

MAPPING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS EDUCATION IN NUTRITION & DIETETIC PROGRAMMES IN IRELAND

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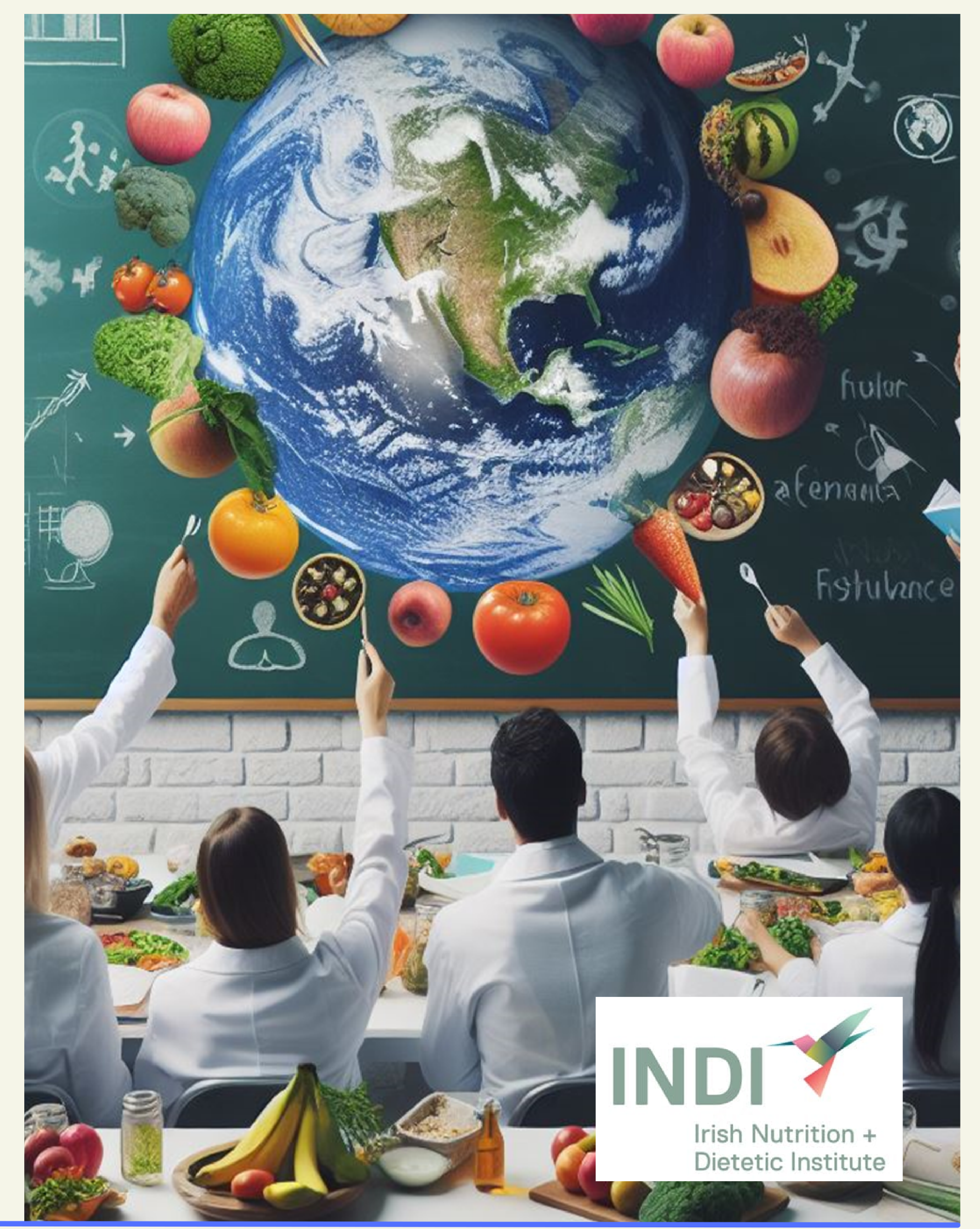
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Toronto
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INDI
Irish Nutrition +
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BACKGROUND

Achieving a Sustainable Food System (SFS), that is, a food system that delivers a secure and safe supply of accessible, affordable, and equitable food for all, promoting all dimensions of health and well-being while having low environmental pressure and impact, and maintaining economic and cultural bases, involves a multi-actor approach (1,2).

