Pursuing Climate Action: combining academic and professional forces

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I argue that..

- Central to progress on sustainability is powerful co-operation between academics and professional services

- Challenging each other in formal and informal contexts allows us to move forward, embedding sustainability within our practice

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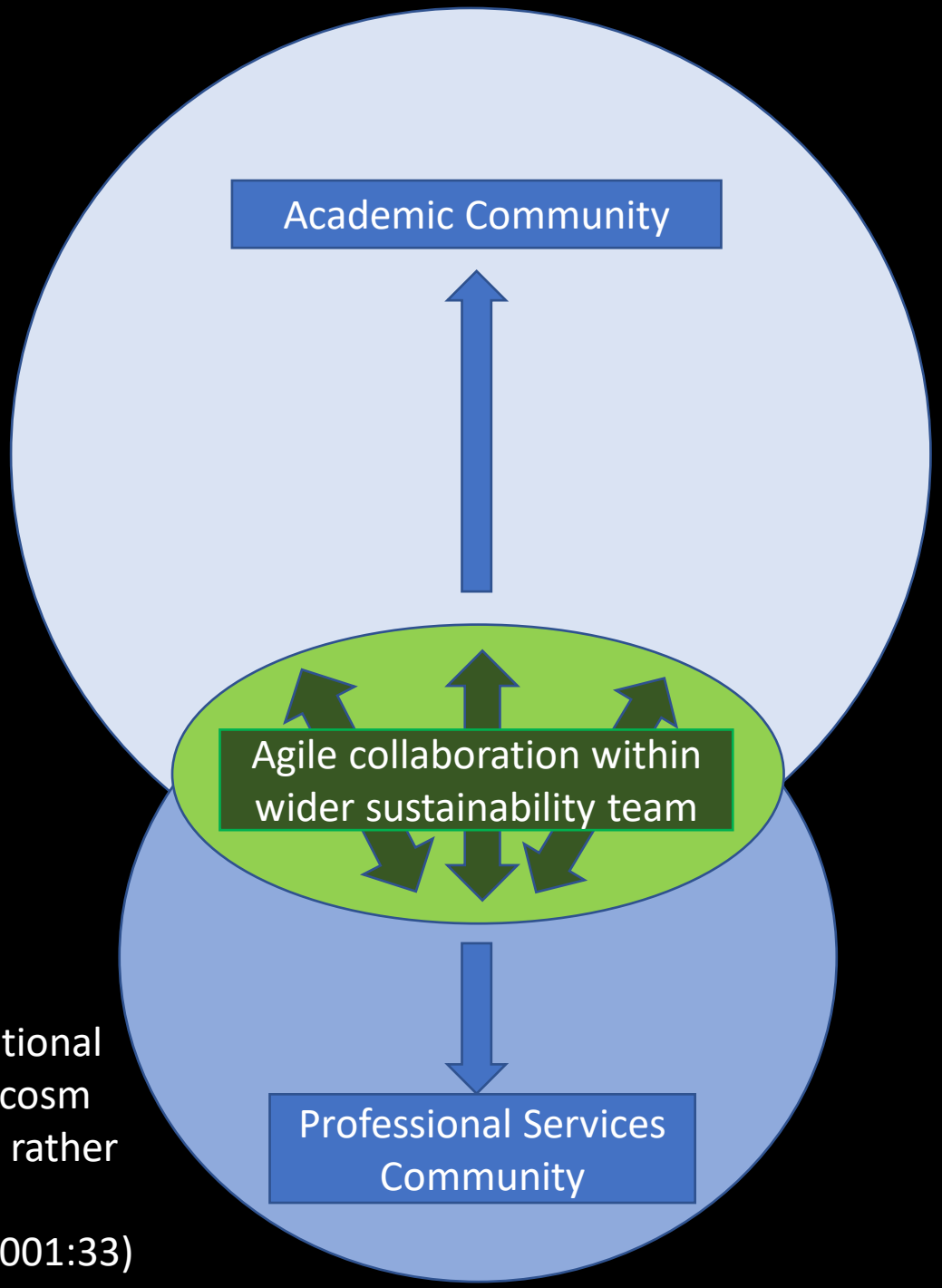
We reflect on the ways in which a functional relationship between academic and professional services leads, enables us to take a productive, institution-wide approach towards addressing climate action.

