	-	0	0	-	0
Philosophy, Logic & Scientific Method	31	20	25	24	46*
Social Policy	44	22	26	53	46
Social Psychology	0	4	4	0	100
Sociology	0	22	14	0	70
Statistics	0	10	5	0	unclear

* Excludes modules where the % of ESD is unclear (see appendix 3)

Table 3- Courses that explicitly reference ESD or provide the opportunity to study ESD by Academic Department

Department	% of UG courses containing or providing the opportunity to study ESD (category Y or O)	% of PG courses containing or providing the opportunity to study ESD (category Y or O)	Overall % of courses containing or providing the opportunity to study ESD (category Y or O)
Accounting	38	17	25
Anthropology	23	26	25
Economic History	27	46	41
Economics	22	23	22
Employment Relations & Organisational Behaviour	17	16	16
European Institute	-	24	24
Finance	0	4	4
Gender Institute	-	29	29
Geography & Environment	59	56	57
Government	15	14	14
Information Systems	-	0	0
International Development	-	62	62
International History	4	13	8
International Relations	29	13	18
Language Centre	0	-	0

Department	% of UG courses containing or providing the opportunity to study ESD (category Y or O)	% of PG courses containing or providing the opportunity to study ESD (category Y or O)	Overall % of courses containing or providing the opportunity to study ESD (category Y or O)
Law	9	7	8
LSE100	100	-	100
Management	-	10	10
Management Science	0	10	7
Managerial Economics and Strategy	0	15	13
Mathematics	0	0	0
Media & Communications	-	8	8
Methodology Institute	-	7	7
Philosophy, Logic & Scientific Method	38	25	31
Social Policy	50	39	41
Social Psychology	0	9	8
Sociology	15	30	25
Statistics	5	20	13

Summary

Out of the 1118 undergraduate and graduate courses available in the 2013/14 academic year 223 of these were found to contain, or provide the opportunity to study, ESD (categories Y and O). This accounts for 20% of the courses on offer. 11.5% of the courses on offer contained ESD (129 courses) and 8.5% provided the opportunity to study ESD (94 courses).

Out of the 223 courses containing or providing the opportunity to study ESD (categories Y and O), 56 were undergraduate courses (out of 281 undergraduate courses) and 167 were postgraduate courses (out of total of 837).

The departments containing the highest proportion of ESD courses were Geography & Environment, Economic History, International Development, Social Policy and Philosophy, Logic & Scientific Method. The LSE100 course continued to contain ESD topics. Information Systems, Language Centre and Mathematics did not appear to offer any courses that contained ESD.

The majority of courses containing ESD were in qualitative subjects and involved both an unseen exam and an assessed essay counting towards the final course grade.

Of the 223 courses containing ESD or the opportunity to study ESD, 70 were half unit courses (meaning that they run in either the Michaelmas or Lent term only). This accounts for just over 30% of the ESD courses available.

Of the category Y courses, the majority of courses containing 100% ESD were offered in the Geography & Environment and International Development departments. The ESD content offered by International Development was largely social sustainability, whereas courses offered by Geography & Environment contained a mixture of social and environmental sustainability.

Comparison with 2011/12

In 2011/12, 124 of the courses offered contained ESD whereas in 2013/14, this figure increased to 129 courses. The number of courses providing the opportunity to study ESD increased from 71 courses in 2011/12 to 94 courses in 2013/14.

As in 2011/12 the majority of courses containing ESD were at postgraduate level and were in qualitative subjects though there was an increase in the percentage of courses containing ESD (category Y) in both Accounting and Statistics.

The Geography & Environment department continued to offer the largest number of courses with an approximate ESD content of 100%. As in 2011/12, the overall percentage of courses containing ESD continued to be greater for International Development in 2013/14.

Appendix 1- Postgraduate Course Guide (DV407 example)

DV407 Half Unit

Poverty

This information is for the 2013/14 session.

Teacher responsible

Dr Elliott Green

Availability

This course is available on the MSc in Anthropology and Development, MSc in Anthropology and Development (Management), MSc in Development Management, MSc in Development Studies, MSc in International Development and Humanitarian Emergencies, MSc in Political Economy of Late Development, MSc in Population and Development, MSc in Social Policy and Development, MSc in Social Policy and Development: Non-Governmental Organisations, MSc in Urban Policy (LSE and Sciences Po) and MSc in Urbanisation and Development. This course is not available as an outside option.

Course content

The course is an interdisciplinary analysis of poverty, where the focus is on poverty both as a dependent variable (what causes poverty) and an independent variable (what poverty causes). The course will draw from a variety of disciplines but will pay special attention to the political economy of poverty; however, no prior mathematical or statistical qualification is required. The topics to be covered begin with an examination into the definition and measurement of poverty. We focus as well on the relationship between poverty and inequality, education, gender and human development, with special attention to the relationship between poverty, violence, and democracy. We also examine the origins of modern famines and whether democratization contributes to poverty reduction. We close with further thoughts on poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals.

Teaching

15 hours of lectures and 13 hours and 30 minutes of seminars in the LT. 1 hour and 30 minutes of lectures in the ST.

Indicative reading

The course has two required purchase books, namely Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 1999) and Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty* (PublicAffairs/Penguin, 2011). Other texts that will be useful include Sabina Alkire, *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction* (Oxford University Press, 2005); Anirudh Krishna, ed. *Poverty, Participation and Democracy: A Global Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Amartya Sen, *Poverty*.

Key facts

Department: International Development

Total students 2012/13: 119

Average class size 2012/13: 15

Value: Half Unit

[Guidelines for interpreting course guide information](#)

Personal development skills

- self-management
- team working
- problem solving
- application of information skills
- communication
- application of numeracy skills
- specialist skills

Course survey results

(2010/11 - 2012/13 combined)

1 = "best" score, 5 = "worst" score

The scores below are average responses.

Response rate: 85%

I would recommend this course %

Reading list (Q2.1): 1.7

Materials (Q2.3): 1.7

Course satisfied (Q2.4): 1.7

Appendix 2 – Moodle page (DV407 example)

Lecture Notes and Recordings

Uploaded when available

DV407 Lecture Recordings

Lecture 1: Poverty

Lecture 2 - Poverty: Trends and Methods

Lecture 3 - Global poverty and inequality: Recent trends

Lecture 4: Poverty, Clientelism And Democracy

Lecture 5: Mass entitlement failure

Lecture 6: Microcredit, Moneylenders and Poverty

Lecture 7: Urbanization, Slums and Poverty

Lecture 8: Gender and Poverty

Lecture 9: Poverty and Violence

Lecture 10 - MDGs and Poverty Reduction in the 21st Century