

Embedding Environmental Sustainability in Spiral Curricula for Pre-Registration Allied Health Education: Preparing the Future Professional Workforce

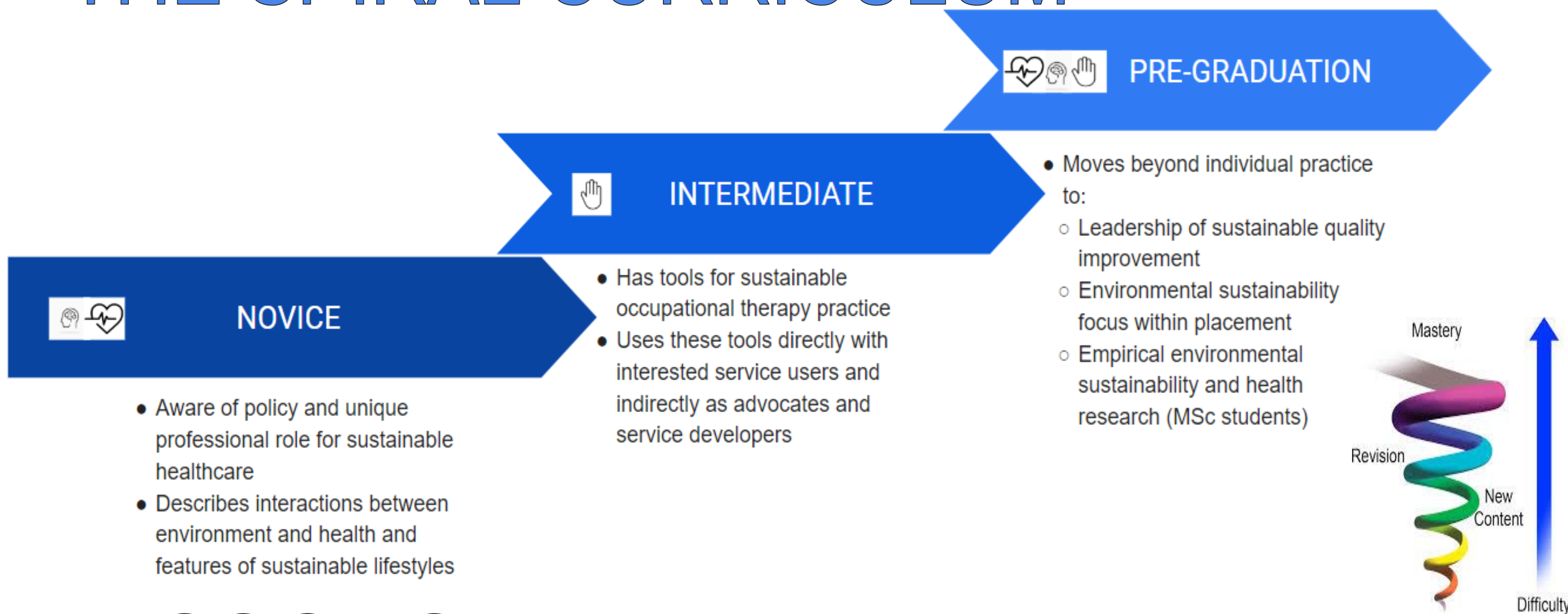
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BACKGROUND

- The Issue:** Allied Health Professions, the third largest NHS workforce, need to be empowered for sustainable healthcare practices (NHS, n.d.). A proactive systematic approach to empowering the future allied health professional (AHP) workforce with a strong professional identity is required as the health impact of climate change is significant and ubiquitous. One way to ensure that ‘curriculums stay relevant to current practice’ (HCPC, 2017) is through embedding sustainability within spiral curriculum in education programmes
- Our goal:** Within one UK Occupational Therapy programme, attitude, knowledge and skill development for environmental sustainability has been embedded at all stages of student learning through a spiral curriculum. The curriculum is designed to align with student development from novice, to intermediate and pre-graduate OT by engaging in head, heart and hand learning opportunities (Singleton, 2015) used for transformative sustainability education
- Process:** The educational approach was founded on information from Global and UK policy & guidelines. Staff engaged in SusQI training, learning outcome targets were mapped across learning outcomes and marking criteria. Review and refinement of spiral curriculum is constant and ongoing