We share the development, outcomes and implications of our SDG and Climate Action analysis.

Functional relationship: academics and prof services



‘Working towards making the educational institution as far as possible a microcosm of the emerging sustainable society, rather than of the unsustainable society’

(Sterling 2001:33)

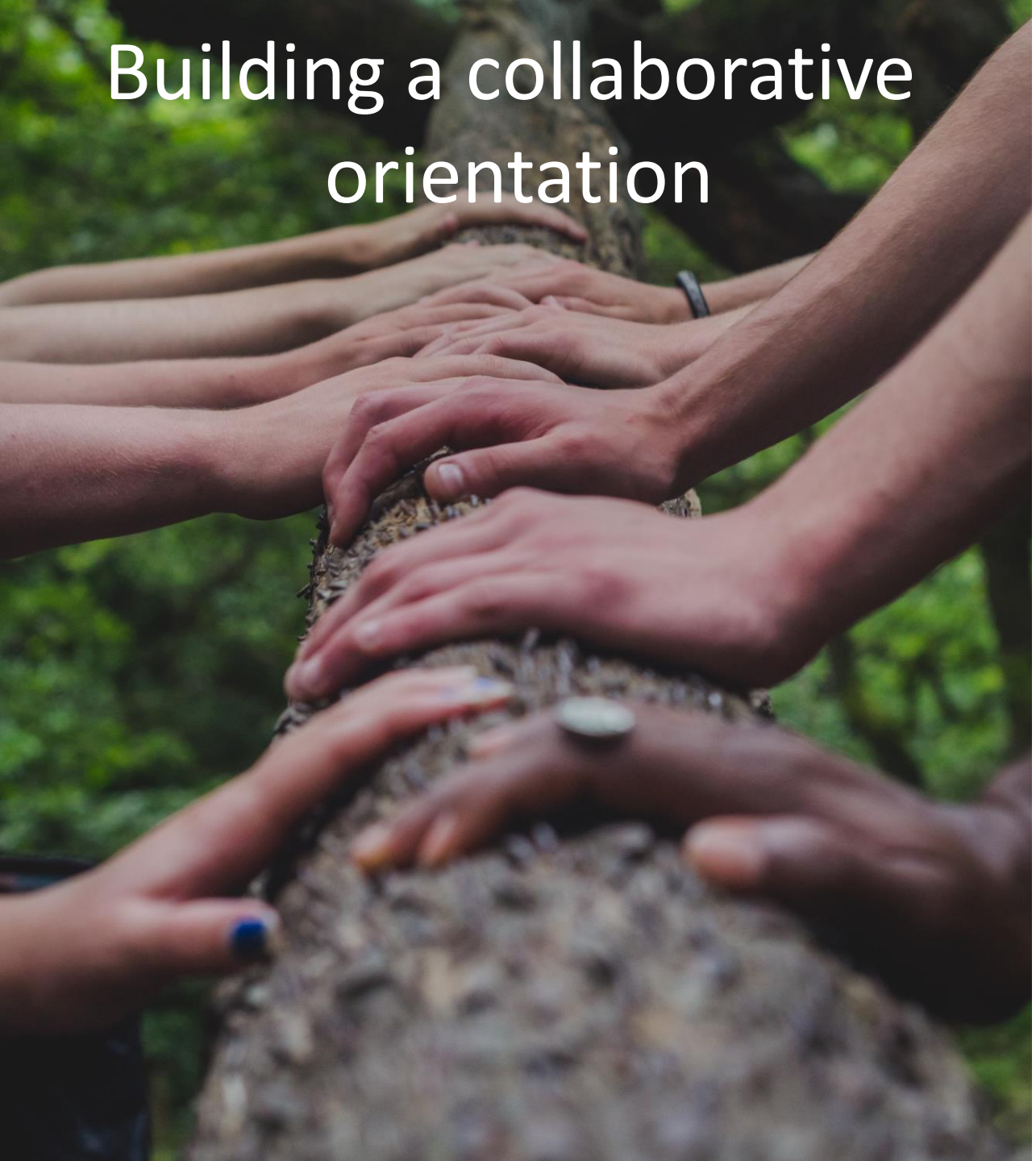
Sustainability team

- Anchoring
- Source of positivity

Agile collaboration

- Encouraging and challenging each other
- ‘Leading’ and ‘following’ in different contexts
- Strong communication including listening

