

Yorkshire Universities Good Practice Guide for Engaging Students with Sustainability through Service Learning



Yorkshire Universities
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This pilot project was funded by the UPP Foundation.



Foreword

Encompassing staff and students from all twelve member institutions of Yorkshire Universities (YU), this UPP Foundation-funded pilot project helped develop a novel model for a regional network and the basis for a unique regional collaboration and shared learning. Together with our detailed findings in this comprehensive report, we have the following key learning points to highlight:

Diversity: The pilot project has enabled us to reach and engage with students who might not ordinarily engage with this agenda.

Capacity building: Focussing on employability skills and breaking down barriers for engagement, we've been able to create resources that help build capacity for both students and staff. Engaging students in identifying, applying and reflecting on their sustainability skills, and the value of engaging with forms of experiential learning is vital but requires careful consideration.

Partnership: Through the Yorkshire Universities Project Oversight Group and the Annual Student Sustainability Research Conference hosted by the University of Leeds, the partner universities have been able to nurture their relationship with the Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission and non-university partners and set real-life challenges for the students to solve.

This Good Practice showcases ways in which our students engage with sustainability and help solve sustainability related needs in their communities across a diverse set of twelve higher education institutions (HEIs) in Yorkshire. This has already enabled reflection and learning at a regional level, and we hope it will inspire other universities beyond Yorkshire to engage their students in this agenda as well as with the network.

The true beneficiaries of this type of activity are the students themselves. The below student testimony from my own institution, the University of Hull, on their engagement with the YU Multi-University Challenge Day speaks for itself:

'Overall, my experience was motivating. In particular, it was inspiring to see how many attended our workshop and the level of engagement and collaboration involved. Many aspects of this event have benefitted my development and I have improved my ability to engage an audience, manage multiple tasks, and collaborate effectively within a team.'

Events like these (YU Multi-University Challenge Day) are crucial for students to highlight and embrace, as they offer invaluable opportunities to develop skills, expand networks, and collaborate with peers from diverse backgrounds. Personally, I was motivated to get involved by both professional and personal aspirations. Enhancing my public speaking and teamwork abilities is essential for my future career, while my passion for sustainability drove me to share knowledge and inspire positive change.'

Working alongside students from various universities was extremely valuable, this has broadened my perspectives, challenged my assumptions, and built new friendships. Bringing students together to address sustainability challenges on a regional level is particularly important as it encourages us to expand our thinking outside of our own university contexts. Looking ahead, collaboration of students between universities should be encouraged and the importance of these activities should be showcased'.

This pilot has enabled us to create a deeper, wider and more ambitious student engagement with sustainability and we wish to inspire other institutions to learn from our experiences across the region.

Professor David Petley
Vice-Chancellor, University of Hull

Executive Summary

This Good Practice Guide for Engaging Students with Sustainability through Service Learning has been produced by Yorkshire Universities (YU) following completion of a project funded by the UPP Foundation. Service Learning refers to educational experience based upon a collaborative partnership between a university and the community. Through a range of intra-curricular and extra-curricular approaches students can apply academic knowledge and critical thinking skills to meet genuine community needs.

The Guide pulls together examples of good practice across the twelve member institutions of YU and explores the extent to which sustainability is embedded into curricula. We found evidence of significant dedication to sustainability across all twelve member institutions, demonstrated in their curriculum approaches. Our findings underscore universities' engagement in activities that benefit their local communities, offering students valuable real-world opportunities and experiential learning. Key themes in terms of institutional good practice include alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in university strategies or subject disciplines; implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) frameworks; collaboration with external or local organisations; and the incorporation of sustainability throughout courses of specific modules.

Through the YU-UPP project, each YU member institution was awarded £1,000 to use towards enabling or boosting sustainability service-learning. Across the twelve institutions, these funds were used to deliver a range of activities, including prize money for a sustainability challenge activity; establishing a Student

Sustainability Society; supporting student internships or employment; producing resources, materials and insights; and running fieldwork projects. Feedback from member institutions demonstrates that a relatively modest amount of funding can deliver a significant positive impact.

The funding also enabled YU to host a Multi-University Challenge Day for the first time in our operation. The event brought together students from across the twelve HEIs who were asked to develop responses to a challenge jointly set with the Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission (YHCC). The topic of the challenge directly aligned with the YHCC Regional Climate Action Plan priority on advancing education and engagement.

