

# AIEB

ALL IRELAND ENDORSEMENT BODY FOR  
COMMUNITY WORK EDUCATION & TRAINING

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EDUCATION AND TRAINING (AIEB)



## Guidance on Climate Justice Education and Practice in AIEB Endorsed Programmes

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## Introduction

This guidance sets out advice for providers of professional community work<sup>1</sup> education and training programmes on a pathway for embedding climate justice in community work education and training programmes. It has been developed as part of AIEB's ongoing commitment to providing those involved in the education field with advice aimed at enhancing the overall quality of community work education and training and addressing the key issues of the day.

In Ireland and globally the climate and biodiversity crises require rapid societal changes in our energy, transport, food, and economic systems to eliminate fossil fuels, ramp up renewable energy and adapt our society to a changing climate. The pressures generated by the climate crisis are already being felt in communities, exasperating existing food and fuel poverty and inflation. In addition, it also requires disaster preparation for extreme weather events which are already causing disruption to lives and livelihoods and will continue to do so with increasing severity in the coming decades. From a global justice perspective, Ireland also has a responsibility to show solidarity with impacted vulnerable communities and states in responding to these challenges.

All of this comes at a time when multiple other issues and challenges face community work and civil society more broadly, including the entrenchment of neoliberal governance and

economics, right-wing populism and far-right extremism and militarism. New community workers may be faced with all of these issues together in their practice and be required to respond to them creatively and strategically from the value-base of the profession. While the climate crisis intersects with and potentially exasperates these challenges, climate solutions which focus on a just transition, fostering resilience and strengthening democracy have the potential to address multiple crises at once.

The overarching aim of this guidance is to support students to develop structural understanding of climate injustice that:

- situates it within the historical and present-day context of capitalist economic development, colonialism and consumerism;
- addresses how it intersects with other forms of injustice, inequality and oppression in Ireland and globally.

In addressing climate and biodiversity crises, community workers are not required to be climate science experts or develop a whole new set of competencies. The central concern of community work is to create the conditions for participation and empowerment of communities in pursuit of social justice, equality and human rights. The challenge regarding climate justice is to consider how we apply the existing knowledge-base and skill-set of the profession to address the

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the terms community work and community development are used interchangeably throughout this document reflecting their interchangeable use in practice.

implications of the climate crisis for the issues which are core to community work. Recognising community work's specific concerns, it will also be important for practitioners to develop partnerships, alliances and coalitions across civil society in pursuit of climate justice.

## **The purpose of developing this guidance**

This guidance builds on AIEB's existing endorsement guidelines by outlining more explicitly guidance on addressing climate justice in professional community development education programmes. It is presented as part of AIEB's work to support and promote quality community work education and training and ensure quality and standards in practice. It will inform future reviews of both current and new professional programmes and can provide a template for providers on how to respond to current local and global challenges within endorsed community work programmes.

AIEB's Guidelines for Endorsement of Community Work Education and Training Programmes sets out an inclusive framework for professional endorsement based on the principles for quality community work as laid out in the *All Ireland Standards for Community Work*. It details the steps to be taken by those seeking endorsement and sets

out the content criteria for the submissions made by institutions as part of the endorsement process. This additional guidance reinforces compliments and supports these documents. Its aims are:

- Articulate AIEB's and endorsed programme providers ongoing commitment to addressing key issues of the day, in this instance climate justice;
- Support the work of providers of endorsed professional community work education by signposting best practice approaches to ensuring that their programmes can adequately address the complexities of embedding climate justice theory and practice into community work programmes;
- Enhance current advice and guidance for new programmes seeking endorsement.

The guidance highlights four key dimensions for embedding and reinforcing climate justice in community work education programmes. It makes recommendations on the elements to consider for students to acquire the essential knowledge, skills and values to develop into effective climate justice community work practitioners, while acknowledging that each programme will have its own ways of doing these.

## DIMENSION 1:

### Environmental Ethics and Values

**Pre-programme:** The course promotion materials and recruitment and selection processes provide an opportunity for providers to emphasise climate justice as an important concern for community work practitioners, including by highlighting climate-related community engagement roles graduates might expect to take up.

#### On-campus learning:

- ✓ The provision of experiential, nature-based and self-reflective activities where students consider their relationship to the natural world and exploring impact, constraints and opportunities (e.g. the effects of technology and consumption on that relationship).
- ✓ The development of students' understanding of the justice implications of the climate crisis and its disproportionate impact on marginalised and disadvantaged communities/groups in Ireland and globally.
- ✓ Supporting students to explore the links between ecological values (interdependence, diversity, decentralisation etc...) and community work values and practice.
- ✓ An emphasis on solidarity informed by an intersectional understanding of the root causes of the climate crisis.
- ✓ Supporting students to understand the effect of their personal choices, habits and behaviours on the environment, creating opportunity for consciousness raising and collective action which emphasise the importance of structural change.

**During fieldwork practice:** On placement, students could be encouraged to reflect on climate justice, including global solidarity and the intersectionality of the climate crisis with other forms of injustice. This could be supported through provision of structured opportunities for students to engage in a process of self-reflection while on fieldwork/practice placement through a daily log/journal, supervision and during return to campus sessions.

#### Anticipated student outcomes

- ✓ That students can articulate, demonstrate and reflect on their connection to the natural world and the impact of their behaviours on the ecosystem.
- ✓ That students can demonstrate a structural understanding of what climate injustice is, including how it intersects with other forms of injustice, inequality and oppression in Ireland and globally.
- ✓ That students can appraise the interconnectedness of the climate crisis with capitalism's growth model and to identify processes towards climate justice.
- ✓ That students can articulate their values, attitudes and beliefs regarding ecology and sustainability and demonstrate awareness of how these inform their practice.