Building a collaborative orientation



- Informed by a relational framework
- Co-operation is driven by trust and commitment (Morgan and Hunt 1994)
- In turn these are informed by shared values (climate action), respect and communication
- Way of working which integrates both parties' contribution

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Forms of collaboration

Working together at these levels

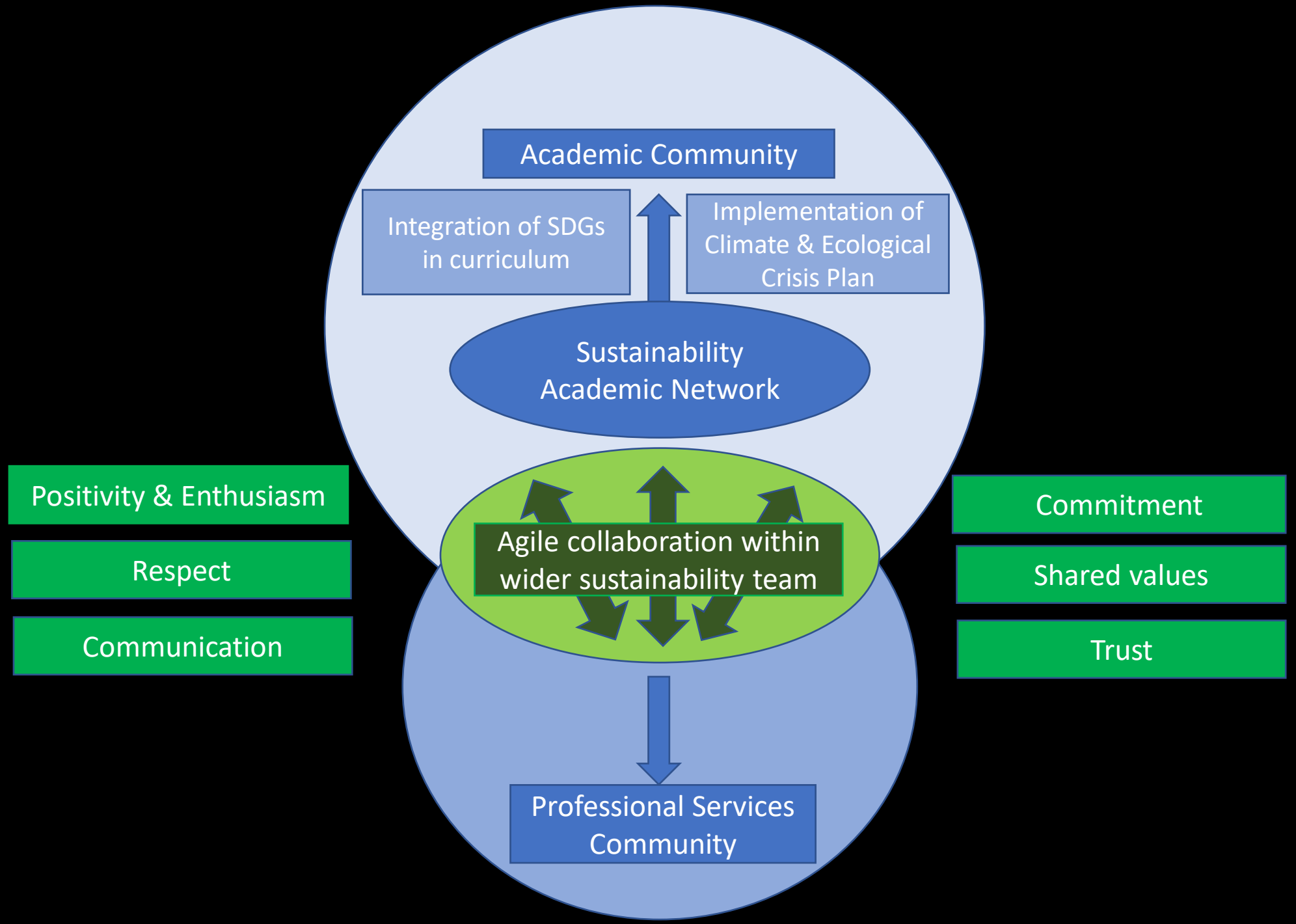
- University Sustainability Committee
- Sustainability Academic Network
- ESD Community of Practice
- Driving specific projects: Curriculum SDG mapping ; Climate and Ecological Crisis Plan; Eco Entreprenneurs Challenge
- Challenging each other to progress SAN and SDG mapping

View from Lois our Sustainability Manager.