In this Guide, we present insights on what works, including:

- Collaboration with external partners to embed positive impacts beyond the university;
- Amplifying the student voice and student engagement within the curriculum;
- Presenting opportunities that have a clear link to employment and / or employability skills for students;
- Providing authentic opportunities to address real-life challenges; and
- Developing student personal experiences.

Through this project, we found that there is significant value for universities in working in partnership to address sustainability challenges through Service Learning. We also discovered that community partners benefit from a diverse range of student perspectives in tackling sustainability challenges, and that providing small amounts of funding can help to engage a wider range of students who would otherwise not have got involved in sustainability activities. The resources and activities delivered through this project have helped to build capacity for engagement with sustainability among both students and staff.

We have used the lessons learned through this project in the development of this Guide, which is intended for universities which are at the start of their journey and are considering engaging with sustainability through service learning.

Glossary

CEL	Community-Engaged Learning
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
GIG	Graduate Implementation Group
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
PGT	Post-Graduate
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SL	Service Learning
WREL	Work-Related Experiential Learning
YHCC	Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission

YU member institution abbreviations:

LAU	Leeds Arts University
LBU	Leeds Beckett University
LC	Leeds Conservatoire
LTU	Leeds Trinity University
SHU	Sheffield Hallam University
UoB	University of Bradford
UoHudds	University of Huddersfield
UoH	University of Hull
UoL	University of Leeds
UoS	University of Sheffield
UoY	University of York
YSJ	York St John University
YU	Yorkshire Universities



1. Introduction

In January 2023, Yorkshire Universities (YU) was awarded a £20k grant by the UPP Foundation¹ to deliver a pilot project to better understand ways in which students across the twelve YU member institutions engage with sustainability through service-learning. In the pilot project we committed to audit existing work; to scope a brokerage network between communities and university students to help solve local environmental sustainability challenges; to explore employability skills related to sustainability; and to share the knowledge and experience with a wider audience.

In January 2023, Yorkshire Universities (YU) was awarded a £20k grant by the UPP Foundation to deliver a pilot project to better understand ways in which students across the twelve YU member institutions engage with sustainability through service-learning. In the pilot project we committed to audit existing work; to scope a brokerage network between communities and university students to help solve local environmental sustainability challenges; to explore employability skills related to sustainability; and to share the knowledge and experience with a wider audience.

- The Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission (YHCC)⁴ is the UK's largest place-based climate forum, drawing its membership from across the public, private and third sectors to support and guide ambitious climate actions. The YHCC has high-level support from public and private sector partners, including all Mayors and Local Authority Leaders in the region. The Yorkshire and Humber Climate Action Plan, which was co-created by Commissioners, panellists and the public, sets out actions for organisations across the region to deliver collectively.⁵

This pilot project built on, and was supported by, two unique regional networks for collaboration:

- YU's Supporting Graduate Employability Implementation Group (GIG)² brings together the Heads of Careers Services from YU's twelve member institutions and stakeholders beyond the higher education sector. The GIG has been tasked by the YU Board of Vice-Chancellors to implement an action plan to support graduate employment and employability in the region.³

Since its inception, the YHCC has experienced an increase in requests from local charities, voluntary and community sector organisations for the Commission to broker relationships with university students in Yorkshire who could help solve their sustainability related challenges. We saw potential for this pilot project to enable the YHCC to connect with student enthusiasm at the region's universities, whilst at the same time raising awareness of opportunities for those audiences not yet engaged in climate discussions.

The £20k grant funding by UPP has provided us with an opportunity to demonstrate how place-based collaboration through a proof-of-concept project like ours could contribute to key goals underpinning the UPP's Strategy and Student Future's Manifesto⁶:

Goal 1: Enable students and graduates to succeed

Themes for Student Success:
Activities inside and outside the curriculum that build skills, networks and communities.

A clear pathway towards graduate outcomes.

Goal 2: Develop green and sustainable civic universities

Building partnerships with the local community – putting them at the heart of positive change.

Environment service-learning pilots.

