

# **DRAFT Education Policy Consultation:**

## **Round 3 Comments. 06/03/2014**

### **Respondent 19**

1. I suppose my first thoughts are, what is the need for this new approach? Do we have a country of bad teachers in permaculture that require bringing into line? If we are just smartening things up, then I feel it unnecessary tinkering, and not very in line with permaculture principles. I understand people want a clearer understanding of what it takes to be a teacher, but I don't think this is difficult to achieve with a simple statement.
2. As the standard seems to be the requirement of a diploma before becoming lead teacher, then it is difficult to extricate one from the other. The path to a diploma seems overly bureaucratic and prohibitively expensive. The exceptions to needing a diploma seem to work for the few.
3. Qualifications as a benchmark are not always the best way of deciding on the quality of a teacher. I assume we are not attempting to bracket ourselves with the teaching profession, and nor would we want to be that prescriptive/homogenised I would hope. I love the variety of choice round what is principally the same course of a PDC. Allow people to have that choice and find the path that suits them most to come to permaculture. If everyone becomes the same, I think we lose something amazing, but could lead to more people doing their own thing, rather than be dictated too - then we could see bad teachers surfacing, who want only to make money.
4. The more we increase the costs of becoming a teacher, the more they will charge students, and thus stifle the progression of permaculture, making it only available to the few.
5. I am genuinely disappointed in the approach the PA is taking in this matter. There are many enthusiastic members out there, for whom taking an active part is being pushed a little further away. Please don't become a them and us organisation, and don't believe that doing a consultation prevents this from being the case, if the end result is no different to the original plan.

### **Respondent 20**

I believe that this policy is a strategic mistake that compromises our independence and our flexibility with our education and training programmes. At best, the issue of

government funding is a distraction, at worst it is damaging to the rapid emergence of competent design practitioners that can deal with the serious problems that we are currently ranged against.

I believe that the Permaculture Association has missed a huge opportunity to support our students and apprentices with a parallel, but definitely optional, course in "sustainability" that meets government requirements, without interfering with the integrity of the PDC course itself. Such a course could accept government-funded students, without diverting or bogging down those who pay privately.

As for the Permaculture Association PDC core curriculum (version 1.6), I have had a quick look and I consider it lacking in rigour, a form of "permaculture-lite", and, in some cases, poorly informed - for example, the session on ethics is at odds with the material published almost 20 years ago in your "Teachers Guide". I have already published my PDC course outline on line, and I have made a public commitment to it for the foreseeable future. My course outline is clearly mapped against "Permaculture - a Designers Manual" and is available at [http://permacultureglobal.com/pri\\_pdc\\_teacher\\_certificates/380/inline?1387896001](http://permacultureglobal.com/pri_pdc_teacher_certificates/380/inline?1387896001).

It seems that, on the current form of the drafts, I will not be conforming to the Permaculture Association's guidelines over the curriculum, nor following their policy recommendations. This, for me, is feeling like a complete re-run of the Permaculture Association's diploma "development", so you should not be surprised by my comments. I wish you well with your efforts, but I am at a loss why you should be re-inventing the work that our colleagues at the Permaculture Research Institute have already done to good effect.

I think the PAB are likely to make things difficult for themselves with the current policy thing - from here it seems that you are trying to reconcile the irreconcilable.

The influence of mainstream education is a major confusing factor. I would argue that their systems are unfit for purpose and, to use the words of one of your correspondents, the mainstream education system is rotting through from the head, and the rot has already reached the body corporate.

+ In the mainstream system "Teachers" can, and do, teach everything/anything (even at university level). There is a (false) assumption that lots of process and regulation makes good teachers. This may work in primary schools, but it's a nonsense with adults wanting anything more than NVQ level 1.

My response to this is to ensure that the most experienced permaculture designers are encouraged to teach. Take Martin Crawford in the Forest Garden world, for example, he admits that he's not a great teacher, but he is so knowledgeable that his students give very positive feedback about his courses, and the students pile in.

+ Process monitoring leads to box-ticking and bureaucracy. Now, nobody trusts anybody to do anything and that bleeds through into the experience of the students.

My response to this is to give up attempting to quality assure the process and vigorously monitor the outcomes instead. Articulate a common goal and trust the course deliverers to attain it. Throw out much of the bureaucracy and get the students to take responsibility for reporting their progress, rather than expecting the trainers to do it.

+ All the fuss and flim-flam of "process" is helping to obscure the woeful lack of competence in permaculture design in many of our systems- not just with the graduating certificate-holders, but also in some of the teachers and, particularly, in some of those setting education "policy". (A simple test: ask them to articulate permaculture design as a system, then the design course as a system, then the diploma etc. What answers do you get?) The only evidence of pattern in much of the writing that I have seen is that of the rotting fish that I mentioned earlier. Values? Relationships?

