



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**



‘Pathways for Sustainability’:

**Differing perspectives
between students & staff on
sustainability education
and training**



Dr Amanda Slevin, Dr Colin McClure, Teresa Hill, Prof John Barry, Md Yousuf Ali

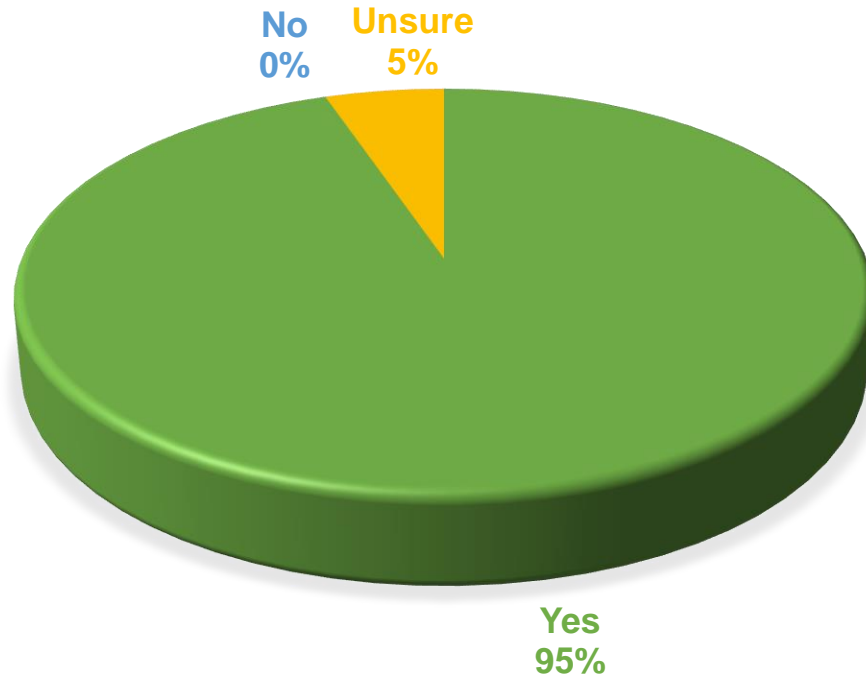
‘Pathways for Sustainability’



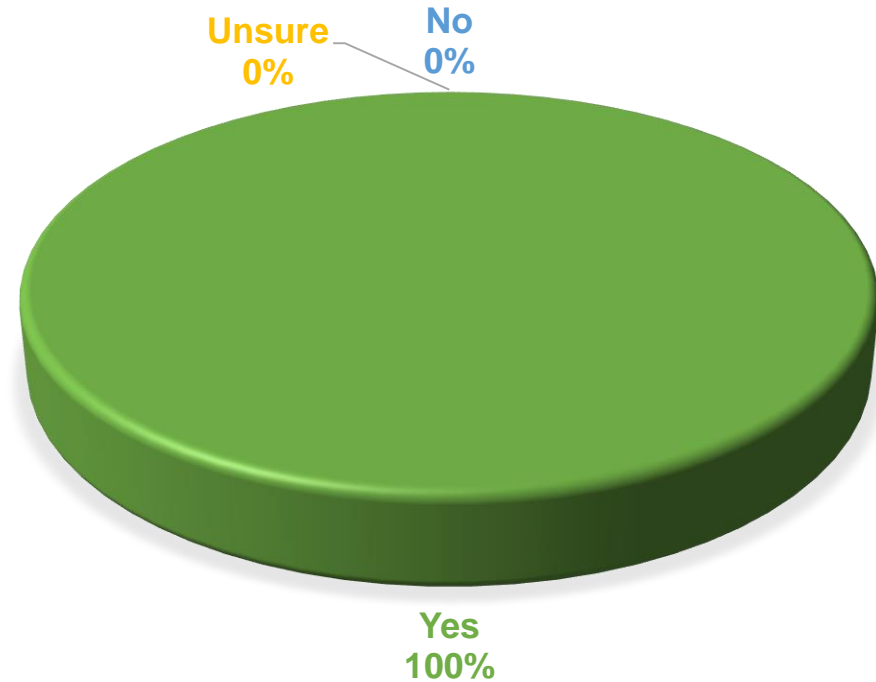
- Funded by QUB’s ‘Green Fund’
- **50** participants in **6** focus groups held during June & July 2020
- Participants from all QUB Faculties and professional services
- **3** student focus groups = **23** participants
- **3** staff focus groups = **27** participants
- Focus groups involved discussion on key questions & short polls
- Research team: **Amanda Slevin** (PI), **John Barry** (Co-I), **Colin McClure** (Co-I), **Teresa Hill** (Co-I), **Md. Yousuf Ali** (Co-I)

Universities & SDGs

Students: Do you think it's important for Universities such as Queen's to have a stance on the SDGs?



