

BRIATHAR DÉ MO LÓCHRANN



MIC

MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE
COLÁISTE MUIRE GAN SMÁL

Mary Immaculate College Submission National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development to 2030



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Introduction

Mary Immaculate College, founded in 1898, is a University-level College of Education and the Liberal Arts, academically linked with the University of Limerick. The College is a multi-campus institution, with a student population of over 5,000 students enrolled in undergraduate programmes in Primary and Post-Primary Education, Liberal Arts and Early Childhood Care and Education, as well as a range of postgraduate programmes at Diploma, MA and PhD levels.

The college warmly welcomes this opportunity to make a submission on the development of the second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development to 2030, by their two departments. The involvement of two government departments represented by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD and Minister for Education Norma Foley TD is particularly timely and strategically important. The college has a long-standing commitment to ESD and global citizenship. Indeed, sustainability will feature as a central pillar in the forthcoming Mary Immaculate College's Academic Plan. Furthermore, as we undertake a new Buildings Master Plan, sustainability will be a guiding framework in terms of energy, heritage, green areas.

Staff at MIC hold significant expertise in the areas of Environmental Sciences, Education for Sustainability (EfS) and STEM Education. Research interests among academics in the Faculty of Arts, namely the Geography Department, relevant to EFS include Human-environment relations; Interaction of the biosphere and environmental change; Urbanisation, regional and local development; Sustainable development; Modern urban ecosystem services; GIS and Remote sensing. Within the Faculty of Education (Geography, STEM & Developmental Education) staff are leaders in their fields i.e. Environmental Sciences, Developmental Education, Education for Sustainability and STEM Education. A selection of publications from MIC Staff related to ESD and Sustainability is included in Appendix 1.

Academics with the above-mentioned specialist expertise incorporate their knowledge and translate their research into the design and development of their under-graduate and post-graduate courses, ensuring that ESD is prioritised in Education and Training and with current and future as per UNESCO'S ESD roadmap¹.

¹ Education for sustainable development: a roadmap - UNESCO Digital Library

MIC is committed to raising awareness around sustainability and embedding ESD through Teaching and Learning and Research activity involving staff and students but also through a wide range of Engagement & Educational Outreach Initiatives that are delivered on campus annually and through Membership and Collaborating with Relevant Organisations.

Teaching and Learning

There are several national educational Strategies and Action Plans that incorporate and link directly to Ireland's Education for Sustainability goals, namely, *National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020*², *Climate Action Plan 2019*³, *Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017 – 2023*⁴, and *Ireland's Action Plan for Education 2016 - 2019*⁵ and staff at MIC ensure that the visions and actions of these strategies guide the design and delivery of our Teaching & Learning, Research and Educational Outreach activities across faculties and campuses in Limerick and Thurles.



The vision of the *National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020*⁶ was that “education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge (the ‘what’), the key dispositions and skills (the ‘how’) and the values (the ‘why’) that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed active citizens who take action for a more sustainable future” (DES, 2014, p.3). As a result MIC has made strides to ensure that ESD is a key feature in modules and courses within the Faculty of Education and Arts.

The *National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland 2014-2020* (DES, 2014) highlights the need to integrate ESD in the curriculum from pre-school up to senior cycle. The strategy identified eight priority action areas which are considered to be key leverage points to advance the ESD agenda in Ireland:

- Leadership and coordination

² <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/National-Strategy-on-Education-for-Sustainable-Development-in-Ireland-2014-2020.pdf>

³ https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/publications/Documents/16/Climate_Action_Plan_2019.pdf

⁴ [Irish aid Development-Education-Strategy-2017-2023.pdf](https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/publications/Documents/16/Climate_Action_Plan_2019.pdf)

⁵ <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Action-Plan-for-Education-2016-2019/>

⁶ <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/National-Strategy-on-Education-for-Sustainable-Development-in-Ireland-2014-2020.pdf>

- Data collection and baseline measurement
- Curriculum at pre-school, primary and post primary
- Professional development
- Further Education and Training
- Higher Education and Research
- Promoting participation by young people
- Sustainability in action.

Both faculties at MIC have a long history of integrating the key fundamental principles of the above-mentioned strategies and action plans and thus providing a cohesive and well-integrated education for all our students across different career paths. The Faculty of Education has also been adapting and delivering programmes in Initial Teacher Education that respond to and address *The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland 2014-2020* for many years now, well before 2014, preparing our future educators to raise awareness about Sustainability, Sustainable development, Developmental Education, Climate Change and Climate Action among our students at both primary and second level. This approach has been adopted by MIC to ensure that ESD are developed right across the education system, developing a spiral approach, making connections between primary, second, third level and future careers.

In an attempt to ensure that there is an awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals among our learners, as per the strategic priorities set out in “*The Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020*”⁷, modules in education and educational outreach initiatives at MIC have been adopting the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 17 SDGs reflect economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, providing a unique framework for teachers for thematic teaching, global learning, sustainability, and citizenship education.