BU have a well-developed collaborative way of working between academics and professional services enabling us to make progress towards our BU wide sustainability targets which address the climate and ecological crisis.

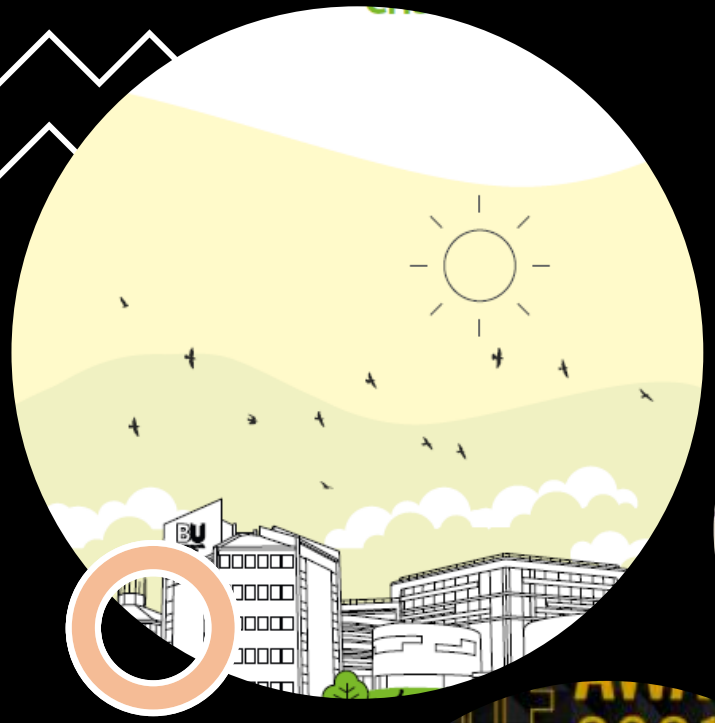
This works because from the very top our Sustainability Committee is attended by a wide range of academics and professional services senior leaders. Reporting to this committee are a number of working groups including the Sustainability Academic Network

Sustainability Academic Network: Driving Change



Why SAN works from Eleanor our Sustainability Officer

It means we no longer have to predict potential opportunities or problems – every department having a seat at the table means we can address problems effectively across the board, plus the different sector knowledge, ways of working and reason for passion lead to more creative, adaptable and robust actions to roll out.



Climate and Ecological Crisis Action Plan

- Net Zero Greenhouse Gas by 2030
- We are number 2 university in UK on SDG13 Climate Action (Times Higher Impact Ranking 2021)
- We were awarded THE Data Points Merit Award 2021
- We need to reflect this success in our education
- CECAP goal for all students to engage with the climate and ecological crisis at each year of study