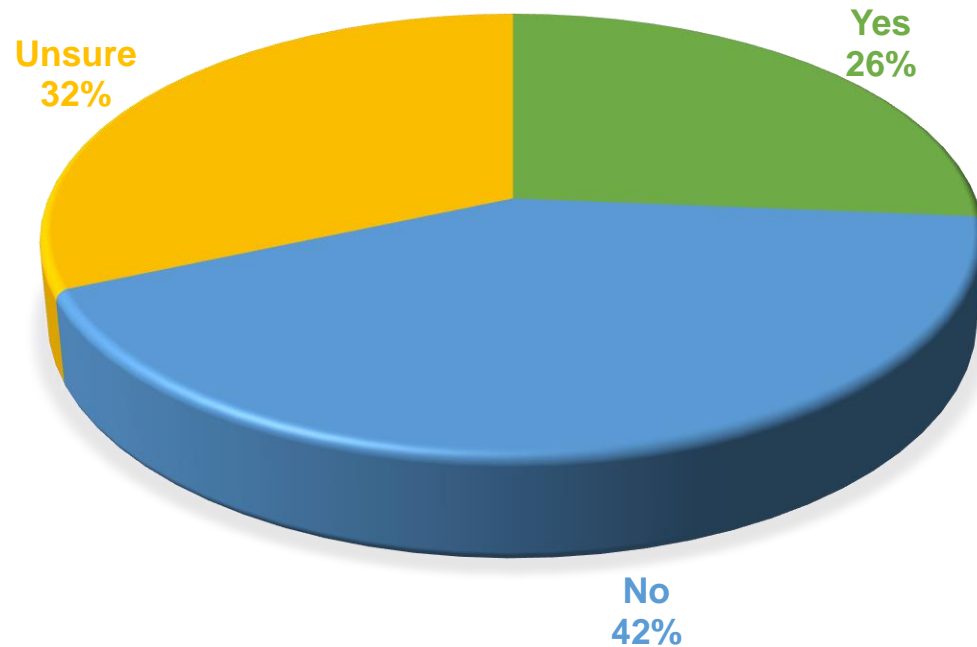
Staff: Do you think it's important for universities such as Queen's to have a stance on the SDGs?



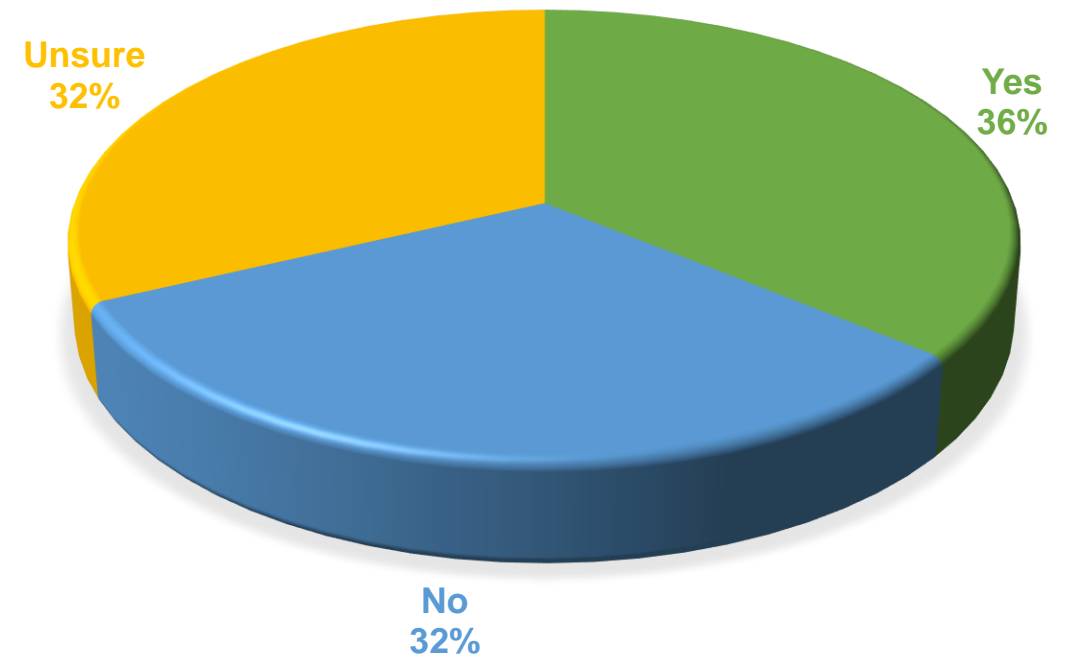
“Universities and colleges are **massive social and economic drivers in** a city or region and they ought to reflect the needs of society and I think the **most important need of society right now is sustainability** ... So if Queen's at least want to think of itself as some sort of **agent of change** ... **I think they should be committed truthfully to Sustainable Development Goals**” (Participant 1, Student FG 2)

Universities & SDGs

Students: Are you aware what the University is doing in regard to its Sustainable impact, or on the SDGs more broadly?