Sustainability in the MIC Academic Plan

MIC has adopted a whole institution approach to ESD⁸. Under the MIC Strategic Plan 2023, the College has committed to the development of an Academic Plan which will focus on mapping the

⁷ [DCCAE - The Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020 \(assets.gov.ie\)](https://assets.gov.ie/)

⁸ [ESD Consultation Paper EV FINAL 22.04.21 - 647e4c20-78e0-49b0-948e-29fb9fa9ac9c.pdf \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/)

direction of future academic activities of the institution. Sustainability has been prioritised as one of four key pillars in this academic plan. While consultations with key stakeholders are ongoing, input from the college community to date has identified 5 initial key themes for the delivery of sustainability on campus. These are presented in Figure 1. There is a direct interrelationship between the sustainability pillar in the MIC Academic Plan and priority areas in the GOI consultation paper on ESD⁹ with commonalities on youth and community being particularly obvious (Figure 2).

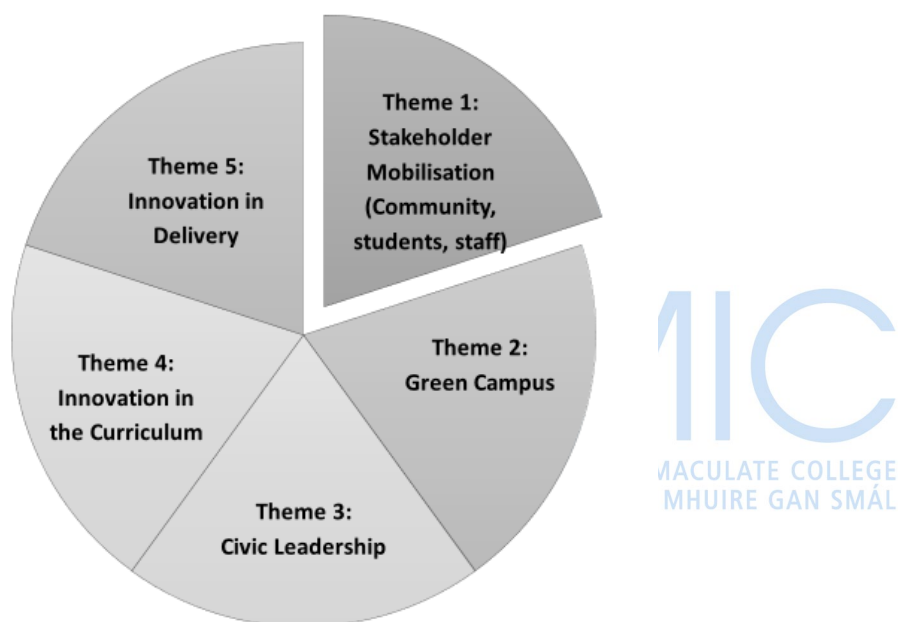


FIGURE 1. DRAFT THEMES FOR DELIVERY OF THE SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR IN THE MIC ACADEMIC PLAN

Research

MIC has been involved in a wide variety of research projects revolving around the theme of sustainability and sustainable development in the past and continues to carry out a wide variety of research in these areas. All such projects involve collaborations with a variety of key stakeholders including many higher-level educational institutions nationally and internationally, the informal education sector, the SEAI (Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland), EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and SFI (Science Foundation Ireland) (Please see Table 1) This research plays a significant

⁹ [ESD Consultation Paper EV FINAL 22.04.21 - 647e4c20-78e0-49b0-948e-29fb9fa9ac9c.pdf \(www.gov.ie\)](#)

role, not only in informing the teaching and learning at MIC, but also in informing national policy in the area of education (Developmental Education, Education for Sustainability and STEM Education), educational outreach, urbanisation, regional and local development (environmental issues and environmental sciences). Table 1 outlines and describes the most recent and current MIC research in these areas.

The Department of Geography at MIC carries out a wide variety of applied and policy-oriented research, engaging in contract research and consultancy work with local, regional, national, and international agencies in both the voluntary and statutory sectors. They have successfully attracted research funding from bodies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and, via the Irish Social Science Platform, the Irish Government's Programme for Research in third level institutions. The Department is also a formal collaborator in the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) established in 2001, and in the Irish Centre for Regional and Local Development (ICLRD).

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Research

B.Ed. and B.A. students are required to complete a final year project. A proportion of these projects examine sustainability related issues. There is a significant number of students partaking their postgraduate research in Education for Sustainability. For instance, a number of DECPsy doctoral theses in related areas, for example Forest school and wellbeing, green exercise and working memory/wellbeing and at perceptions of climate change among young people through a psychological lens.