INTRODUCTION

The integration of SFS education into nutrition and dietetics programmes is not merely a pedagogical enhancement but a moral imperative. Nutrition and dietetic professionals are well-positioned to become advocates for SFS, with influence across various food and health sectors/industries (3), through the promotion, counselling, and monitoring of more sustainable healthy dietary (SHD) patterns (4,5,6). However, SFS is regarded as an emerging area of specialist interest for nutrition and dietetics professionals (7). And while many national professional bodies have formally acknowledged SFS and SHD as part of the scope of practice, the competencies required to deliver this advocacy and change in planetary and population health are varied. Moreover, recent international research suggests that dietitians perceive themselves to be inadequately trained and lacking the skills and confidence to practice SFS advocacy competently (3,8). As such, the proportion of graduate dietetic and nutrition students equipped with knowledge and skills to contribute to discussion and problem-solving regarding SFS needs to be assessed and improved.

OBJECTIVES

Complete a comprehensive evaluation of academic SFS education/training offered to undergraduate and postgraduate nutrition and dietetic students in the ROI and identify the scope for SFS content integration.

METHODOLOGY

Phase I. Programme selection

Identified accredited nutrition and dietetic programmes offered in ROI in the 2023/2024 academic year.

Module Selection

Phase II.

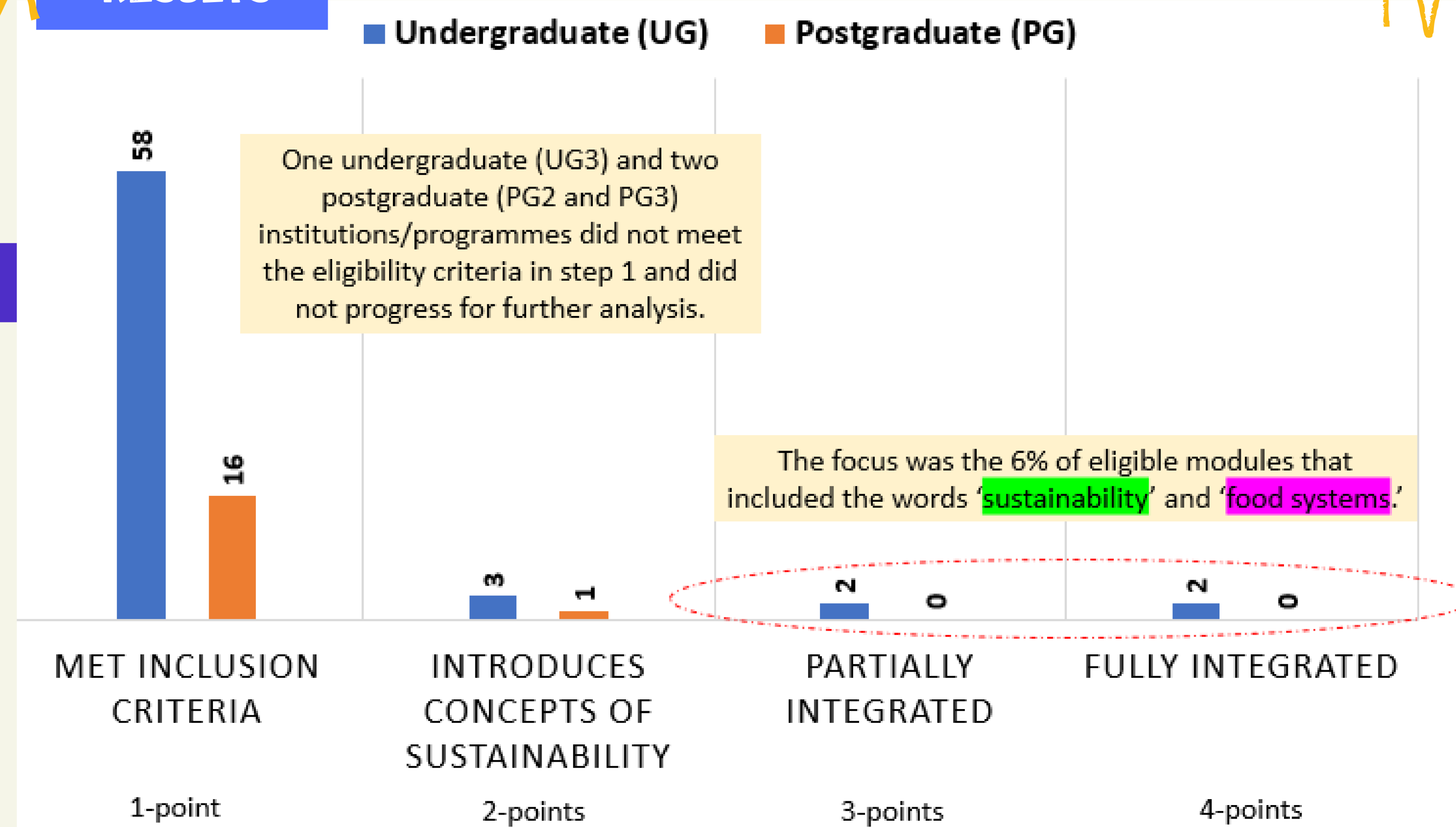
Attained detailed programme information, i.e. module titles, descriptions and learning objectives

