

Leadership for sustainability

How Agored Cymru are educating tomorrow's leaders



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

www.cymru.gov.uk



Agored Cymru

Overview

This story focuses on Agored Cymru's drive to create sustainable development qualifications that will support the Welsh Government's statutory commitment to the way business and the public sector in Wales operate.

Background

Agored Cymru is the Welsh Awarding Organisation, charitable trust and social enterprise which works in partnership to promote learning, widen opportunities and enable progression for learners in Wales. With over 20 years of experience in awarding credit in Wales, we develop qualifications and accreditation opportunities to meet the priorities of the Welsh Government in supporting employers, communities and learners of every age, gain access to the benefits of learning.

Results

Identify outcomes that increase the wellbeing of Wales

Evidence

Make decisions using better information

Collaboration

Work with others across boundaries

Long term

Fix the causes rather than the symptoms

Connect

Focus on the economic, social and environmental benefits

Transparency

Measure and report on the difference you make

This is one of a series of SD stories that can be found on the Welsh Government website at <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/>

Why

The new Level 5 Leadership for Sustainability qualifications have been driven by the requirement to embed Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) into the education system and the development of the pending Sustainable Development Bill.

The inspiration for the qualification came from Peter Jenner, the Chief Executive of consultancy and training provider William Battle Ltd and Agored Cymru Board member. Jenner's focus was on putting sustainability into the heart of business, and he was keen to develop a qualification that effectively taught and helped individuals to achieve this. In October 2011 a previous student of the programme, Glyn Jones of Princes Gate Cool Water, won the 'Enhancing Leadership & Management Skills Award' from the Welsh Government.

At the same time, Agored Cymru recognised that Wales is one of only four regions worldwide that has a statutory commitment to sustainability, and so looking more closely at the skills and knowledge required to support the Welsh Government's commitment to sustainable development made even more sense. The existing success of Agored's current ESDGC units also meant that they were confident that their approach would have impact in both public and private sectors.

"The sustainable development focus is not just on risk, but opportunity, good practice and the business case for sustainability thinking to deliver low carbon growth and provide a sustainable quality of life for future generations in Wales."

Rachel Mooney,
Senior Manager Qualification Development,
Agored.

Agored have been quick to identify that educational programmes are a crucial means of delivering sustainable development as a mainstream way of doing business and running services within the public sector. The programme has been applied in the re-commissioning of Social Care and of improving Healthcare in Wales and is the key to meeting the challenges of the new Bill in the autumn.

What they did

The new qualification has been based on work carried out over 15 years with best practice from the US, UK and EU and has been piloted throughout the UK and Europe through £4.6m worth of funding.

The units have been developed through engaging with businesses to "achieve more with less", and is aimed to go beyond a continuous and incremental improvement mentality by promoting innovation and releasing the creativity of the workforce.

The level 5 qualifications build upon Agored's existing ESDGC accredited units as well as input from a wide range of stakeholders including the Welsh Government's Sustainable Development department, and a selection of experts from the private sector who are directly involved with both business enterprise and educational development.

This is one of a series of SD stories that can be found on the Welsh Government website at <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/>

The Steering group purposely developed the content centred on knowledge and workplace based practice to deliver a low carbon economy and the need for a radical shift in the way that economic, social/health and environmental sustainability are addressed.

Through this development Agored Cymru identified three core skills for sustainable development:

1. The ability to think and act in the three dimensions of sustainability simultaneously (economic, social and environmental).
2. The learned skill of delivering deep organisational change from within.
3. Innovation in product, service and process.

Some of the specific units that have been developed around these skills include:

- Delivering sustainable change
- Sustainable supply chain and strategic partnerships
- Public sector procurement to boost local economies
- Cutting waste to improve services and reduce costs
- Succession planning and talent management for sustainability
- Innovation through diversity

The aim is to train internal 'sustainability change agents' with the skills to significantly impact both the shareholder value and profitability of companies.

“The qualification has taken a year to research, scrutinise and incorporate best practice advice from the expertise within the business sector. It is the first of its kind and it is hoped that it will support significant change toward the sustainability of the Welsh economy”.

Rachel Mooney,
Senior Manager Qualification
Development, Agored.

What changed

The qualification officially launched in April 2013 and has attracted the attention of both public and private sector. Whether its ultimate aim to create economically, socially and environmentally sustainable organisations reaches its potential is still to be seen, but Agored Cymru hope the course's design will challenge conditions that block the path to a more sustainable way of working.

The course doesn't just focus on the science and numbers side of sustainable development. It recognises that to create change, a mix of both sustainability, knowledge and soft skills are very important.

Rachel Mooney says that the qualification builds the learners' ability to consider economic, social, health and environmental metrics of outcome while mastering the practice of Sustainable Change Management. It is also expected that the learners will be proficient at communication and empowerment along with appraisal and recognition of achievements.

This is one of a series of SD stories that can be found on the Welsh Government website at <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/>

What they learned

The next challenge for the course is to achieve demand in Wales in both public and private sectors.

Some public sector organisations have already shown their support, such as the Leader of the City & County of Swansea and his team, Public Sector Management Wales, the Welsh Local Government Association, and the Chief Executive of the NHS. Building the qualification in Sustainable Governance has been a vital pre-requisite to encourage commitment from these organisations.

Involving both private and public sector in the formation of the course has meant it's been designed with their needs in mind. For the course's success going forward, gaining political backing and adoption of the programme by Public Sector Management Wales and Senior HR Managers will positively influence the uptake.

Agored Cymru say that this is only the beginning of the journey. The hurdle is still to convince organisations of the need to invest in training as a means of delivering sustainability through economic growth, cost reduction, service innovation and environmental improvement. It is also necessary to make sustainable development more relevant to Chief Executives as a cross cutting theme that helps them to achieve their operational and strategic priorities.

The uptake and delivery of these principles and their embedding within organisation practice in Wales will be monitored and reviewed at intervals over the next five years. Its success should be measurable through sustained use and organisational adaptation supporting sustainable business practices.

“Most organisations are designed in silos. We create management structures in silos, budget in silos, derive policy in silos and implement strategy in silos. Then we wonder why sustainable development is not working. The qualification takes sustainable development from the green silos across all organisational structures by addressing economic, social/health and environmental issues simultaneously.”

Peter Jenner,
Chief Executive William Battle Ltd.

Contact and Links

Rachel Mooney - Senior Manager Qualification Development

02920 741069

Leadership for Sustainability Course
Agored's ESDGC Units
Agored's Sustainability Units
William Battle Ltd

This is one of a series of SD stories that can be found on the Welsh Government website at <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/>