ESD Research and Projects Involving Staff & Students at MIC		
Recent and Current Research Project	Details	Involvement of MIC Staff, Students & External Contributors & Organisations
Climate change education in primary schools: an interdisciplinary approach	Under the leadership of Dr. Anne Dolan, Members of staff from the Faculty of Education have collaborated in climate change education research. The proceedings from this research will be published shortly in the following publication Dolan, A.M. (ed.) <i>Teaching climate change in primary schools: an interdisciplinary approach</i> . London: Routledge.	This project led by Dr. Anne Dolan involved a programme of professional development for staff at MIC on Climate Change Education. Staff then tried and tested a variety of different teaching strategies with pre-service and in-service teachers and children in schools, culminating in the writing of an educational book for educators.
InPlace: Investigating Planning, Place-Making and Commuting in Ireland.	InPlace: Investigating Planning, Place-Making and Commuting in Ireland. The focus here is on the social costs of commuting, and again sustainability issues are to the fore.	Prof. Des Mc Cafferty is PI for an international research project. The research team is drawn from MIC, MU, UU, UCD and Uni of Maryland. The project will run until spring 2023.
Pillars for Just Transitions From Just Transitions to Just Disruptions	Dr. John Morrissey is co-investigator on a number of international research collaborations on sustainability related topics, including Pillars for Just Transitions a collaborative project with Southern Connecticut State University, USA which considers the social justice elements of socio-technical transitions and the From Just Transitions to Just Disruptions a developing project which aims to develop an integrated sustainability, justice and resilience framework to steer policy responses to the climate crisis.	Dr. John Morrissey and international collaborators.
Teaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Schools	This is a collaborative project focuses on the teaching of the SDGs including the Climate Action Goals. It is anticipated that the research from this project will be published in a book.	This project led by Dr. Anne Dolan involves members of staff from MIC, UL and external organisations collaborating in writing a book on Teaching the Sustainable Development Goals across the education system.
Picture book on climate change	Dr. Anne Dolan is completing a summer course on children's illustration for picture books. She plans to design a picture book on the topic of climate change.	This project led by Dr. Anne Dolan involves collaborations with MIC staff and students.
Climate change education in secondary schools: an interdisciplinary approach	This project involves a CPD programme on climate change education for members of staff from MIC, UL and LIT which will culminate in the publication of a book on the pedagogy of climate change education for secondary schools. Specifically, the CPD will be designed and delivered by staff from MIC and the Ubuntu network. This CPD will include a visit to the Eco Village in Cloughjordan and a writers' retreat. The project aims to enhance collaboration between NISE partners	The project aims to enhance collaboration between NISE partners through a focus on climate change education. This involves the establishment of a climate change education network (for second level teacher educators) within the NISE partnership. This network will include staff from MIC, UL and LIT which will culminate in the publication of a book on the pedagogy of climate change education for secondary schools. The project aims to:

	<p>through a focus on climate change education.</p> <p>This research project will generate a minimum of two journal articles using the collaborative process as an action research project. Participants will be invited to reflect on the overall process through reflective journals and interviews completed by Dr. Anne Dolan. The project will generate a penultimate publication: <i>Climate Change Education in Secondary Schools: an interdisciplinary approach</i>. Every participant will author or co-author a chapter for this book.</p>	<p>To create a climate change CPD programme for teacher educators based on the expertise within NISE.</p> <p>To support researchers to conduct research about discipline specific climate change education and present their work within one book;</p> <p>To create a supportive writing environment which will promote research collaborations within and between NISE institutions.</p>
<p>Review and Research on the impact of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) Schools Programme</p>	<p>Liston, M., Dolan, A., Brennan, A. & Taylor, M. (2019). <i>Review and Research on the impact of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) Schools Programme</i>. A report was compiled by Mary Immaculate College on behalf of the SEAI. Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.</p> <p>The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is the lead agency with responsibility for increasing awareness about sustainable energy. The goals and objectives of the SEAI's Education Programme, through their educational outreach programmes aim to excite and inspire students about STEM and in areas such as energy, environment and climate change and to embed STEM, and relevant areas such as ESD, Climate Change Education across the school curricula, ethos and culture. The SEAI's programme also aims to embed sustainable energy in all relevant curricula within the Irish school system in an integrated manner and that all schools have a whole school approach to energy education, developing an embedded culture of sustainable energy.</p> <p>Led by Dr. Maeve Liston, research was carried out by Mary Immaculate College in 2019 on behalf of the SEAI to review the SEAI educational outreach schools programme for both primary and second level schools in Ireland. The aim of the research was to inform the design and development of future SEAI outreach activities and inform the future direction of the SEAI schools programme and continuous professional</p>	<p>Led by Dr. Maeve Liston, Director of Enterprise & Community Engagement and Senior Lecturer in STEM Education at MIC, in collaboration with the SEAI, Primary & Post-primary teachers in schools across Munster and Dr. Anne Dolan, Dr. Aimee Brennan (Marino Institute) and Dr. Maria Taylor (LIT).</p> <p>The findings from the research has been used to inform the design and delivery of elective modules in STEM education at MIC and summer courses for in-service teachers.</p>