Phase III. Data Analysis

Module screening, ranking and scoring based on inclusion criteria (key words) and methods developed by 14 and 15, respectively (see Table 1 below for scoring criteria)

Score	Criteria/Description
1-point	Module meets the inclusion criteria for data collection - Title/description/learning outcomes includes 1+ keyword environmental, sustainable, public health, food system, agriculture, society, community
2-points	Module introduces concepts of sustainability - As before AND includes the keyword 'sustainable' or variation thereof i.e. 'sustainability'.
3-points	SFS is PARTIALLY integrated - As before AND includes reference to key term 'food systems' but is not the sole focus of the module
4-points	SFS is FULLY integrated - As before AND includes reference to key term 'food systems' ; mentioned multiple times and appears to be the sole focus of the module

RESULTS



OPPORTUNITIES

Institutional collaboration and knowledge transfer.

Employ strategies from the National Strategy for ESD

Review core competencies and standards

KEY FINDINGS

Fig 1. Scoring outcome of undergraduate and postgraduate modules

- **SFS education is offered at varying degrees** in Ireland, largely across undergraduate nutrition programmes (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2)
- **21% of all undergraduate** and **6% of postgraduate** nutrition/dietetic programme modules had some relevance to SFS.
- **Nutrition students in Ireland have more opportunities** to engage with SFS content than dietetic students, especially at the undergraduate level
- However, **less than 1% of undergraduate programmes** either partially or fully integrate SFS content into their modules, respectively
- Postgraduate dietetic programmes in ROI offer modules with references to SFS; however, **no postgraduate programmes/modules** offer partial or full integration
- Need to **broaden SFS language and learning** to include more references to sustainability, food systems and agriculture (Fig 2)