Goal 3: Support higher education's value to society

By connecting student research and knowledge with local third sector and employer needs through service-learning, students have been able to help solve real-life challenges and make a difference in their communities. By engaging directly with local employers, students have increased their sense of belonging and the experience has enhanced their employability skills. This type of activity contributes to the commitment of the host institution's social justice, civic and sustainability missions. It also helps deliver aspects of the YHCC Climate Action Plan and generates positive regional impact.

¹ YU's was among the eight successful projects that received grant funding by the UPP Foundation.

² <https://yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk/2022/05/17/plan-to-improve-graduate-employment-and-employability-in-yorkshire/>

³ https://yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2022/05/YU_Supporting-Graduates_Full-Report_May-2022.pdf

⁴ <https://yorksandhumberclimate.org.uk/>

⁵ <https://yorksandhumberclimate.org.uk/sites/default/files/Climate%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

⁶ <https://upp-foundation.org/student-futures-commission/news/a-student-futures-manifesto/>

2. Project Overview

The Project Oversight Group of this YU – UPP Regional Sustainability Service-Learning Pilot was chaired by Professor Dave Petley, Vice Chancellor at the University of Hull. The group, which included representatives from all twelve YU member institutions, steered and contributed to the delivery of this 15-month long project from January 2023 to March 2024.

The first key step of the project comprised an audit that examined the definitions of service-learning; identified existing relevant activities; determined what worked; and explored the extent to which sustainability was embedded in the curricula of the various institutions.

Subsequently, the project allocated £1,000 funding per YU member institution (£12,000 in total) to use towards enabling or boosting sustainability service-learning activity.

A further £3,000 was assigned as prize money to a Multi-University Challenge Day⁷ that YU organised in December 2023 bringing together 36 students from across the twelve universities. On the day, the students were asked to develop a proposal in response to a challenge set by the YHCC on 'How might we encourage students from across Yorkshire & the Humber to engage with sustainability whilst they are at university?'. All students received a share of the prize money and a Certificate of Achievement, recognising their contribution in taking forward the YHCC's Climate Action Plan, which was endorsed by YU, the YHCC and the UPP Foundation. They also completed a sustainability skills assessment session to explore the skills and experience gained through participation in the Challenge Day. The winning group was invited to present their proposal at the Student Sustainability Research Conference on 6 March 2024⁸.

This YU Good Practice Guide for Engaging with Sustainability through Service Learning aims to showcase ways in which students engage with sustainability and help solve sustainability related needs in their communities and present insights on what works across the diverse set of twelve higher education institutions (HEIs) in Yorkshire. We have pulled together information gathered through the project and highlighted the ways in which the allocated funding has made a difference across the YU member institutions. This guide is intended for universities which are at the start of their sustainability journey and are considering engaging with sustainability through service learning.

⁷ <https://yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk/2023/12/07/our-multi-university-challenge-day-fostering-sustainability-through-collaboration>
⁸ Collaborative Regional Conference Showcases Student Sustainability Research, <https://yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk/2024/04/15/collaborative-regional-conference-showcases-student-sustainability-research/>

3. Definitions of service-learning and sustainability across curricula

3.1 Service Learning (SL)

SL refers to educational experience based upon a collaborative partnership between a university and the community. Various definitions of SL exist, but most feature common themes of engaging with communities and addressing real-world issues:

- Service Learning (sometimes referred to as community based or community engaged learning) is a pedagogical approach that integrates meaningful community service or engagement into the curriculum and offers students' academic credit for the learning that derives from active engagement within the community and work on a real-world problem. Reflection and experiential learning strategies underpin the learning process and the service is linked to the academic discipline.⁹
- Learning by listening and working with our community enables students to apply academic knowledge and critical thinking skills to meet genuine community needs. Through reflection and assessment, students gain a deeper understanding of course content, the context around many of the issues our society faces, and their own role as civically engaged members of society.¹⁰
- The auditing exercise undertaken by YU as part of this project explored the definition of service learning across the twelve YU member institutions. By doing so we wanted to illustrate the numerous ways in which SL can be delivered depending on institutional contexts.



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Table 1 – Overview of definitions and perspectives of SL from each YU member institution.

External collaboration opportunities to meet community needs:

Although SL is not a commonly used term at LAU, a working definition focuses on facilitating student learning through participation in arts-based activities that address community needs, enhancing student development and experience, and recognising links to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). LAU provides students with opportunities to collaborate with several external organisations including the third sector. This can be through live briefs, competitions and student-led collaborations.

