

CEDHE Strategy 2026 – 2031

Shaping our environmental future

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the-ies.org



The Institution
of Environmental
Sciences

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About CEDHE

About the Community for Environmental Disciplines in Higher Education

The Community for Environmental Disciplines in Higher Education (CEDHE) represents the environmental science education community across higher and further education, acting as the education community of the Institution of Environmental Sciences (IES).

Bringing together a diverse membership spanning institutions in the UK and internationally, CEDHE facilitates connections between academia, employers, and professional bodies, supporting the alignment of the environmental curriculum with sector needs.

CEDHE has played a significant role in shaping sector-wide frameworks, including contributions to the [ES3 subject benchmark statement](#), and has been instrumental in promoting the integration of employability and professional competencies within environmental programmes.

Through its role within the IES and its wider network, CEDHE maintains strategic partnerships with several organisations that influence education, policy, and professional standards. CEDHE works in partnership with organisations including the [Teach the Future campaign](#), [Nature Premium](#), the [Science Council](#), and the [Society for the Environment](#). Collectively, these partnerships uniquely position CEDHE as a key intermediary between academia, industry, and policy.

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Foreword

How do we understand, manage and respond to the unprecedented environmental challenges that define our current world? Our chances of succeeding in this rely on society being equipped with the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to make the decisions and take the actions that will drive the transformational change the world so desperately needs.

Effective environmental education – at all levels, but particularly further and higher education – is critical to achieving this, and our first Community for Environmental Disciplines in Higher Education (CEDHE) Strategy is as timely as it is important.

The six interconnected themes at the heart of this strategy provide a clear framework for CEDHE's growth, impact, and long-term sustainability. Enhancing our role in maintaining quality, consistency and professional relevance across environmental programmes through expanding and diversifying our accreditation offer (**Strategic Theme 1**) feeds directly into our ambitions for international expansion (**Strategic Theme 2**). Not only will this allow CEDHE to extend its reach while ensuring that integrity of standards is maintained, we will also ensure that accreditation delivers tangible benefits to learners by offering enhanced student membership (**Strategic Theme 3**) focused on improving employability, progression, and engagement for students and graduates.

Expanded CPD and short course endorsement (**Strategic Theme 4**) will strengthen links between education and professional practice by creating clearer pathways for lifelong learning and skills development, which is particularly important in a time of rapidly changing skills needs. Policy engagement (**Strategic Theme 5**) establishes a more structured and strategic approach to influencing environmental education policy, enabling CEDHE to contribute its expertise where it can have the greatest impact. Finally, enhanced member services (**Strategic Theme 6**) will draw on existing strengths to increase engagement, visibility, and industry connections, ensuring that CEDHE continues to deliver clear and measurable value to its members.

Focusing on these themes puts CEDHE in an excellent position to respond proactively to a changing educational landscape, support the next generation of environmental professionals, and shape a resilient and forward-looking environmental education community. We look forward to working with you to achieve this.

Dr Alison Stokes, CEDHE Co-Chair
Dr Michelle Hale, CEDHE Co-Chair
Dr Naomi Holmes, CEDHE Vice-Chair

Purpose

The environmental sector is rapidly evolving in response to global challenges, increasing the need for highly skilled professionals and future-focused education. CEDHE plays a vital role in supporting inclusive, high-quality environmental education that provides graduates with the skills needed for a career in the environmental sector.

As financial pressures force many higher education institutions to reduce essential elements such as fieldwork and practical learning, CEDHE's role in maintaining standards, strengthening links between academia and industry, and championing the value of environmental education is increasingly important.

This five-year strategy sets out how CEDHE will maintain its impact and relevance. It defines CEDHE's approach to representing the sector, supporting the quality of degree programmes and enabling the academic community to deliver high-quality environmental education.

A key priority is securing CEDHE's long-term sustainability by broadening its activities and impact. The strategy aligns with the wider IES Strategy, ensuring a coordinated and complementary approach.

Strategic themes

Introduction

The strategy is underpinned by six core themes, which together provide a framework for CEDHE's direction over the next five years. These themes have been informed by stakeholder engagement, analysis of the competitive landscape, an assessment of organisational capabilities, and insights from our members.

Each theme builds on CEDHE's strengths while also identifying areas for growth and development. Themes include accreditation, international expansion, student membership, CPD and short course endorsement, policy, and additional membership services.



- ✓ 1 **Accreditation**
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Accreditation

1 Strategic theme 1: Accreditation

Accreditation sits at the heart of CEDHE's work and represents a key driver of membership. It reflects the quality and credibility of environmental higher education, and provides a mechanism through which standards and professional relevance are strengthened across the sector.

While CEDHE has demonstrated sustained growth and clear sector leadership, changes within Geography, Earth and Environmental Science (GEES) disciplines highlight the need to both strengthen and evolve the accreditation offer. In response, this theme focuses on expanding reach and relevance, while ensuring the continued rigour and value of the accreditation framework for members.

This includes strengthening engagement with programmes aligned to IES areas of expertise beyond traditional GEES disciplines, reflecting the increasing interdisciplinarity of environmental education.

Key priorities and activities:

- Promote the value of accreditation, with a focus on under-represented regions;
- Expand specialist accreditation in under-represented areas aligned with IES community specialisms; and
- Diversify the accreditation offer by piloting new pathways and extending into interdisciplinary, social science, and international provision.

International Expansion

2 Strategic theme 2: International Expansion

International accreditation presents a clear opportunity for growth and for strengthening CEDHE's global presence. While CEDHE has established a strong reputation and already accredits a small number of international programmes, its reach remains limited in comparison to the wider volume of environmental programmes delivered internationally. Initial activity will focus on regions where there are existing engagement and strong alignment with CEDHE's accreditation criteria, providing a foundation for growth.