	development for teachers in the area of STEM Education, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)/ Education for Sustainability (EfS) and Environmental Education.	
Our World (SFI/Junior Achievement Programme)	Dr. Maeve Liston is a member of an advisory taskforce for a new programme in collaboration with SFI and Junior Achievement Ireland involving the design and development of a STEM programme for fifth class entitled: Our World. This involves engaging with key stakeholders in Ireland in co-creation a high-quality STEM education Outreach Programme to be rolled out in schools across Ireland.	Dr. Maeve Liston Director of Enterprise & Community Engagement and Senior Lecturer in STEM Education at MIC, with SFI, Junior Achievement Ireland Education Team, James O'Connor CEO Microsoft, Principal of Stanhope St Primary School, John Hurley of H2 Learning, and Fidelity Investments Philanthropy Manager.
The design, development, and implementation of an innovative STEAM Education Outreach programme for Primary Schools based on Climate Change	This project involves the design, develop, and implement an innovative cross disciplinary STEAM Education Outreach programme for primary schools based on climate change. The pilot project will deliver CPD and workshops to teachers and children across Co. Clare, supporting and building capacity through professional development in STEAM education. The desirable outcome from this project involves developing Science Capital, environmental awareness and proactive teachers and pupils within the school's immediate and wider community. Research results and findings obtained from this high quality, evidenced-based model of professional development for teachers on climate change will then inform and directly influence the teaching of Climate Education in MIC with pre-service and in-service teachers carrying out undergraduate and post-graduate courses. The project has been €40,000 from The Public Innovation Fund in June 2020.	This project delivered through the Clare Education Centre, led by Evelyn Sorohan is being designed in collaborations with Dr. Maeve Liston Director of Enterprise & Community Engagement and Senior Lecturer in STEM Education at MIC, Clare County Council (Arts Officer and Environmental Awareness Officer), Dr Alice D'Arcy, Managing Director, STEAM Education and the Green-Schools initiative.
Undergraduate Dissertations (Faculty of Arts)	Each academic year sees a number of Geography students undertake undergraduate dissertations on climate change.	Example of some titles: The vulnerability of dairy farms to climate change; The effects of climate change on silage and barley yields in Ireland; Public perceptions of extreme weather events.
Ongoing research on Just Transitions and Coastal and Community Sustainability	Collaborations with Geography group at MIC, Southern Connecticut State University, CT, USA & colleagues at RMIT University, Melbourne Australia, as well as CPPU and UCC in Ireland.	Led by Dr, John Morrissey at MIC.

Table 1. ESD and Climate Change Research Projects at MIC

Engagement and Educational Outreach Initiatives

As explained in the previous sections MIC has adopted a whole institution approach to ESD in our strategic priorities in our Strategic Plan and Academic Plan through teaching and learning and research activity but also “*beyond our immediate learner communities, to engage with the wider community and local actors*” (GOI, 2020, p.11)¹⁰. MIC staff manage and organise a wide variety of educational outreach initiatives for staff, students, teachers, children and the wider public with the overall aim in developing Science Literacies and Science Capital around climate change and environmental awareness. Please see Table 2 for details.

SFI’s *Agenda 2020: Excellence and Impact Plan*¹¹ for the period from 2012 to 2020 sets out to have the most engaged and scientifically informed public (SFI, 2015). SFI defines an engaged public as “*one that understands the role of science, can judge between competing priorities and arguments, encourages young people to take science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects, and feels that it has the appropriate level of engagement with, and influence upon, the researchers.*” (SFI, 2012, p.23). A science literate society allows people to make informed decisions about their everyday lives. *Science Capital* is the measure of people’s knowledge, attitudes, skills, and experiences with science. It looks at what and how they know, what and how they think and who they know. People with *Science Capital* engage with science as part of their normal, everyday life. *Science Capital* is affected by experiences i.e. exposure and engagement with science at school, at home, during informal learning experiences through educational outreach both in and out of school and everyday life experiences (Archer *et al.*, 2015).

MIC recognises the importance of non-formal education engagement initiatives in the areas of sustainability, climate change and developmental education¹². Therefore, MIC is involved in the delivery of high quality, effective sustainability communication in order to develop responsible human interactions with the natural and social environment and an understanding of the human-environment relationship.