**Assessment considerations:** These outcomes could be evidenced through a range of methods which integrate assessment of students' knowledge, skills and values.

## DIMENSION 2:

### Knowledge of the climate crisis and climate justice

#### On-campus learning:

- ✓ A brief introduction to the science of climate change, including the risks and likelihood of extreme weather events and their impact on vulnerable communities.
- ✓ Understanding of environmental justice as a foundational concept and movement which links local environmental pollution with human rights, equality and anti-poverty.
- ✓ Framing the climate crisis as a symptom of global inequality and oppression, resisting a siloed approach in analysis and action.
- ✓ Critical literacy around climate and environmental discourses and their implications for communities, with an emphasis on climate and environmental justice.
- ✓ Familiarity with climate policy and politics: governance architecture, policy goals and targets, key governmental and civil society actors – local, national and global.
- ✓ Awareness of environmental human rights issues, debates, mechanisms and current developments.
- ✓ Understand the linkages between the climate crisis and other issues from a justice and rights perspective – particularly how historic and existing inequalities shape climate vulnerability nationally and globally.
- ✓ Knowledge of climate policy issues, pathways and options – energy, food, transportation, housing etc – with a focus community-based solutions and case studies.

**During fieldwork practice:** Analysing climate issues in practice could be supported through provision of structured opportunities for students to engage in a process of self-reflection while on fieldwork/ practice placement through a daily log/journal, supervision and during return to campus sessions.

#### Anticipated student outcomes

- ✓ That students can demonstrate a **basic** understanding of climate science sufficient to be able to explain climate change to a lay audience.
- ✓ That students can demonstrate knowledge of the theory of climate and environmental justice and how the justice perspective differs from other forms of environmental discourses and action.
- ✓ That students can demonstrate a good grasp of current local, national and international climate policy and environmental human rights mechanisms, their direction and implications for practice.
- ✓ That students can identify, engage with and analyse the climate justice issues in both practice and policy.

**Assessment considerations:** These outcomes could be evidenced through a range of methods which integrate assessment of students' knowledge, skills and values.

## DIMENSION 3:

### Practice skills for a just transition

Providers could consider the provision of immersive, experiential and scenario-based learning-by-doing methodologies when developing students practice skills in this area.

#### On-campus learning:

- ✓ Facilitate education and consciousness raising that connects climate change to peoples' lived realities and concerns, drawing on local environmental justice concerns and building momentum towards local action.
- ✓ Facilitating nature connection and nature-based learning with communities.
- ✓ Communicate climate-related issues in a clear and accessible manner.
- ✓ Build community capacity for:
  - ✓ local dialogue on climate action including addressing conflict
  - ✓ a just transition locally through community food, energy, economic and other initiatives.
  - ✓ critical democratic engagement in climate policy making beyond the community level, including policy literacy, campaigning, media and other skills.
- ✓ Support global climate justice, solidarity and strategic co-ordinated action for a just transition through alliance building and networking between communities.
- ✓ Support the development of community action plans to respond to environmental crises (flooding, heat waves etc), fostering resilience and protecting the vulnerable.
- ✓ Develop sustainability policies and procedures in community organisations.
- ✓ Build personal and collective psychological resilience and address climate anxiety and despair through dialogue and action.

**During fieldwork practice:** The provision of structured opportunities for students to engage in a process of self-reflection while on fieldwork/practice placement through a daily log/journal, supervision and during return to campus sessions. If possible in the context of the placement, students could be supported to undertake and reflect a specific piece of work with a climate justice focus while on fieldwork.

#### Anticipated student outcomes

- ✓ That students can facilitate dialogue and consciousness raising in communities about the climate crisis, its causes, impacts and the issues and options for a just transition.
- ✓ That students can use their communication, engagement, and groupwork skills to build capacity and support transition efforts in local communities.
- ✓ That students have skills to support meaningful community participation in climate policy discussions at all relevant levels.
- ✓ That students have the ability to prepare and implement climate justice policies, procedures and action plans in organisations and with communities.
- ✓ That students have the ability to work in partnership, networks and alliances to strategically advance action for climate justice.
- ✓ That students can respond to climate-related fears and anxieties in ways that builds personal and collective hope, agency and resilience.

**Assessment considerations:** These outcomes could be evidenced through a range of methods which integrate assessment of students' knowledge, skills and values.

## DIMENSION 4:

### Recommended actions for the providing Department, School, Centre and the Institution

- ✓ Develop an overarching climate justice statement which sets out the provider's commitment to addressing these issues, including practical sustainability measures, which all staff and students subscribe to and promote.
- ✓ Engage with and support institution-wide efforts for sustainability such as Green Campus initiatives and seek to ensure that the institution's policies and procedures reflect a commitment to climate justice locally and globally.
- ✓ Organise climate justice training and education for staff in the Department/School to support collective and individual reflection, consideration and analysis of the issue and how the climate and biodiversity crisis intersects in their own subject area and with the programme overall.
- ✓ Actively develop relationships with local and national community development organisations to support their capacity to address climate justice including through external engagement, research & outreach.
- ✓ Recognise the role of educational providers working in partnership with placement organisations and supervisors to build capacity across the sector in this area. In particular, this might include the provision of opportunities for placement supervisors to engage in reflection on the issue as part of the role that they undertake and more broadly to provide support for their practice.



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