This theme builds on existing credibility to support international expansion. CEDHE will ensure that accreditation remains accessible and adaptable across different cultural and institutional contexts, while maintaining the integrity and consistency of standards.

Key priorities and activities:

- Strengthen accessibility of the accreditation process while maintaining quality and consistency across different cultural and regulatory contexts;
- Target growth in regions where CEDHE already has a presence, using existing credibility to build momentum; and
- Explore expansion into new international markets where there is strong programme provision.

Student Membership

3 Strategic theme 3: Student Membership

Student membership is a key benefit of accreditation and a valued element of CEDHE's membership offer. Engagement with stakeholders indicates a clear demand for enhanced student support through the CEDHE network. This reflects a wider opportunity to enhance the support available to students and strengthen the contribution of accreditation to graduate outcomes and employability.

This theme focuses on activities that enhance the value of accreditation and strengthen engagement with students and graduates. It seeks to better align student support with employer needs and evolving workforce requirements. In doing so, it aims to strengthen the role of accreditation in supporting positive graduate outcomes and clearer progression into professional pathways.

Key priorities and activities:

- Increase awareness and uptake of the CV Clinic to support student employability;
- Launch the work placement hub to increase the accessibility of internships and practical experience opportunities; and
- Expand careers-focused content, including webinars and employer spotlights to respond to evolving workforce needs.

CPD and Short Course Endorsement

4 Strategic theme 4: CPD and Short Course Endorsement

The connection between accreditation, professional development and employability represents a unique strength for CEDHE and is widely recognised by members as a key benefit of membership. Strengthening this link offers an opportunity to provide clearer pathways between education, skills development, and professional practice.

This theme focuses on developing a more integrated approach that brings together accreditation, short course endorsement and continuing professional development (CPD). It builds on existing activity while creating space to adopt new approaches through a pilot scheme, ensuring that development is evidence-led.

A key element of this work is the evolution of the existing Short Course Endorsement scheme. Alongside this, there is an opportunity to explore a more integrated approach to short course endorsement within the existing accreditation scheme, to reduce duplication at the application stage and support lifelong learning provision.

The theme also reflects the importance of expanding CPD opportunities for students and graduates. Employer collaboration will play an important role in shaping skills-focused activity, building on the unique position of CEDHE as a link between industry and academia.

Key priorities and activities:

- Strengthen and refine the Short Course Endorsement scheme;
- Pilot an integrated module-level endorsement approach within existing accredited programmes;
- Expand CPD and training opportunities for students and graduates; and
- Develop employer co-designed skills programmes within selected specialisms.

Policy Engagement

5 Strategic theme 5: Policy Engagement

Strengthening CEDHE's engagement in environmental education policy requires a clear and structured approach. The initial focus for the policy theme is to develop internal frameworks and shared understanding of where and how CEDHE can most effectively contribute to policy discussions.

Working in collaboration with the IES Policy Team, this includes defining key criteria for engagement and mapping priority policy areas. This foundational work will support a more consistent approach to policy activity. It will position CEDHE to contribute to external consultations and play a more visible role in shaping environmental higher education policy.

Key priorities and activities:

- Define clear criteria for policy engagement in collaboration with the IES Policy Team;
- Map key policy areas to identify priority themes for CEDHE involvement; and
- Build the foundations for more strategic, longer-term policy influence and thought leadership.

Member Services

6 Strategic theme 6: Member Services

Enhancing the value of CEDHE membership requires a greater focus on activity that builds on strengths including accreditation and employability, while prioritising initiatives with clear demand and measurable value for members. This work will prioritise areas where CEDHE can add distinct value, complementing rather than duplicating existing provision within the sector.

This theme focuses on enhancing engagement and strengthening industry connections to ensure alignment between accreditation outcomes, skills needs, and career pathways. It also includes exploratory work to assess demand for additional areas of support, including early career academic development.

The theme also reflects the importance of expanding CPD opportunities for students and graduates. Employer collaboration will play an important role in shaping skills-focused activity, building on the unique position of CEDHE as a link between industry and academia.

Key priorities and activities:

- Develop a structured engagement plan to increase visibility through the website and social media;
- Strengthen industry engagement to align accreditation outcomes; with evolving skills needs and career pathways, informed by employers; and
- Conduct exploratory research into the need for early career academic support.

Summary

This strategy sets out a framework of development for CEDHE over the next five years. Activities build on CEDHE's established strengths while responding to the changing external environment. This includes a stronger focus on international growth, greater interdisciplinarity within accreditation and clearer integration between education, skills development, and professional practice. Across all themes, there is a focus on reinforcing the core accreditation offer and ensuring long-term sustainability through diversification, innovation, and targeted growth.

The strategy recognises accreditation as the foundation of CEDHE's value and influence, while identifying opportunities to extend its impact through international expansion and enhanced support for students. Alongside this, it highlights the importance of developing clearer pathways for CPD, strengthening policy engagement, and increasing external activity to raise CEDHE's profile and impact.

Overall, the strategy positions CEDHE to strengthen its leadership in environmental higher education and enhance value for members. In doing so, it extends its influence across national and international contexts to support the next generation of environmental scientists.

Useful Links

IES Website | www.the-ies.org

CEDHE Website | <https://ches.info/>

Accreditation information | https://ches.info/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/CEDHE_Accreditation_Information_Jan26.pdf

IES Communities | <https://www.the-ies.org/communities>

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