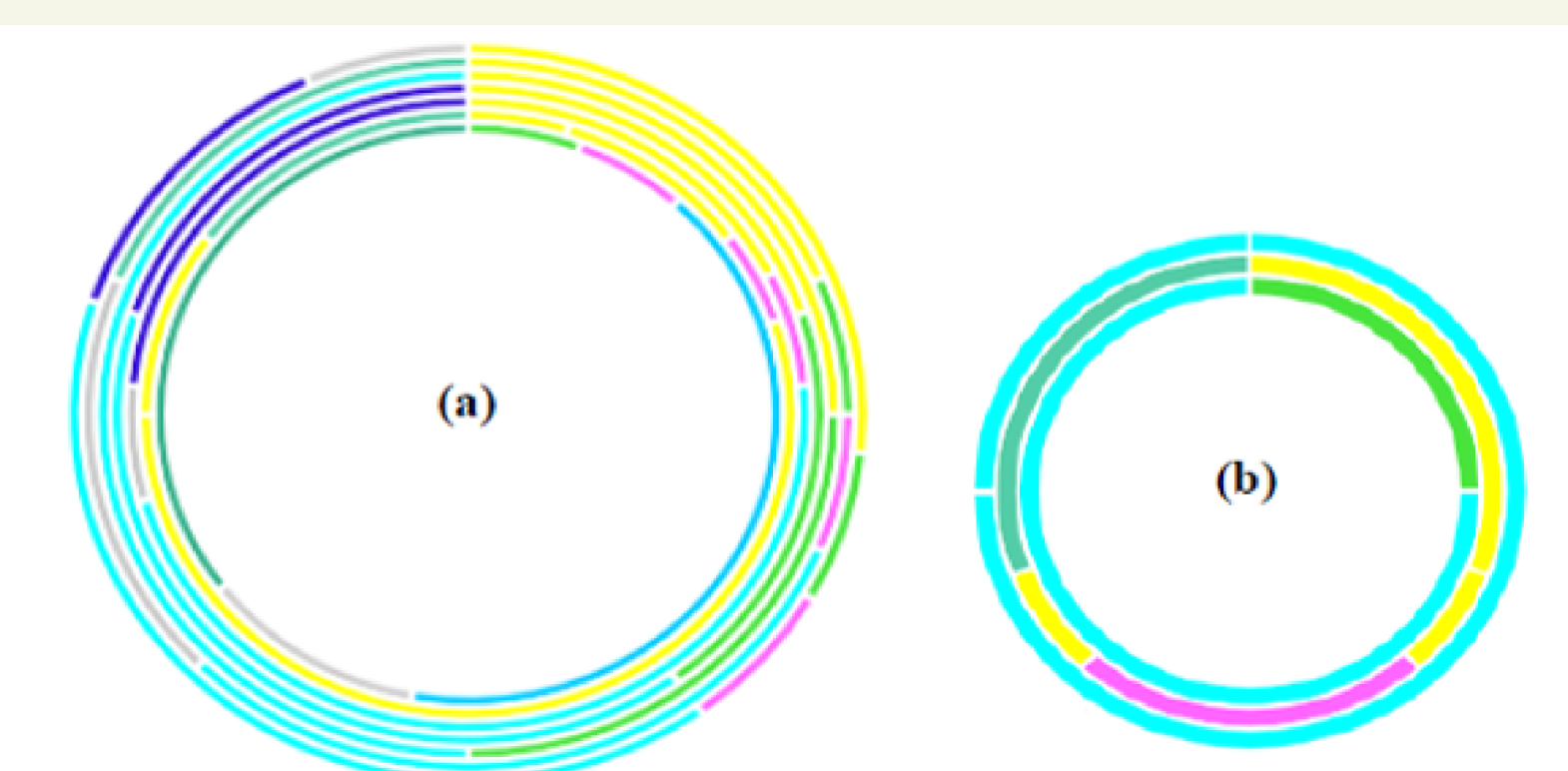


Fig 2. Percentage distribution of keyword frequencies of eligible modules (a) undergraduate (b) postgraduate

LIMITATIONS

- Inclusion criteria - only modules with all the relevant available information i.e. key terms, were included.
- Assumptions about the nature of 'partial' or 'full' SFS content integration may not truly reflect the complete learning for some modules e.g. if a module did not include the term 'sustainability' but did include 'food systems' it was excluded from further study
- Due to the time constraints of this research, the focus of this study was limited to academic learning with respect to SFS content integration.
- Assessment elements i.e. practice placements and/or research projects and/or dissertations were assessed were not assessed.

KEY ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS WITH RESPECT TO SFS EDUCATION IN NUTRITION & DIETETICS IN IRELAND...

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is considered an important aspect of education globally (9,10,11), bound by a set of implicit and explicit ethical assumptions (12,13). This statement articulates the ethical imperative of incorporating education for sustainable development (ESD) into the curricula of nutrition and dietetic programmes across higher educational institutions (HEI) in Ireland. It underscores the moral obligation to equip future nutrition and dietetics professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to advocate for SFS across a range of professions for the enhancement of population and planetary health.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

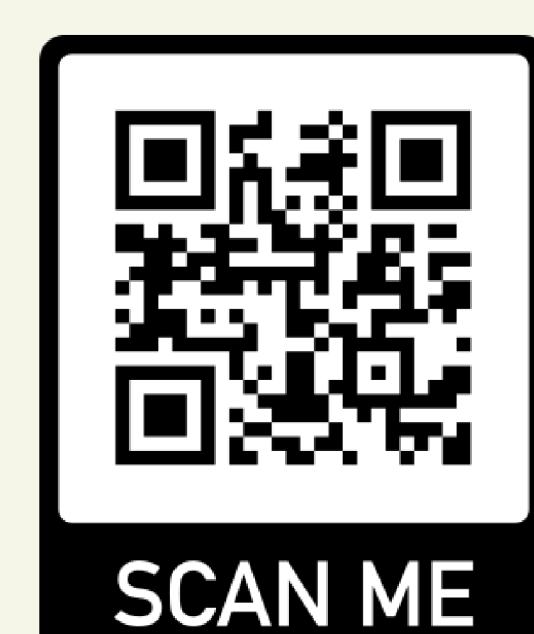
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CONCLUSION

These results highlight the need to strengthen the depth to which SFS content is taught and assessed across all programmes in ROI with opportunities to enhance learning through competency and curricula review in line with the adoption of robust frameworks to enhance ESD.

References

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