Community-focused placements and projects:

LBU strives to positively impact the regions and communities it serves through its role as an anchor institution. The university collaborates with external stakeholders to understand and address local challenges, providing opportunities for students and staff to work together within and alongside the curriculum.

Offering a diverse and growing portfolio of experiential learning opportunities which are responsive to the needs of external partners, whilst adding real value to the educational experiences of students and graduates, is an example of how LBU seeks to make a responsive and positive contribution through the talents of its students and graduates.

Opportunities include placements, curriculum-immersed consultancy projects and extra-curricular interdisciplinary projects, which enable students to address real-world challenges in multi-disciplinary groups whilst making meaningful contributions to their communities.

The university's Sustainable Global Exchange initiative, in partnership with YSJ offered the opportunity for students to upskill and understand sustainability within a European context. The programme included carbon literacy training for social sciences students to enable them to effectively train others in carbon literacy within youth and community settings.

⁹ European Observatory for Service-Learning in Higher Education (EOSLHE) <https://www.eoslhe.eu/europe-engage/>

¹⁰ Michael A. Fitts, President of Tulane University, New Orleans, USA – 2023 UPP Foundation Lecture: <https://upp-foundation.org/watch-or-download-the-2023-upp-foundation-lecture/>



Engagement with schools and community groups:

Whilst not explicitly using the term SL, LC offers modules that enable students to engage with external schools and/or community groups.



Placements and practical learning:

LTU prides itself on providing opportunities for all students to undertake professional placements and/or applied practical learning opportunities or projects as part of their programmes.

These opportunities currently include partnerships with a wide range of topics and sectors, and projects/placements of varying lengths to provide valuable experience for LTU students. All students undertake practical projects and placements as a core function, each year of their degree. Many of these placements are with local third sector organisations providing opportunities for regional/national positive social impact.



Curriculum-Integrated Employability:

SHU takes an employability approach to SL, supporting and enhancing students' attainment of skilled employment. SHU has a unified approach to employability, combining curriculum and co-curricular activities. This is achieved through a Curriculum-Integrated Employability (CIE) model which is complemented and enriched by a co-curriculum employability offer. CIE is the basis on which all employability activity in curriculum will be established.

Student-led research:

Students at UoB are offered a range of opportunities to research and explore issues of sustainability within their subject discipline including through student-led research projects. UoB aim for projects wherever possible to be linked into industry or community organisations and to be addressing real world issues.

Third sector volunteering:

SL at UoHudds encompasses a wide range of volunteering activities with third sector organisations which take place within the curriculum, as well as the co-curricular or extra-curricular space. SL has the potential to provide profoundly valuable hands-on experiences which can enable students to develop new skills, discover new interests and learn how their degree knowledge and skills can be applied in the real world. Volunteering and other forms of experiential learning are crucial to achieving the university's mission of 'inspiring global professionals.'



As well as making work experience widely available within degrees, UoHudds has active links with local not-for-profit organisations, including those active in sustainability, conservation and the circular economy through partnership with Third Sector Leader Kirklees, regularly hosting network meetings so university staff can develop joint projects with charities. SL activities, made possible by joint working between the Sustainability Team, Careers Service, SU and academics include collaborations with the Canal and River Trust, Fresh Futures, the White Rose Forest Partnership and contribute to projects such as planting a tree for every student.

Benefitting the community and addressing sustainability:

Although it doesn't work to a specific definition of SL, UoH acknowledges activities aligned with this concept. UoH students learn from real-world activities that provide benefits for the wider community focusing on sustainability across various contexts such as economic, social or environmental issues.

Community Engaged Learning:

UoL uses the term 'Community Engaged Learning' (CEL) which captures the reciprocal community collaboration embedded within their approach. Related activity takes several forms across the university such as the Lifelong Learning Centre, Students into Schools programme, Volunteering and Sustainability Services.

The university has established the Community Engagement Network for Research, Education, and Civic Engagement (CENTRE), which is a distributed network rooted in the pedagogy of Communities of Practice. Here a network instead of an individual/centralised unit is organised to oversee civic activity across the university. The approach and therefore power is distributed to each of its constituent members who in turn have connections out to faculty/students working at a grass roots level with communities.