As you know, I am in favour of fairly strict requirements over the curriculum. Students of the PDC have the right to be taught the course as it was originally outlined. On the other hand, teaching the course is a privilege and not a right. This is not just out of respect for all the design and development work that Bill put into it, the whole idea is that we take our duties seriously. I am already working to the challenges set out recently by Rosemary Morrow: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tg8QrpRH-50>

We live in a strange society here in the UK. I see an unfortunate tendency in this country for course graduates to rush towards their diploma, as if a piece of paper will suddenly convert them into a good design teacher. (For many, it must seem the only way that they are going to "get their money back" after the design course). It is a sad commentary on a society that many of us are trying to change. Perhaps you should reflect on whether the PAB policy may actually be encouraging this attitude. Does experience count for nothing? Where else are people with 20 plus years of experience in the field (working on projects, not just "teaching") cast aside so casually in favour of inexperience and incompetence? Why are many of our long-time-served teachers now working mainly in other countries?

So, I remain at odds with the populist and mainstream views. I recommend tighter

syllabus specification, lighter specifications on who can teach, clearer rights and stronger recourse for students.

## Respondent 21

I would like to comment on the qualifications needed for the diploma tutors in particular.

I worked in the Further Education sector in England during the 80's and 90's. I taught a whole range of courses at a whole range of levels to a whole range of abilities and ages. I also wrote courses including Open College Network Courses. I carried all this out in the context of a reasonably well paid job, with paid holidays, sickness benefits etc.

The proposed draft policy seeks to impose a professional standard onto self-employed workers (Ok teachers and tutors may have contracts with the association but they are extremely part-time and need to be part of wider polyincomes).

The Association has - to my mind - paid too much attention to the views of non-staff members who have had FE/HE experience (possibly because there was not that expertise within the association staff)

I took my PGCE (FE) in 1983 prior to all my work in FE. However, this experience has not been recognised during the past 3 years whilst I have been pursuing my tutor training,.

I was at the initial training event in Lambourne End over 3 years ago. I felt this was a good event with a wide range of people there. However the effort was not made at that event to capture the experience of the participants. Had this been done my experience - and that of others like me, including those who were unable to attend - would have been recognised.

Instead an overburdensome, expensive ever-expanding system has been developed which means I am always "struggling to keep up" with what is now termed my "senior tutor pathway". I attended the senior tutor training prior to the Cardiff Convergence - at this event a senior tutor guild was set up to support the likes of me.

Since this event a number of attendees - as far as I am aware - became senior tutors who were not senior tutors at the time. Meanwhile I was not supported in my guild and was left to my own devices. I tried to kickstart things in 2013 but it was only with the Losehill diploma gathering in 2013 that I felt I made progress. It was at that event that I heard - for the first time - that having a PGCE was a level 6 qualification, as opposed to the PETLS qualification (level 4) which is the level we are supposed to be aiming at under the new policy.

In sum:

Prior experience has not been recognised by the Assoc. in its development of education policy, except in the case of certain individuals. I suggest a robust Accreditation of Prior Learning policy is included in any future policy. That way prior experience can be officially recognised (this can include experience as LANTRA trainer, for example). We have a lot of prior skills and experience in the Association which is not being recognised.

E-training and E-learning should be developed to help people on low incomes avoid massive travel/accomodation costs to train to be teachers and tutors. Interestingly the diploma pathway for apprentices is a good example of this and of how people can self-

direct their learning in ways that are not too costly, with plenty of flexibility. It is all about recognising existing skills and experience and building on these.

More senior tutors need training up as a matter of urgency. They are the ultimate arbiters of the system yet they geographically only cover a small part of the UK. They need supporting in this.

The training and accreditation of both apprentices and tutors needs streamlining. There are far too many forms which duplicate information, yet are currently deemed essential. Forms are proliferating unnecessarily - this all adds to time costs on part of both apprentices and tutors. Standards are vital - but standards are not upheld and maintained simply by creating new forms, over-complicating existing pathways and the creation of yet more pathways.

## **Respondent 22**

Comment about consultation:

It is good to have a consultation. Its good to ensure that a consultations results does not set things in stone that need to breathe and evolve. Many voices may not be heard through this consultation something to bear in mind.