Staff: Are you aware what the University is doing in regard to its Sustainable impact, or on the SDGs more broadly?



Key themes

- Include:
 - Approaches and content for future programmes;
 - Issues of ideology, morality, power;
 - QUB culture, leadership & practice;
 - Practical measures for sustainability
- Any training should be embedded within broader teaching & learning initiatives
- University-wide, systemic focus on sustainability (not tokenism)
- Connect training with increased visibility of sustainability in QUB, new events, Green Week, fossil fuel divestment, etc.

“It needs to be **a grassroots approach across the whole institution** because sustainability ... look how many Goals there are there ... the institution almost **needs to come up with their version** of this here and introduce it across the board or it [sustainability] won't take roots ... and I don't think that it will be successful then. And in relation to what they would like to achieve from it, that would be a **PR stunt sort of thing** [if there isn't a systemic approach]” (Participant 3, Student FG 3)

Initial priorities for content

Students

- Climate change & climate action
- Energy (justice/sustainability/transition)
- Multi-level issues (from macro of economy to individual consumption)
- Human rights and justice

Staff

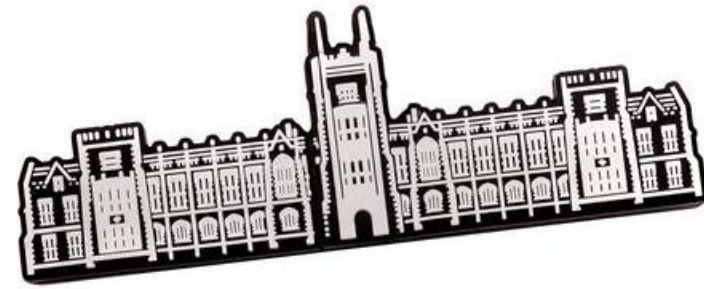
- Climate crises/ awareness of unsustainability
- Individual actions (energy and waste reductions, etc.)
- Reduced consumption (multiple levels)
- Greening the curriculum and campus/ enhancing visibility of sustainability and SDGs across Uni

If it's not a like a defined course ... it should be incorporated into ... the course ... that people are studying ... the **reason that I'm paying to go to University** and to study is so that I would hope that **Queens would help prepare me for the future world** ... obviously, **climate change and issues surrounding that are going to be a huge part of that** and **failing to address that and to help me to learn about that** ... would be pretty **detrimental to my learning experience**" (Participant 3, Student FG1)

Sustainability: Not just for Xmas

- A coordinated commitment to sustainability delivered in a 'tailored' manner
- Prepare students to become Sustainability Challenges of their generation
- Embedded across all sectors – education, research, professional Services, operations, outreach and engagement – not a '*bolt-on*' approach
- Resourcing to aid embedding of sustainability across levels, incl. 'Train the Trainer', Sustainability Champions, recognition awards
- Integration into courses (formal T & L) but also non-formal initiatives and strong central repository
- A truly systematic response to SDGs
- Impact of this and related work on QUB Strategy, acceptance of the SDG/ Sustainability paper (Dec. 2020), and ongoing work on the online module
- And only a start, but a good start to engagement with and of staff and students

Beyond Queen's...



- Both staff & students want integration of sustainability across research, education, etc.
- Interdisciplinary approach to sustainability across all domains
- Use local strengths / connections of the Institute
- Not a 'one-size fits all' approach
- Take advantage of existing student / staff-recognition frameworks
- Mandatory 'Save the world' training isn't going to cut it...

“It actually absolutely has to be **actions, not just sort of a tick box exercise** of acknowledging it ... Queen's should be leading the way in this for Northern Ireland. You know we're a massive big employer. We're one of the leading academic institutions in Northern Ireland. **We should be demonstrating to other organisations; how you do this and how you do it well.** We are already doing lots of the things which are covered in those Goals, but it's getting that into a cohesive and you know, **communicating that as an overall plan and leading the way forward**, not playing catch up and not just head nodding and box ticking” (Participant 7, Staff FG 1)



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