

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

CIRCLE U. NATIONAL CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS:

CREATIVITY & CULTURE

EDUCATION & SUSTAINABILITY

GLOBAL HEALTH IN THE CURRICULUM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a summary of the discussions and key findings of three thematic workshops held during the first Circle U. national conference, *'Teaching and living leadership for addressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)– the role of universities'* – held at King's College London on 19-20 May 2022. The three workshops on the themes of 'Creativity and Culture', 'Education and Sustainability' and 'Global Health in the Curriculum' were designed and facilitated by King's academics and brought together academics, researchers, professional services staff and students from across the Circle U. partner universities to consider how to embed these thematic areas within education and curricula across Circle U. institutions.

Key findings and recommendations

Workshop participants agreed that disciplines should not exist in silos. Cross-disciplinary programmes and content development, particularly between the humanities and sciences, can support students' skills development, the dissemination of research, and the development of creative approaches to real-world problems. This helps prepare students for life-long learning post-university by fostering key capabilities such as critical thinking, cognitive flexibility and confidence.

Key recommendations emerged across the three workshops:

Greater critical thinking around key terms, their significance and how these terms can potentially shape curricula. These include culture, creativity, agency, autonomy, decolonisation.

Flexible curricula to enable cross-disciplinary content to be embedded and accredited.

Structured programmes and modules that can be widely implemented across universities.

Course sharing within Circle U. of modules and programmes open across the Alliance, including details of how students can participate.

CREATIVITY & CULTURE

A clear understanding of the importance of culture is essential to enabling students to understand one another and to engage in interdisciplinary actions. Discussions explored the value of creativity in science and in disseminating scientific information to the public as well as the role creativity can play in supporting the sustainable development goals (SDGs) through interdisciplinary projects. To support the SDGs, the development of a creative hub was proposed - understood as a creative space within universities to facilitate the cross-disciplinary collaboration needed to tackle the SDGs.

Examples of existing actions that higher education institutions have taken to engage students beyond their disciplines and encourage creativity include the Circle U. [Think and Do Tank Café](#), the KU Leuven [BAC ART LAB](#), the American Association for the Advancement of Science [Dance your PhD Contest](#), and King's College London's [Cultural Competency Kickstarter](#).

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that creativity and culture are understood and valued across Circle U. the following recommendations are proposed:

INTEGRATE culture and creativity into the curricula through flexible course content, encouraging university departments to apply these two terms to determine initiatives that encourage new ways of working within and across disciplines.

E.g., 'Artists in residence' work alongside students studying any subject; competitions such as *Dance your PhD* to consider subjects and topics from a different perspective and encourage early-stage

academics to engage in cross-disciplinary communication and projects with the aim of embedding this approach in future management.

SUPPORT this new cross-disciplinary engagement with resources and cultural competency training to ensure that students and staff have a common understanding.

DEVELOP a 'Toolkit' to provide a clear overview of initiatives and activities aligned with the SDGs, which students can choose from. Rather than having set goals, such a toolkit could include creative limits that encourage students to work in a defined framework and ensure that from the outset students question how they can bring creativity into their first year of study.

ENSURE that students and staff are aware of and engage with these new creative opportunities through monitoring and evaluation.

DEMONSTRATE collectivity in this process by supporting Circle U-wide creative projects. E.g., a Circle U. choir.

ENSURE that management and senior leadership teams across Circle U. universities have a clear understanding of the value of culture and creativity by defining the terms' scope and potential.

EDUCATION & SUSTAINABILITY

This workshop focused on the connection between education and sustainability by exploring how such content could be embedded into a degree programme, including what sustainable education looks like, the importance of student agency (defined as the ability to act in society and feeling empowered to effect change), designing interdisciplinary module content which enables students to address real-world problems and breaking departmental and faculty silos. The core questions explored were:

How can the SDGs be integrated into the main curriculum design? What institutional support is needed to embed the SDGs in the curriculum? And how can these ideas of promoting student engagement in SDGs become a reality?

What is sustainable education? Where does it link to education for a sustainable world? How can or does your university engage with external partners both locally and globally?

How do we bring together learning rather than silos of practice? How do you design authentic assessment in this cross-disciplinary intersect?

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To foster the link between education and sustainability, the following recommendations are proposed:

MAKE a Circle U-wide commitment to the SDGs by training students and staff on SDGs and supporting knowledge sharing about sustainable education across the Alliance.

CHANGE the use of target-focused language; reframing the focus of SDGs from 'goals' to 'needs' to support students' view of them as essential Circle U-wide directives.

INTEGRATE sustainability into curricula across Circle U. through SDG-focused, community-driven, sustainable community partnerships that allow students across faculties to address real-world problems through annual, cyclical challenge-based programmes. These modules should be integrated into courses, credit-bearing, yearly and seminar-based, and be offered online but with in-person opportunities for collaboration and team building. These could include green space activity, museum reflection, personal sustainability, or the development of programmes such as King's Civic Challenge and the Circle U. Challenge.

CHANGE the mechanism of assessing impact to ensure an authentic and effective assessment based on process-driven summative observations, which require students to record and reflect on their experience throughout the process.

CREATE cross-disciplinary spaces within Circle U. institutions where students can explore their own cultures and support engagement within these spaces by training students and staff on cultural competency.

GLOBAL HEALTH IN THE CURRICULUM

Key findings from the workshop related to the interdisciplinary but fractured nature of Global Health, and the opportunities which exist to rewrite the structure, content and focus to foster an interdisciplinary, decolonised practice, which views the global south as an equal partner.

Discussions considered the shifting interdisciplinary nature of Global Health and the issues associated with this including the difficulties of processing professional language, different methodologies and perspectives and the time-consuming nature of interdisciplinary work. The role of technology and its potential, limits and challenges in Global Health were also considered. The discussion then considered four topics:

What is meant by Global Health? Emerging themes included that Global Health is often fragmented and that there are many meanings beyond the classical way of thinking about health, particularly across disciplines. The geographical focus of the discipline on low-middle income countries, and the power imbalance this creates between partners in the global north and south was also discussed.

Global Health: Ways of thinking. A model of Global Health where it is taught by specific people within a discipline. Should this approach be challenged and rather taught theoretically by all disciplines?

Decolonising the Global Health curriculum. There is often confusion around the term decolonisation and there is a need for better critical thinking and discussion around what this means in the context of the global health curriculum.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations included:

DETERMINE a respectful and meaningful way of engaging across disciplines through partnerships with academics, medical professionals and students from the global south.

IDENTIFY legitimate practices that are not subject to western biases. Establishing mutual norms, and ideals for research-based interactions to take place.

REFRAME working with the global south as a partnership rather than 'helping.'

SUPPORT restructuring and redeveloping core practices of Global Health across Circle U. including improved understanding of the concept of decolonisation and its implications for the curriculum.

CHANGE the parameters of Global Health as a subject and embed it as interdisciplinary curricula in different faculties.

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