Comment about Permaculture Association Role:

I feel the main role is to contribute towards structure, ways, means and tools by which organisations and individual teachers can measure and be measured as to how well a standard is achieved for permaculture through the teaching. The role is less about rule making than setting standard, both so permaculture can evolve and be evolved in diversity, by individuals, and groups of individuals, and so permaculture can become a profession of high repute recognised by organisations of high repute. There is need for the chart as presented, which effectively is like a rule book, for clarity, yes, and so the organisation itself can be clear about its business, and so can people be clear what structure can be relied on. I feel it is good that the chart /rule book includes exceptions, I also feel it is good that the high standards are set for exceptions to rules. I do wish to make it clear that I feel giving allowance for exceptions, does not replace or answer to what I regard to be an important need for flexibility in the system as a whole to allow for creative growth in standards, means, ways in permaculture by a wider network. This latter is crucial, I feel.

Comment about Open College Network:

The Permaculture Association Role can be helped by Their Mission and Vision Statement, which is a good one, I feel. I suggest their mission can contribute to ours (Permaculture):

Best be working towards:

Respect for circumstances and potential, and individual needs, be these advanced or less advantaged.

Leaving scope for innovation and development

maintaining flexibility, openness, responsiveness

Any rules and regulations should reflect the meaning in all such keywords included in the Their Mission and Vision Statement of the OCN,( as theirs is effective I feel to permaculture here) and where possible, rather than have a rule, have a tool box for achieving a standard and for setting a standard.

A comment on:

levels and types of competence are required.

There should be more than one yardstick:

Example:

Depth of Knowledge in any related Field

Depth of Experience in Permaculture

Ability in Teaching

Teaching Qualifications/ Experience/ Study of Teaching.

Value of any individual

Transferable skills.

Ability in any related field.

Circumstantial Perspectives

And so on, by example.

I have enjoyed a PDC where the depth of knowledge and perspective of one Diplomat made the course. I enjoyed a PDC where the ability of another tutor in the teaching enabled 'a course feeling'. As such I feel the course hung together by accident, by individual experience and talent, and not by standard in permaculture per se. SO I do recognise need for standard. I enjoyed a PDC where the standard was set by some of the participants, some of which had the perspective that made it 'permaculture' some of which represented high standard in their own profession and approach.

I feel many PDC fly by, by accident. I feel there were aspects of the PDC I attended, that did not represent good standards. I understand that teaching Permaculture is 'young' yet, and there is scope for delivering comprehensive standards, and a high standard, as part of an ongoing learning process, led by participants and pdc holders as much as by the diplomats of the day, again, not through rule setting, or surveys and feedback forms, but through openness, responsiveness, humility, high intents and so on.

Comment on the comment:

'sub-sets can form that can do particular things. There is room for everyone.'

People may have different needs for what the Diploma or PDC best represents for them depending on what their entry level is, and or what their intents are. I feel it should be possible to deliver a A Diploma or PDC variously to different needs. For example permaculture at forest school or early school years level, may be different to permaculture at high academic level, in the field, in other forms of systems thinking, or as taken up by experienced farmers, foresters, etc. Its a question of pitch. When I did my PDC it was clear sometimes the pitch did not always meet the right level and for a number of people. Existing Diplomats may not represent the whole picture, and may be as young as pdc holder, or younger in terms of ability/knowledge/years/experience etc. I feel the consultation process maybe consider that.

Wholly agree it helps to have clarity of expectations, and this is essential.

Allowing conversation on education to continue in a way that allows present and future diplomats to sculpt their courses in a living way day to day even to meet the needs and standards of permaculture is also essential.

The rule book is essential, complete with clarity on exceptions. This as stands seems fine as is. However, should not be a stand alone, without a corresponding document, that enables conversation and allows change and fresh implementation in teaching method and content. The purpose of such a corresponding document would not be to include a way challenge the rules, per se, as these are functional, and serve clarity, setting expectations functionally, etc, this is necessary.

I do feel anyone who teaches a certified pdc must have a diploma. I do feel people who have a pdc are beneficial to students on a pdc, and this is a really good part of running a pdc for that reason alone. I do feel, one should be able to deliver a pdc, before one has a diploma, but that one does so by accessing a toolbox by which the standard is set. I feel it should be made clear to prospective students that one can access the basics of permaculture by attending courses led by a pdc holder. I feel one solution to this problem may be, that:

pdc can only be certified where the students attend at least 2 modules led by diplomats who have many years of experience, and successful projects.

I say the above, as I feel standard in permaculture is of the essence, and that this standard is relevant at any level of implementation. Its about recognising permaculture in mundane, or in advanced implementations, same functional rules, same allowance for new input.