Engaged learning and Education for Sustainable Development:

The terms 'Engaged Learning' and 'Work related learning' are used to encompass activities at UoS in which students work closely with external partners, often within the curriculum. Such opportunities include aspects of experiential learning, knowledge exchange and civic engagement.



Community Engaged Learning:

UoY uses the term 'Community Engaged Learning' (CEL) over SL. This type of learning aims to create a mutually beneficial partnership between the UoY and community-based organisations through which students deliver tangible outputs for the community whilst gaining structured, developmental experiences for themselves.

WREL & Sustainability Challenges:

Work Related & Experiential Learning (WREL) in the curriculum is a priority for York St John University. Every degree has at least one placement module. YSJ considers the university itself as an employer of students and graduates.

Sustainability is a key theme as part of a commitment to create work-related learning in all subjects at all levels. YSJ describes two example activities taking a SL approach:

Firstly, the YSJ Living Lab is a year-round, cross-university network of students and staff which collaborates to investigate and tackle ecological justice issues within the university and wider community.

Secondly, students are offered multiple opportunities and support to create sustainable enterprises, particularly through the Ingenuity programme and Kickstarter funding programme.

As the overview demonstrates, while SL isn't uniformly adopted across institutions, comparable concepts are put into practice. Among the twelve YU member institutions, seven don't use the term 'service-learning', instead they refer to related activity as:

Community engaged learning

Work-related and/or experiential learning

Practical learning

There are prominent themes within the definitions and perspectives of SL adopted by YU member institutions, including:

Placement and project opportunities or modules within the curriculum that are linked with an external organisation	Engaging in volunteering activities with the third sector	Making tangible and meaningful contributions to the wider community through volunteering, placements and projects
Partnership and collaboration between universities and community organisations	Offering activities that enhance student development and enrich their overall academic experience	Addressing real-world challenges, often encompassing aspects of sustainability (social, economic and environmental) as well as the UN SDGs

Each definition aligns with at least one of these main themes. Despite the absence of a unified recognition of the term SL, the definitions demonstrate that universities share a similar approach and perspective towards SL. Many universities prioritise SL initiatives that benefit the local community and provide diverse real-world opportunities for students, primarily through placement and projects.

Key insight

Sustainability service-learning connects to different facets of the higher education system. Evidence from the YU pilot project has demonstrated that sustainability service-learning is of interest to students, academics, directors of sustainability, sustainability service staff, communications staff, external engagement, strategic partnerships and enterprise leads, employer engagement, heads of career and student opportunity leads, etc.

3.2 Sustainability in the curriculum

The second key part of the audit, was to discover the extent to which sustainability is embedded in the institutional curricula and strategies of YU members. By doing so we wanted to assess to what extent it was possible for students to engage with sustainability through SL or other related activities within the curriculum.

The overview of our findings illustrates the diverse range of activity that can be taken up by students across the region.

Table 2. Overview of the extent sustainability is embedded into curricula.

Approach to sustainability in the curriculum

Sustainability is addressed across the majority of courses, with strong engagement in social and political issues. Wider sustainability considerations are addressed in-depth by a number of courses including BA (Hons) Fashion Design, BA (Hons) Fashion Marketing, BA (Hons) Filmmaking.

For out more: www.leeds-art.ac.uk/about-us/sustainability/

A high-level audit of the LBU curriculum revealed that 8 out of 11 schools deliver one or more modules within their subject areas that can be considered to deal with a UN SDG directly. 10 out of 11 schools deliver a module that engages with some aspects of the UN SDG's.

Find out more: www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/our-university/sustainability/

Staff use case studies within specific modules to highlight engagement in sustainable system change. Students are encouraged to explore impact and can utilise these themes in their submissions. Core curriculum will be reviewed in 2-3 years' time when there will be an opportunity to further embed sustainability, in line with the strategic commitments and ambitions of LC.

Find out more:
www.leedsconservatoire.ac.uk/student-life/welcome-induction/social-community/#:~:text=Sustainable%20Conservatoire%20%2F%20Climate%20Emergency,taking%20action%20to%20do%20better



The LTU Strategic Plan 2021-2026 commits to curriculum alignment with the UN SGDs, meaning that all degree courses will include education for sustainable development. Students will tackle challenges that link to the issues critical to our planet.