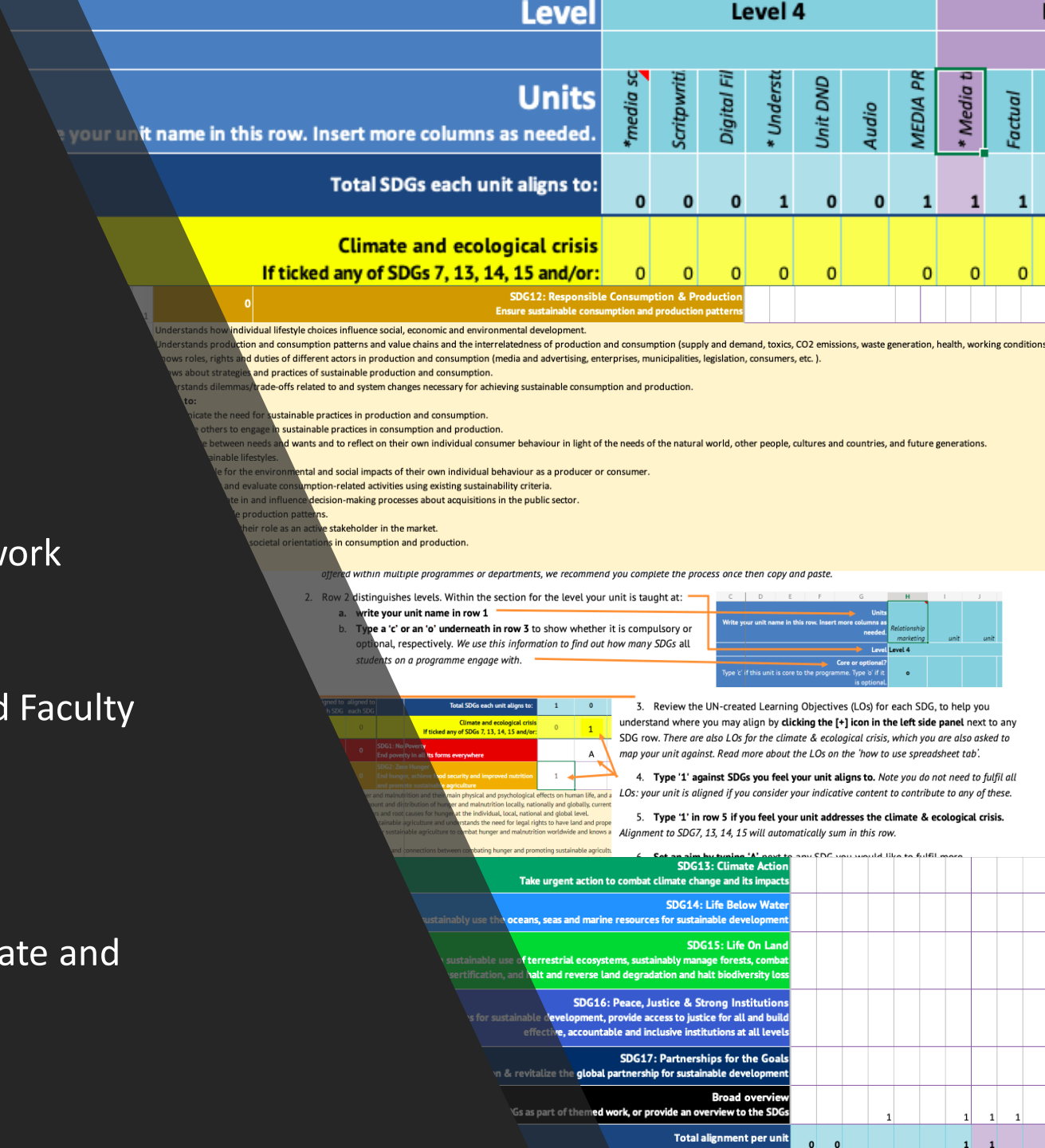
Curriculum mapping

- **BU2025 Action 44(a)**:
- “Support our students and staff to take a responsible approach to the environment and sustainable development by including sustainable development in our programmes.”
- KPI: “100% courses aligned to at least one UNSDG by 2025/26”

- **CECAP Action ES1.1**: “Include the climate and ecological crisis in all levels of programmes in the indicative content of at least one unit per level by 2022/23.”
- UNSDGs: 7 13 14 15