I have much to do these days, and so cant spend more time on this than getting a reply in on the fly. I do know that when I achieve my diploma, I want to go out and teach having a clear set of rules, a clarity in standards, and having clear reign of my own creativity and independence. If that does not exist by then, I certainly want go ahead, and flexibility to exist so I can contribute and create without having to follow someone else's wee picture on things, but rather to follow permaculture. I am finding doing a diploma a tiresome demand on my time, means and focus, and yet, due to that I recognise that it is currently the only egalitarian process, and one that disciplines towards a standard, in a way that running around being involved in permaculture through life or work does not, I feel to uphold the need for it, both to set standards in doing as well as teaching permaculture. At the same time I dont feel a

static rule book, and group or peer pressures per se reflect what permaculture is very well. I do feel, clarity of expectations, rules, and their exceptions are needed as functional and necessary. Balance in these things are needed, yet without compromising what is necessary. Complementation of all that is suggested, rather than just one aspect, like just a rule book, or just flexibility, being made effective, a range of aspects and yardsticks is necessary to achieve standard in permaculture, and well.

Creation of the standard and rules best be led by participants not yet holding a pdc and by pdc holders as much as by the diplomats of the day, and again, not through rule setting, or surveys and feedback forms, but through openness, responsiveness, humility, high intents and so on. Of the elder diplomats, say, that I know, I have respect for and have advocated respect for these for a while now, and due to their years of experience, level of study and experience both within and without permaculture. Of the younger, diplomats, say, I feel there is plenty of scope for humility, and I think there is scope for such across the board. Permaculture in these isles is young, and we can all contribute towards a growth towards a standard. Amongst participants and pdc holders and people interested or active in some way, I feel there is both scope for respect, and humility, also. And also right across the board there is scope for caution, as where competitiveness, peer pressures, and interests reigns, permaculture can fly out the window. Therefore there is need for engaging a wider group in the processes, all involved, awarded or not, teaching or receiving teaching, as well as engaging with appropriate organisations like OCN by representing (or rejecting where necessary) their values based on the demands and needs of permaculture itself, in designing a good way to uphold and implement -standard- through education, certification, awarding and so on.

## **Respondent 23**

Well I'm happy to arrive in the scene when things are open to debate. I hope I can give some useful input on the issue. I understand I'm a bit late in the game to contribute, but it's good to see many people getting involved so far, in what seems to be a very interactive process. I've been reading the information that you sent me and the two pages of comments. It's all very interesting stuff, and many points that have been made are quite valid. I can see that it's hard to make a 'square' out of a 'spiral' (or should I say a 'box' out of a 'torus'?), but it is possible. So coming to a balanced view between all points must be the aim, obviously at the same time guided by the principles and ethics of permaculture itself.

Here are some of my views about the whole thing. obviously more slanted towards my personal situation and experiences. In the next few days I'll write again with a more detailed request for teachers recognition, now that I understand more deeply the process.

Through my thirteen years of studying and working in the Permaculture world, I have had the opportunity to meet a good selection of Permaculture teachers. I would like to say that I support the fact that there is a solid structure within the teacher recognition process by primarily utilising the diploma/certificate system. But equally at the same time I think there should be leeway, stretch, and exceptions made to special cases when needed. Let me expand slightly...

I have met teachers who.....

understand perfectly the theoretical world of Permaculture, and are great in teaching it, but who do not necessarily practice it on any level in the physical world. They often learn from other peoples experiences, and see the fact of being a teacher more important than being a permaculture farmer or practitioner.

or others who have incredible amounts of practical experience and who are qualified within the diploma system, but simply are just not the most charismatic characters, they may be expert practitioners but at the same time crap teachers. Not able to communicate or pass on the knowledge behind the practice. Not able to fill the people with hope and excitement. Permaculture must be put forward in a way that is digestible by the course participants and something that also includes humour and fun. And this takes a certain character.

I have met incredible permaculture teachers whom are so passionate about it that they totally immerse themselves in the deep-end of the lifestyle, sometimes these people are naturally in tune with permaculture in a similar way that a Mystic 'lives the holy scripture' instead of simply reading it. Often these very busy practitioners find it hard to conform to human systems and their agenda, even a Permaculture Diploma system! These people have dedicated their lives to living inside and side by side with the living wisdom. Often they have the most to teach and can benefit others through their balance of farming and teaching.

But on the other hand often by combining these different Archetypes of teachers one can create great courses! Because as we understand, by bringing together different characteristics we can create a more wholesome perspective and insight. separate we are broken, together we are fixed.

Any person can repeat paragraphs, messages or simply read the Permaculture Designers Manual, but who can actually understand those words in their heart? Who can truly think those thoughts and turn them into actions? Who understands the essence and oneness of the design and message, and on the other hand infinite details of localised information only absorbable by years of direct experience. So I think it's always about a balance between a good amount of experience in the field and a good amount of time sharing and inspiring in the classroom.