¹⁰ ESD Consultation Paper_EV_FINAL 22.04.21 - 647e4c20-78e0-49b0-948e-29fb9fa9ac9c.pdf (www.gov.ie)

¹¹ <https://www.sfi.ie/funding/sfi-policies-and-guidance/research-impact/AGENDA-2020.pdf>

¹² [Irish aid Development-Education-Strategy-2017-2023.pdf](#)

Environmental Awareness and Climate Change Engagement and Educational Outreach Initiatives at MIC		
Engagement and Educational Outreach Initiatives	Details	Involvement of MIC Staff, Students & External Contributors & Organisations
Climate Change Professional Development for MIC staff (2018-2020)	This programme of professional development was delivered by staff and members of external organisations to MIC staff across the Faculty of Arts and Education from 2018 -2020. 18 members of staff were involved. Two-hour meetings were held every second month over a two-year period. A field trip to the Eco-Village in Cloughjordan was organised.	18 members of staff from a wide variety of subject areas for example STEM Education, Visual Arts, Geography, History, Developmental Education participated in the CPD, translating what they learned into their practice with undergraduate and post-graduate students.
Tiny Forest at MIC	MIC is in the process of developing a Tiny Forest on its campus in Limerick. The Tiny Forests (Leaf Ireland) programme, with an Taisce, are working with management and academics in the area of geography and STEM education at MIC in designing and planting a 20m x 10m space, area of dense of native Irish trees.	The Tiny Forest initiative involves the delivery of workshops to students during core sustainability and education for sustainable development modules and electives. MIC is collaborating with local schools, an Taisce and the Tiny Forests (Leaf Ireland) programme in developing this programme.
The DICE (Development and Intercultural Education) Project	Each year, through the DICE Project, a wide variety of engagement and educational outreach events on Climate Change are held at MIC for staff, students and primary and second level teachers.	The DICE Project is a national education initiative, funded by Irish Aid, which promotes the integration of development education and intercultural education in Initial Teacher Education at primary level in Ireland. The project is implemented by DCU, Maynooth University, Marino Institute of Education and Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. DICE events are open to both students and staff at MIC. Events are delivered in collaboration with a wide variety of external organisations such as Irish Development Education Association; Climate Chaos Ireland and Trócaire.
Science Week – The Tipperary Festival of Science	The TFS is managed and delivered by Mary Immaculate College in collaboration with Science Foundation Ireland and Limerick Institute of Technology through arranging events with a wide range of collaborators in a variety of venues across Tipperary i.e. in higher education institutions, schools, libraries, theatres, youth clubs, art galleries, retail spaces, industry etc. In the past number of years a focus has been placed on the theme of Environmental Awareness and Care and Climate Change during the festival, offering workshops, talks and seminars in this area to staff and students at MIC, schools and the general public.	Sessions delivered to all MIC staff, students, local schools (Tipperary) and the general public.

	https://www.mic.ul.ie/news/2019/launch-of-tipperary-festival-of-science	
Climate Month at MIC	Every November as part of Science Week Ireland a Climate Awareness Seminar Series is delivered on different aspects of climate change, organised by the Faculty of Arts and Education for staff and students. https://www.mic.ul.ie/news/2019/limerick-festival-of-science	Members of staff deliver lectures / seminars to staff, students, and the wider community.
One World Seminar Series at MIC	Every spring semester to celebrate One World Week a series of awareness raising lunchtime seminars on the topics of Sustainability and Climate, Justice are delivered to staff, students, and the general public.	Seminars presented by staff members and open to all students and the public. Funded by Youth Council of Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland.
Green Campus Programme at MIC	MIC Thurles have developed a Green Campus Programme, which provides a valuable opportunity for our students to learn and develop important life-skills and at the same time contribute towards our thriving and growing community. The Green Campus programme is an example of a community-led holistic approach that provides students and staff with a sense of shared collegiality and responsibility, and a realisation that individuals working together can make significant differences to their environment. Our overall aim is to achieve a 'greener' and more environmentally friendly campus. A particular purpose of our involvement with the Green Campus Programme is to provide the students with a leadership experience that is relevant to their future teaching careers, and to encourage a sense of responsibility, community and independence amongst the students as leaders in promoting environmental awareness issues. The Green Campus Programme fosters an environmental awareness in our campus in a way that connects everyday activities, academic study and student development and connecting them together with the operational requirements of the college.	The MIC Campus involving the entire campus community aims to make environmental awareness and action an intrinsic part of the life and ethos of educational facilities. This includes the students, academic staff, non-teaching staff, as well as media, local business, contractors and visitors. The Green-Campus also endeavors to extend learning beyond the classroom/lecture to develop responsible attitudes and commitment, both in College and in the wider community. Green-Campus is an international environmental education Programme, offering well-defined, controllable ways for educational campuses to take environmental issues, innovation and research from the academic departments and apply them to the day-to-day management of the campus.
Green Flag at MIC	Mary Immaculate College (MIC) has been awarded a Green Flag for its Thurles campus in recognition of the efforts of students and staff who have successfully reduced waste throughout the campus, increased recycling, and raised awareness of environmental and sustainability issues amongst the student and staff population ¹³ .	Since MIC has been awarded Green Flag we have started to forge even stronger links with the local community and provide a hub for schools that are part of the Schools' Green Flag initiative to network and link together.