LTU's Curriculum for Social Justice (CfSJ) framework is based upon an ethical imperative for the institution to do its best for all students and will be instrumental in closing the awarding gap, improving educational experiences, creating the best possible outcomes for all students, and producing socially responsible and sustainable citizens of the future.

The CSfJ has an Education for Sustainable Development strand. This will form the framework for LTU's approach to embedding sustainability into the curriculum, through both taught modules and practical application through student projects and placements to meet the above commitments.

Find out more:

www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/about/environment-and-sustainability/



SHU is currently completing a major curriculum redesign and revalidation process, as part of which all courses have been required to demonstrate how they help to deliver the SHU Climate Action Strategy. All courses must demonstrate how they are aligned to professional body, apprenticeships standards and QAA benchmarks (as appropriate) for sustainability.

Departments and Institutes have developed course specific approaches to enhance the core employability curricula focus. In 2024 SHU plans to develop a Climate Curriculum Hub to support staff and students. This will include the roll out of Carbon Literacy Training across staff and student bodies and the development of e-learning modules on climate action which will be available to all staff and students.

Find out more:

www.shu.ac.uk/about-us/our-values/sustainability/climate-action-strategy-commitments



Sustainability features in many current programmes at UoB. The introduction of the Bradford Curriculum in 2022, which requires all undergraduate programmes to adopt design principles, including Sustainable Futures, by 2025 provides an institution-wide framework for the development and delivery of sustainability in the curriculum.



The Bradford Curriculum defines the Sustainable Futures Curriculum as:

- Explicit, evident and embedded at each level of a programme with increasing challenge and complexity (integrated/assessed or otherwise as best fits the programme design).
- Research and/or inquiry is used to explore the subject discipline through a student-defined lens e.g. UN SDGs.
- Potential for designing innovative learning activities where students, staff and/or other stakeholders work in partnership within/across modules/programmes/ faculties.
- Offers opportunities for student choice, application of learning, generation of creative ideas and innovative solutions to real world problems, and development of Bradford Qualities.

Find out more: www.bradford.ac.uk/about/strategy-vision/sustainability/sustainability-in-the-curriculum/

UoHudds promotes sustainable development in a wide range of ways, including addressing sustainability as part of the undergraduate and post-graduate subject curriculum. Sustainability features naturally in a wide range of degrees from Architectural Technology to Textiles, addressing areas as diverse as the world of fashion and logistics to renewable energy and environmental sciences.

All UG and PGT courses have to show how they address the Huddersfield Graduate Attributes as part of course validation and subject review. The UN SDGs are a highly visible component of UoHudds's unique co-curricular Global Professional Award (GPA), which engages thousands of individuals each year through timetabled sessions in the first and second year of students' degree study. Through the GPA students work in groups to identify SDGs which speak to their concerns and research locally available opportunities for them to get involved.

Find out more:

www.hud.ac.uk/subjects/sustainability/
www.hud.ac.uk/undergraduate/global-professional-award/

The UoH's Vision is: "Motivated by society's challenges and inspired by the power of our global community, we are shaping a fairer, brighter and carbon neutral future."

At the heart of the university Strategy 2030 are two core themes of Environmental Sustainability and Social Justice. As part of the Transforming Programmes initiative (2020-2024), all subject areas at the university have been asked to embed the Vision into the taught curriculum at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Since November 2022, students and staff have been working together to develop approaches to embedding sustainability in learning, as part of Education for Sustainable Development Changemakers, supported by Students Organising for Sustainability UK (SOS-UK). Students from a range of disciplines, including History, Criminology, Politics and Computer Science, started by mapping their curricula against the UN SDGs, other sustainability criteria and the university's values and pillars. Students and staff then began developing ideas and projects to respond to findings and progress embedding sustainability into teaching and learning to ensure all students at the UoH learn about how they can lead on sustainability.

Find out more: www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/strategic-plan
www.sos-uk.org/project/education-for-sustainable-development-changemakers

Sustainability in the curriculum has long been embedded in the university's strategic sustainability commitments. In November 2021 the university's Climate Plan ensured sustainability in the curriculum was embedded as an institutional priority. The Plan represents the single biggest investment UoL have ever made: £174 million over the next decade, more than £150 million of which will be put towards achieving the goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Leeds Sustainable Curriculum – as a key principle within the UoL Climate Plan, there is recognition of the significance that curricular, cocurricular, extracurricular and student research opportunities have in equipping students with the knowledge and capabilities to have a positive impact in local and global communities. This principle integrates with a major curriculum transformation programme – Curriculum Redefined, enabling UoL to develop their approach to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and amplify and extend their foundational work in this area. This includes embedding sustainability in elective modules, capstone projects and community engaged learning.