I think most people will prosper from having a specific route in which to take in permaculture or the teacher training, firstly to make sure they stay on track, and secondly so they can actually make sure they evolve deeply with nature. But not everyone needs this route, structure or discipline. And I think that as long as any special cases are reviewed by a 'higher council' then I believe there will be no flaws in the system. I think the Apprentice system has always been a very valuable system in bringing people to new skills, or making sure that a student or apprentice has the opportunity to be guided and nurtured and filled with constructive criticism. Those who know, can see those who know, those whom don't know, can know, but they must follow the set flow or just grow, then they'll know, and then someone who knows, will see they know, and will help them show, to others, how they grow. together we gather together, each one teaching one, and then another. To make the process Too strict I fear that we may push out some dear characters who could have an awful lot to share with the world if they just felt a bit more welcomed and accepted.

But we must always keep in consideration that there will always be a few whom want to ruin it for the rest of us, so we must make sure that there are certain measures to make sure there are no charlatans or wolf in sheeps clothing who could give permaculture a bad image. I can see the Permaculture certificate system ending up being similar to that of the Organic farm and food certification system. There are big respected organisations such as The Soil Association, like yourselves, being the biggest and most respected in the UK, but all over the world less well known companies are popping up, making it easier and cheaper and less strict to obtain an organic farm certificate. So the aim must be about the balance if we want everyone to stay within one unified system of control.

## **Respondent 24**

1) I welcome greater clarity and professionalism in teaching PDCs and think qualifications outline is useful. The point "PTLLS or other teaching qualification" needs to be tightened a lot. I have attended a permaculture training of teachers, which could be considered to be a teaching qualification. A list of what qualification will suffice is necessary - including qualifications in Scotland (which has a different education system to England, no PTLLS), and other countries. Or do you want to exclude people from other countries, or those who have achieved qualifications in other countries? (are there international standards of such?)

2) In order to enable enough people to be teaching permaculture, we need to ensure that enough people have diplomas. The current system does not enable people to get diplomas, certainly in Scotland there is a stagnation due to unnecessarily onerous senior diploma tutor pathway preventing highly experienced and qualified individuals to take on this role, where they clearly should be senior tutors by now. In fact, one was a senior tutor many years ago, but because he didn't reply to an email a few years ago he was demoted. Although he has repeatedly stated that he wants to be a part of the new system

of late he has been rejected and told to apprentice someone significantly junior to him in years and in practical, educational, and permaculture experience to him (my words not his) - this is not helpful to permaculture in Scotland, nor to the education system in general. One way to make this more streamlined is: a) making sure that all previous qualifications of teachers are considered re the tutor pathway, and b) how about mock tutorials? It is an outrage that the handful of senior tutors get paid by other tutors' hard-won apprentices (yes it is really hard to get and to keep apprentices). If senior tutors really want to support the system they should offer their own apprentices for the tutorials which they will oversee, so nobody loses out. The apprentices can benefit from this input from different tutors which although encouraged is often not taken up. Much tutor training should be available on the internet, using tools like skype.

3) It's all very well saying you have to have x qualification, but how will you ensure that tutors stated actually are there, and actually have the qualifications?

4) I really like respondent 1's comments and think this is a great idea - self-organising systems with feedback from students given anonymously directly to the PA and then put onto the PA website - great! I think that this should be done regardless to anything else that gets done. I have heard others comment that a well-known permaculture teacher consistently gets bad feedback, but continues with the same behaviour because feedback is anonymous. This system would enable students to select their teachers based on feedback from previous students - brilliant idea!

## Respondent 25

- Keep it simple and avoid too much complexity of teaching levels/roles as seems to be happening.

- We don't see whether the new policy takes into account those of us who have had a long involvement of teaching permaculture and have established recognition. Through Jane Hera and Andy Goldring, ##### has been authorised by British Permaculture Association to teach a certificated PDC through his monthlong programme at ##### for the past 7 years. ##### has been living and breathing permaculture for the past 15 or so years. It would be a shame if this situation had to cease due to a new set of rules as the course continues to develop and deepen its permaculture teaching and presence in the community and is a great success every year.

According to ##### who has a diploma from the Scandinavian Permaculture Institute the course fulfills all the criteria of a PDC. ##### has been teaching the course with us for the past week and is collaborating on a book about permaculture at #####.

The gardens at ##### are transitioning to become a permaculture demonstration, research and learning centre. Permaculture philosophy and practice are gaining in interest throughout the community at #####.