Table 2. Examples of Engagement and Educational Outreach Initiatives

¹³ <https://www.mic.ul.ie/news/2021/mic-thurles-green-flag-award>

MIC Staff Consultations on Ireland's ESD Strategy

Consultation Process

Further to the launch of the public consultation on the development of the second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development to 2030, Prof. Niamh Hourigan, Vice-President of Academic Affairs at Mary Immaculate College invited Dr. Anne Dolan, Lecturer in Primary Geography (Faculty of Education) and Dr. John Morrissey, Lecturer in Geography (Faculty of Arts) to lead the MIC consultation process on the strategy. Extensive input from students, academic and professional services staff at MIC was obtained in a series of consultation workshops in June 2021. The consultations were structured around the core questions outlined in the 2021 consultation paper (GOI, 2021, p14¹⁴), shown in Table 3:

Q1	Do you feel that the key priority areas proposed and outlined in this paper should constitute the main focus of the new National Strategy for ESD to 2030?
Q2	What other priority areas, if any, do you think should be included?
Q3	Should any of the priority areas proposed be excluded?
Q4	What do you feel we should aim to achieve in respect of the above?
Q5	What key actions could be taken in terms of advancing and further developing these priority areas? Please give three examples of suggested actions in each case.
Q6	What, in your view, are the main challenges you/we face in delivering on ESD goals/targets?
Q7	Are you or your organisation involved in research linked to ESD or the UN SDGs? If so, what is the main focus of your research?

TABLE 3. STRUCTURED QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS, AFTER GOI (2021, p14)

Attendees were presented with an overview of the 5 draft priority areas outlined in the consultation paper, (GOI, 2021, p10), shown in Figure 2.

¹⁴ GOI, 2021. Ireland's Education for Sustainable Development Strategy to 2030 Consultation Paper. Government of Ireland.

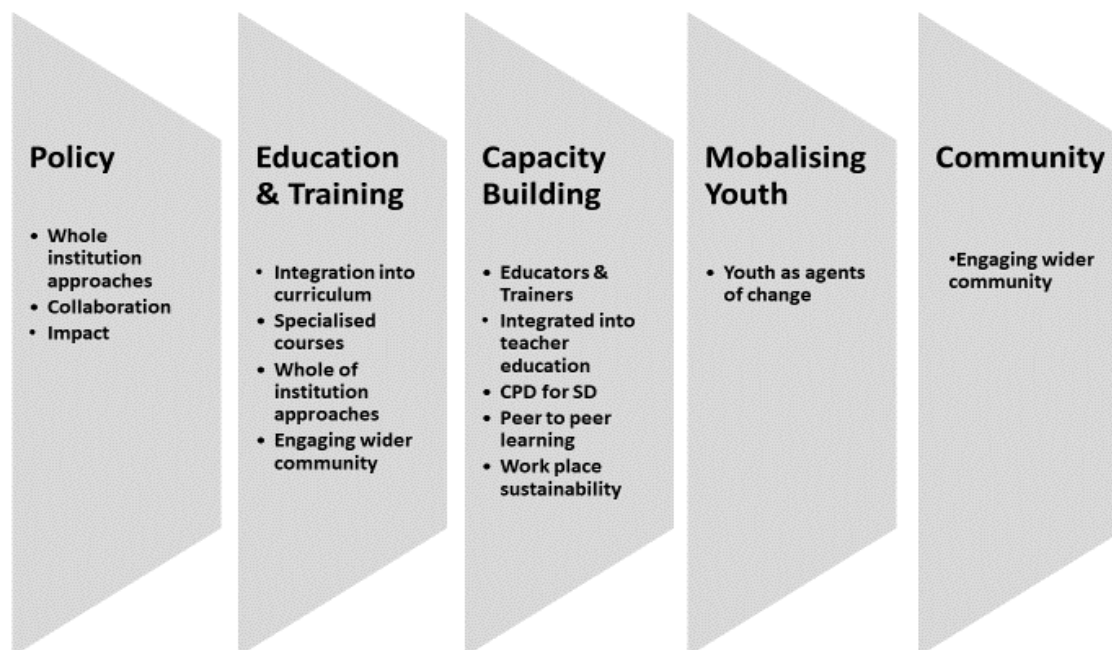


FIGURE 2. DRAFT PRIORITY AREAS, BASED ON UNESCO FRAMEWORK (GOI, 2021)

All consultation sessions followed a uniform process, whereby structured discussion on the core questions from Table 3 was followed by an open-forum, unstructured exchange of views and perspectives. Notes were taken with the consent of attendees and these were analysed thematically to develop an integrated and coherent synthesis.

Outcomes of the MIC Consultation Ireland's ESD Strategy

Broad support of the priority areas outlined in Figure 1 was forthcoming and MIC stakeholders expressed support from these 5 areas as key pillars of the new national strategy. Contributors expressed the view that the 5 priority areas needed to be supported in specific, key ways (e.g. through the provision of appropriate levels of funding and underpinning legislative structures). Key themes which emerged from the consultation are outlined below. While these themes are addressed to a degree and in some form in Figure 2, contributors were of the view that these themes in particular were deserving of prioritised inclusion and explicit acknowledgement in the new national strategy.