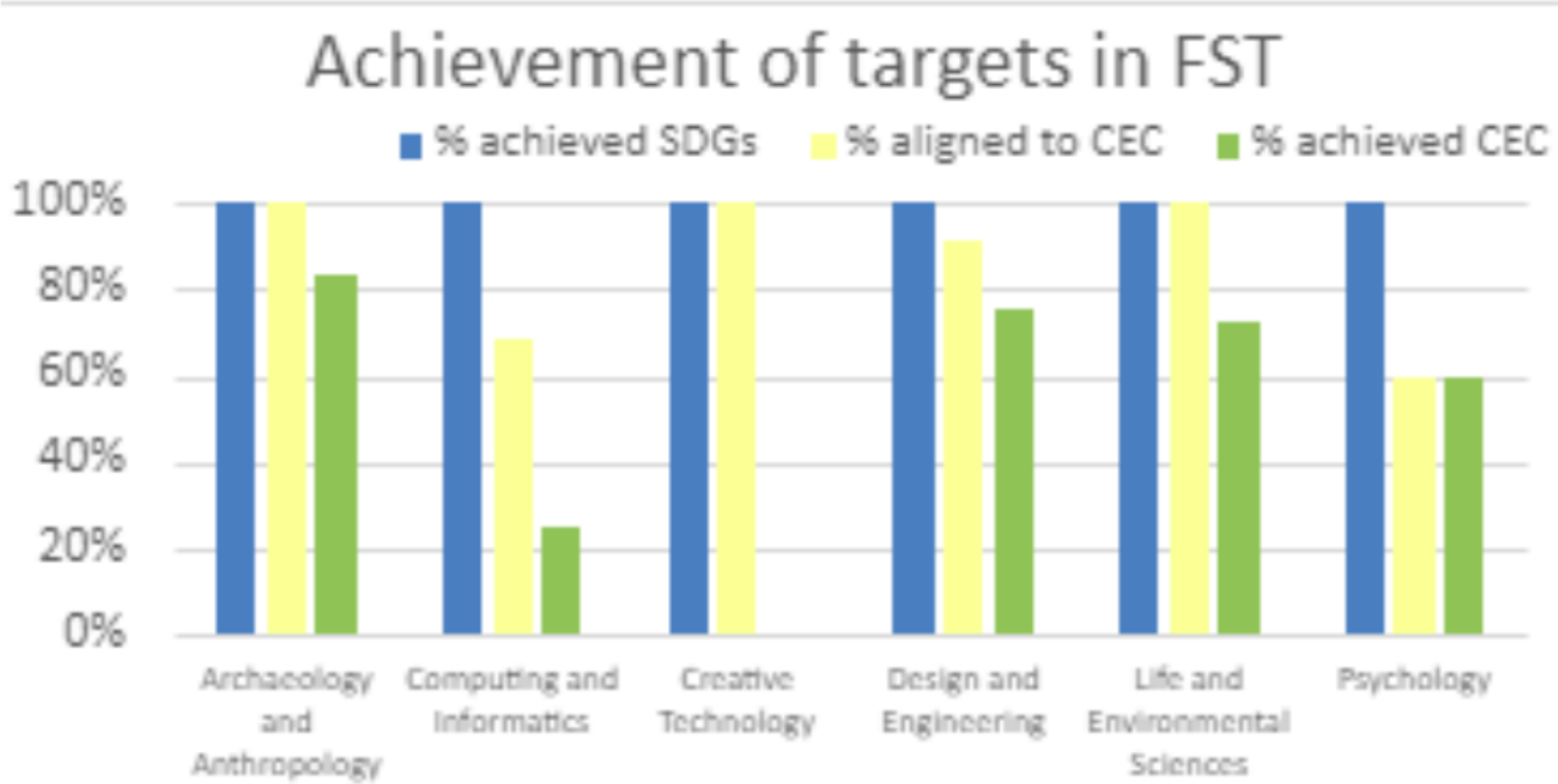
SDG alignment tool

- Balancing auditing with education around SDGs
- Tool developed by Sustainability Academic Network supported by sustainability team
- Circulated in Faculties and Depts by SAN rep and Faculty sustainability lead
- Advice/support as to how to use the tool
- Capturing data at unit level about SDG and Climate and Ecological Crisis coverage



Key outcomes

- We are making good progress towards our SDG KPI across university
- We need to make real efforts to enhance our coverage of Climate and Ecological Crisis to meet our CECAP action
- There is real variability by department in the provision of education embracing sustainability (SDG and CECAP)



Results by department within one faculty

Bringing Climate Action to the front of our education

Dr Fiona Cownie, Dr Elena Cantarello

Suggestions for your institution

- Core sustainability team essential and critical that academics work with this team
- Sustainability Academic Network
- Project Driven
- Communication key
- Don’t just focus on academics with subject expertise as agents of change
- Enthusiasm and positivity are essential
- Feed forward collaboration as a principle

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Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Collaborating with internal and external partners on the basis that they in turn will collaborate with other partners. Give with the expectation that they will give to others.

Feed forward collaboration

Sustainability as collaboration v competition

Target

17.16

Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries

To summarise

- Our functional relationship allows us to take an institution-wide approach to climate action and learn from each other

- Nomination for the wider sustainability team (academics and professional services) within VC staff awards

‘You are consistently and creatively bringing great ideas to the table and pushing forward with innovative challenges for students to drive change in the institution’

Thank-you for your time

Questions?

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