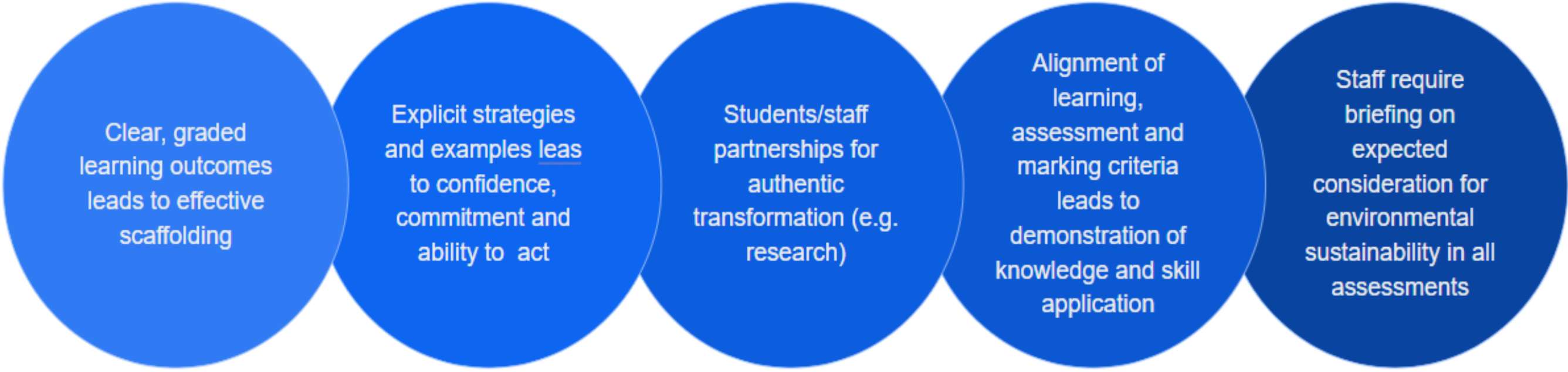
THE SPIRAL CURRICULUM



LESSONS LEARNED

THE CHALLENGE: Skill development for sustainable actions in the context of high-quality person-centred care, is hindered by different level of requirements among AHP professional bodies and a lack of unified agreed educational frameworks

KEYS TO SUCCESS:



THE WIN: Concerns for health and environmental sustainability (ES) is unifying students and academics. Positive feedback is received for this novel initiative. Students now consider ES as part of ‘business as usual’ at every assessment opportunity

Environmental sustainability needs to be central to pre-registration educational programmes for all healthcare professionals

A structured and collaborative approach paves the way to achieve this



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RESULTS & IMPACTS

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| Students | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students collaborated through research (n=5)<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ AHP students’ voices on environmental sustainability in their curriculum◦ Healthy population’s engagement with sustainability in daily life• Students presented their environmental sustainability research at conference and as invited talks.• Creation of sustainability group posters and videos (n=128)• Practice of direct and indirect sustainability strategy application (n=133)• Video presentations exploring sustainable quality improvement in healthcare (SusQI) (n=111) |
| Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 leader → to a team of 3 sustainability co-leads• Contributed a case study about our educational strategy to the Delivered five students/staff conference presentations and invited talks• Authored an environmental sustainability peer reviewed article (Australian Occupational Therapy Journal)• Current research study to investigate pedagogical practices related to embedding environmental sustainability within the Health and Life Sciences Faculty with the intention of co-creating a user guide |
| Organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Established a spiral curriculum across all level of OT study - key environmental sustainability concepts embedded within content, assessment and placement.• Established SusQI Beacon site status for teaching across two AHP professions (Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy)• Ongoing facilitation of more health profession programme to embed sustainability in curricula, with embedded research. To date, three teams supported through consultation• This pedagogical project is within-institution so no direct social and financial impacts have been measured. However, observations are that students perceive that the spiral curriculum shifts their perspective to consider environmental sustainability as part of ‘practice as usual.’ For example, the expectation that the Elkington (2013)’s triple bottom line is used as an outcome measure for quality improvement, ranging from recycle/reuse/reduce, carbon emission reduction, financial savings to staff workload etc. The long-term goal is to investigate this in relation to students’ perspective at course completion and impact on service-user, clinical care and future workforce preparedness |

CALL FOR ACTION

- There is a need to rethink clinical reasoning and person-centredness in the context of environmentally sustainable healthcare (Hess & Rihtman, 2023) for teaching and research
- Shared learning is vital for continued development towards embedding environmental sustainability in all AHP educational programmes across the UK

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