Terminology: Education for Sustainable Development is a contested term, considered by some as an oxymoron. For instance, traditional approaches to development since the industrial revolution have been carbon intensive and ultimately un-environmental. Authors such as Wade (2014¹⁵) propose the term 'Education for Sustainability' as it reflects openness to alternative perspective and radical viewpoints. We also suggest that the new strategy should adopt this terminology.

Environmental/Ecological Literacy – There is currently a deep knowledge deficit on ESD matters.

- New strategy to outline specific measures to address current knowledge deficit in understanding the scale of current ecological crises.
- Commitment is required for the development of environmental/ecological literacy in understanding and applying personal, local, community based, national and international solutions.
- New strategy should aim to culturally embed ESD, in particular, seeking to fundamentally challenge cultural assumptions on consumption, materials use and energy.

Sustainability in Practice – The strategy should prioritise the practical over the theoretical.

- ESD with a practical emphasis is urgently required, a focus on 'what can be done' rather 'what is wrong'.
- The new strategy should seek to encourage the meeting of pragmatism with ambition, stressing for example, the importance of graded actions; from short-term, little actions to longer term strategic changes, placed within ambitious and long-ranging strategies.
- Transdisciplinary approaches should be emphasised, whereby different disciplines and spheres of experience may find commonality which develop mutual understandings.

¹⁵ Wade, R (2014). Learning for sustainability: the challenges for education policy and practice. in: Atkinson, H and Wade, R (ed.) *The challenges of sustainability: linking politics, education and learning* Bristol Policy Press. pp. 63-86

ESD Community Debate and Dialogue – There is considerable scope for more extensive public facing debate as well as inter-institutional co-operation.

- Alignment on ESD goals across all levels of education is required
- More deliberate linkages between primary, secondary and third levels of education, including outreach activities, guest lessons, collaborative projects etc. should be fostered through:
 - Institution level sustainability forums, including all key stakeholders (staff, students etc.); applied at primary, secondary and third level institutions.
 - Opportunities for cross-institutional collaboration and co-operation for third level institutions eg. Regional ESD assemblies to report on progress, pool resources and share learnings.
 - National ESD annual conference to share practical learnings & case-studies

Civic Leadership on Sustainability – Education institutes are uniquely placed to do much more on ESD and to actively demonstrate best-practice on sustainability.

- Educational campuses should be designated as key ESD ‘learning laboratories’, eg. all educational campuses to sign up to the National Pollinator Plan
- Mechanisms should be identified to encourage more assertive and definitive civic leadership, eg.
 - Annual ESD plans to be developed and made publicly available.
 - Publishing of Carbon Footprint reports on an annual basis
 - Common Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on sustainability, eg. Indicators related to action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals across primary, secondary and third levels
 - Mandated divestment from fossil fuel investments for organisations in receipt of public monies

Funding and Legislative Support – The new strategy needs adequate resourcing and political support.

- Financial support for CPD for ESD provision across primary, secondary and third levels is essential.
- More extensive grant support needed to support and show-case ESD innovations

Figure 3 outlines amended priority areas for the new National Strategy on ESD, following extensive consultation across the MIC college community. The importance of civic leadership from the education sector is emphasised here, as is the need for alignment on ESD approaches across primary, secondary and third level institutions. The new strategy needs adequate political will, demonstrated first and foremost by an appropriate level of funding support. However, underpinning governance and legislative supports are also required. The strategy needs a clear focus on its ultimate *raison d'être* – that is on precipitating the societal transformation that an ever-increasing volume of reports and studies are showing is essential for future prosperity (UNEP, 2020¹⁶); Lenton *et al.*, 2019¹⁷). For this, the entire academic sector needs to be more precisely aligned and directed towards delivering meaningful ESD – trans-disciplinarity in teaching and research one key means of delivering this (da Rocha *et al.*, (2020¹⁸)).



¹⁶ UNEP. (2020). *Emissions Gap Report 2020*. Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme.

¹⁷ Lenton, T.M., Rockström, J., Gaffney, O., Rahmstorf, S., Richardson, K., Steffen, W. and Schellnhuber, H.J., 2019. Climate tipping points—too risky to bet against. *Nature*, 575(28 November), pp. 592–595.

¹⁸ da Rocha, P.L.B., Pardini, R., Viana, B.F. and El-Hani, C.N., 2020. Fostering inter-and transdisciplinarity in discipline-oriented universities to improve sustainability science and practice. *Sustainability Science*, 15(3), pp.717-728.

