

## Student participation

Student representation is a key part of this degree, and we welcome the opportunity to work with our students throughout. We respond to all suggestions, and try to make changes to the degree on the basis of student feedback where possible.

The main channels through which discussion about the degree takes place are the Staff-Student Liaison Committees, held each semester; the fourth year programme review; and through degree reps. Students are of course welcome to discuss any aspect of the degree with any member of teaching staff or Sue, at any time.

Key points from the academic year 2017/18, and responses to them:

Feedback	Details	Action taken if any
Students enjoy pathways	<p>Students at the end of the degree said that they really realised the benefits of the pathway. Some really enjoyed having ‘two degrees’, and that they were able to study two things, and see two different sides. It was said that some students didn’t realise how much the pathway mattered earlier on. Students said that being on a pathway gave them access to courses that they wouldn’t have been able to take otherwise.</p> <p>It was said that the role of SD Families could be to do more discussion of pathways. The emphasis on taking two pathways in first year was thought to be a very good one.</p>	<p>We will continue to emphasise with new first years the importance of the pathway; and also the benefits of being on a pathway. It does mean guaranteed places in popular courses that are hugely oversubscribed and in prestigious departments for which demand is very high.</p> <p>We will continue to support SD Families in this important role.</p>
Liaisons across pathways	<p>For the Geography pathway, it was said that the meetings with Anthony were very helpful.</p> <p>For Social Anthropology, it was said that a liaison, like Anthony, would be very helpful indeed.</p>	<p>We are currently working with the pathway subjects to make sure that the Liaison is in place in each</p>
Peer support	<p>Students felt it would be useful to have more information about courses from previous students.</p> <p>Students said that having peer support group meetings in the SocAnth pathway this year had been helpful.</p>	<p>We are trialing a new initiative of informal SD lunches in response to this – these will be opportunities for students to meet with other students in their pathway/their year/other years, as well as staff, to share ideas and support and make friends.</p>

Dissertation arrangements	There was feedback from some students being confused about dissertations and word counts; all of this is set out clearly in the SD Dissertation Handbook.	We have made a number of changes to dissertation information and supervision, which will be brought into the degree in due course.
Fourth year course choices	Some students in fourth year would like to take courses that are of particular relevance to their dissertation/career planning.	We have changed the regulations so that, in exceptional circumstances, it will be permissible for students to take one less pathway course and one other relevant course in fourth year - if for example, the course was directly relevant for a student's dissertation, and they had all the pre-requisites. Students should discuss this with their PT, and would need their PT approval.

#### **Comments from the External Examiner, Dr Kate Burningham, July 2018**

The Degree is assessed every year by an independent external expert; Dr Kate Burningham from the University of Surrey.

Her comments for this year are:

- This entire MA is an innovative degree. Staff work extremely hard to ensure that students develop a genuinely interdisciplinary and applied understanding of sustainable development. A wide range of methods of assessment are used to enable students to develop transferable skills and communicate appropriately to diverse audiences. Alongside traditional essays and exams, assignments include the production of policy briefs and blogs and reflections on site visits.
- The amount of effort committed to ensuring student satisfaction is extremely high. Programme staff (both academic and administrative) get to know their students very well and communicate with them closely through staff student liaison committees.
- Extreme care is taken over moderation and the process which has been followed is always spelt out clearly. This is clearly very time consuming for the academics involved.
- Very detailed and thoughtful feedback is provide for students at all levels, on cover sheets, as annotations to the text of assignments and also on exam marking forms. Care is taken to ensure that comments are constructive, explain clearly why students have achieved a particular mark and what they could do to improve their work.

#### **Comments from the Teaching Programme Review, February 2018**

Every five years, degrees across the University are assessed by a panel of external experts, along with staff from outwith our School, in a Teaching Programme Review.

Comments from the panel:

Key Strengths and Areas of Positive Practice:

- The pioneering nature of the Sustainable Development Degree
- The Personal Tutor System and Student Support Officer, for ably fulfilling their commitments and duties to an extremely high standard
- The quality and standards of support available to all students
- The subject group for how they have effectively coped with a significant increase in student numbers since the last review.
- The quality of teaching and provision that students received from Sociology and Sustainable Development.
- The work of Postgraduate Tutors in the Subject Area.
- The significant efforts and engagement with Widening Participation.
- The use of weekly newsletters, SocPALS, SDPals, and SD Families in encouraging and growing a sense of a cohesive cohort.
- That Sustainable Development review the resources required to maintain, and the sustainability of, the current provisions of the Sustainable Development Degree.