

Feedback for the QAA SBS Advisory Group for Social Policy

Overview

Students Organising for Sustainability ([SOS-UK](#)) has been working with the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges ([EAUC](#)) to support QAA Subject Benchmark Statement (SBS) advisory groups with increasing student voice in their process and integrating sustainability and climate justice into their subject. This is critical and necessary work that will help ensure SBSs are representative and inclusive, whilst providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge to go into green careers and support our collective sustainable future. On 26th November 2024, SOS-UK held an online student consultation to gather views relating to the Subject Benchmark Statement for Social Policy. Current students and recent undergraduates from a diverse variety of UK universities reviewed the current SBS through a sustainability and climate justice lens, finding positive examples and developing suggestions for how the SBS can become more accessible, inclusive, sustainable and forward-facing.

Positive elements of the existing document

- Students referenced the comprehensive nature of this SBS and recognised that it needed to be both broad in reach and vague enough to be relevant to different institutions and settings.
- Students noted that the current document encourages students to directly engage with current debates and the reality of the problems that society faces. They were pleased to see reference to active and participatory learning through visits, case studies and in-person research.
- The group liked that the document focuses on synthesis and dissemination of ideas and arguments. They stated that it is important that developments in social policy are disseminated beyond academic institutions.

Suggestions for improvements or amendments

- The group would like to see an increased emphasis on the interdisciplinary nature of Social Policy, and integration of solutions-focused interdisciplinary themes within critical social theory, especially in regards to the present and future challenges of the climate crisis.
- Students highlighted that the current document uses complex academic language and is not accessible for those with dyslexia, or younger students considering the subject for study at higher education. They suggested that an executive summary or shorter, bullet-point style document is produced that is aimed towards students in further or secondary education.
- Students referenced the significant current lack of content relating to sustainability and urged the group to use a forward-looking approach, that safeguards the future of this subject and of our planet. The group discussed the intersectionality of sustainability, and urged the group to also deeply consider justice issues, and how this can be interwoven into every section of the document.
- Students stated that the new iteration of this document must address the issue of emerging technologies, especially AI, although there was differing opinion within the group over the role that it should play. Some students particularly reflected on the environmental impact of AI data centres, and the potential negative impact on student knowledge and skills, and others were excited about the possibilities that AI may open up for Social Policy.

The future of Social Policy

- Students were highly positive in regards to the future of Social Policy. They were excited about increasing meaningful representation of student voices within the QAA advisory groups and review process, and wished the panel to know that they were eager for the new Subject Benchmark Statement to be widely circulated to students following publication in 2026.

For more information about this student consultation, including more detailed feedback, please contact Hannah Fitzpatrick, Senior Project Manager for Education at SOS-UK: hannah.fitzpatrick@sos-uk.org.