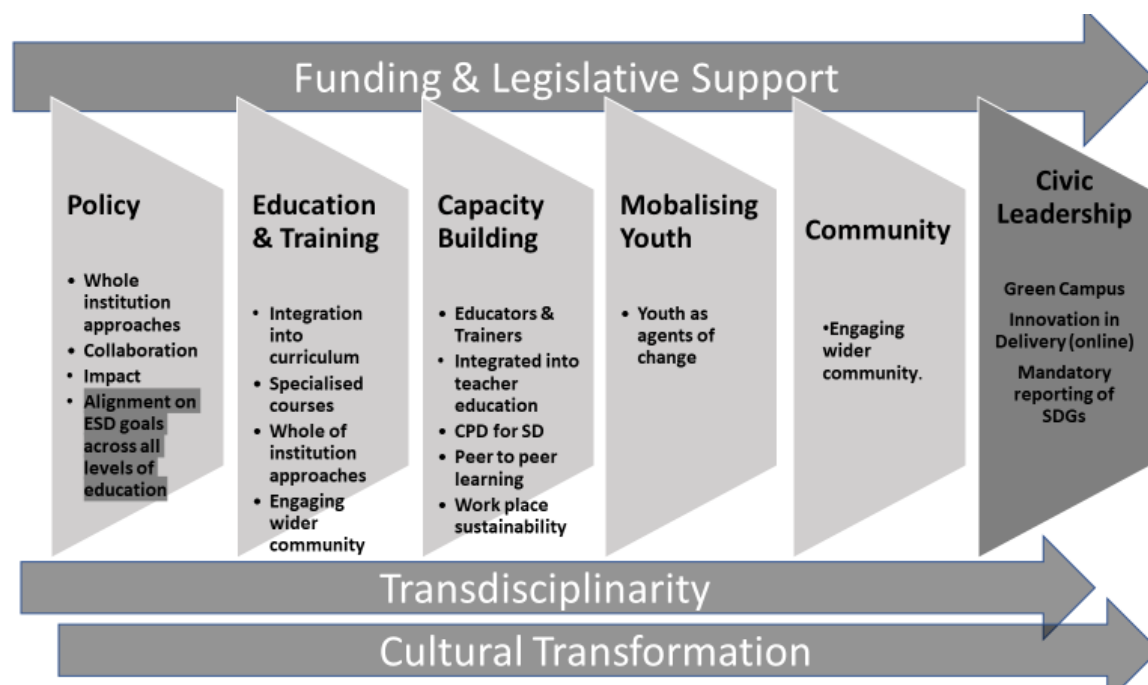


FIGURE 3. AMENDED PRIORITY AREAS, BASED ON MIC CONSULTATIONS, JUNE 2021

Recommendations

Specific recommended priority actions are as follows:

1. The strategy should reflect the need to re-orient the entire education system towards education for sustainability. Essentially a complete paradigm shift is required.
2. There is a need to recognise that Education for Sustainability is at the heart of quality education.
3. There is an urgent need for investment to support research in Education for Sustainability.
4. Immediate attention is required for building capacity of educators in Education for Sustainability.
5. Any future policy or action plan applying to any sector of education requires sustainability profiling and or audit.
6. Any strategy required funding and political commitment such as that which was evident following the launch of the Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy.

Appendix 1

Select Publications from MIC Staff Related to ESD and Sustainability

Freebody, K. and **Finneran, M.**, 2021. Climate Change: a battle for our hearts and minds' in *Critical Themes in Drama: Social, Cultural and Political Analysis*, Abingdon, Oxon. Routledge, 153-166.

Dolan, A.M., 2020. *Powerful Primary Geography: A Toolkit for 21st-century Learning*. Routledge.

Morrissey, J., Schwaller, E., Dickson, D. and Axon, S., 2020. Affordability, security, sustainability? Grassroots community energy visions from Liverpool, United Kingdom. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 70, p.101698.

Axon, S. and **Morrissey, J.**, 2020. Just energy transitions? Social inequities, vulnerabilities and unintended consequences. *Buildings and Cities*, 1(1).

Bloomer, J., 2020. The only honest thief: critiquing the role of human smugglers. In *Haven: The Mediterranean Crisis and Human Security*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

McCafferty, D., 2019. Fifty years of urbanisation in Ireland: Structural and spatial evolution of the urban hierarchy since Buchanan. *Administration*, 67(3), pp.65-89.

Heidkamp, C.P. and **Morrissey, J.** Eds., 2018. *Towards Coastal Resilience and Sustainability*. Routledge.

Dalton, C., 2018. Natural capital: An inventory of Irish lakes. *Irish Geography*, 51(1), pp.75-92.

Flannery, E., 2015. *Ireland and Ecocriticism: Literature, History and Environmental Justice*. Routledge.

Dolan, A.M., 2014. *You, Me and Diversity: Picturebooks for Teaching Development and Intercultural Education*. Trentham Books. Available from: IOE Press, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0AL, UK.

Flannery, E., 2013. Ireland and Ecocriticism. *The Journal of Ecocriticism – Special Issue on Ireland*, 5(2), pp. 1-8.