To support the development of the Leeds Sustainable Curriculum the university is taking forward a Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence



research project to identify and develop approaches to embed Education for Sustainable Development in discipline and interdisciplinary contexts.

Find out more:

sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/
spotlight.leeds.ac.uk/climate-plan/

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at the UoS is built on a foundation of engaged pedagogies, encompassing:

- ‘What we teach’ - enabling our students to access the curriculum content that they need to critically understand the key issues facing our world today,
- ‘How we teach’ - offering students the opportunity to learn in an applied, collaborative, participatory fashion and,
- ‘Who we are’ - helping our staff and students to play their part in a sustainable future through global empathy, solidarity, and a commitment to good change.

UoS has committed to embedding ESD in all taught programmes, and ensuring that ESD is built into the development processes for all new modules and programmes.

Course leaders are encouraged to reflect on where they are already teaching ESD/SDG-related content and/or using engaged, participatory, experiential pedagogies that develop students’ core critical competencies.

Find out more:

sheffield.ac.uk/sustainability/education-sustainable-development



Sustainability is one of the four core University principles. UoY has developed Environmental Sustainability at York (ESAY), a focal point for research, teaching and operations across the university:

- ESAY offer a suite of four sustainability-themed York Interdisciplinary Modules (YIMs), interdisciplinary, credit bearing modules which are open to students of any academic discipline.
- The Sustainability Clinic (one of the YIMs) is delivered as a core module for Environment and Geography students and an elective module offered to students of all disciplines at undergraduate and postgraduate level.



- Dissertations and projects centring on sustainability with local organisations are increasingly common for masters students.

Find out more: www.york.ac.uk/about/mission-strategies/vision-for-york/

Sustainability-specific modules are covered in many degree programmes and form a thematic part of YSJ.’s future work-related learning strategy.

Sustainable Global Experience initiative this partnership between YSJ and LBU offered the opportunity for students to upskill and understand sustainability within a European context. The programme included carbon literacy training for social sciences students to enable them to effectively train others within youth and community settings. Students from YSJ, along with students from LBU, engaged in a Sustainable Global Experience with Pagoda Project, including trip to Brussels, in Belgium.

Find our more:

www.yorks.ac.uk/research/institute-for-social-justice/research-themes/ecological-justice/living-lab/



The audit reveals significant dedication to sustainability across all twelve member institutions, evident in their curriculum approaches. Despite the diverse array of activities, methods and scales, it's apparent that each of the twelve institutions is actively striving to integrate sustainability into their degree programmes and curricula. Moreover, this exercise underscores the universities' engagement in activities that benefit their local communities, offering students valuable real-world opportunities and experiential learning. It's evident that all universities acknowledge the pivotal role of sustainability within their curricula.

Examples of the integration of sustainability into the curriculum include Sheffield Hallam's Sheffield Institute for Education, which is helping to convene a climate action and sustainability network for schools in South Yorkshire to support school leaders, teachers and students. They are also exploring how forest schools can help enhance the curriculum. The University of Leeds has identified over 360 modules with a direct link to sustainability. The Leeds University Network for Sustainability in Higher Education (LUNSHE) is a dynamic interdisciplinary community of practice that inspires people to embed sustainability

across the student academic experience and experiential learning opportunities. All students at the University of Leeds can access a digital induction unit on sustainability, which will introduce them to sustainability, Climate Change and the UN SDGs and the interdependencies across these. They can also access a 'Sustainability in Practice' digital unit which has more of an institutional focus such as information on the university's Sustainability Strategy, objectives and Climate Plan commitments as well as a separate Environmental Management System digital unit.

Sustainability also features strongly in support for student enterprise. For example, the University of Huddersfield's Enterprise Team has supported students in developing business ideas as diverse as 'seaweed leather' as part of their Enterprise Placement Year (EPY) through to a business – Reclaim Tentwear - which takes discarded festival tents and turns them into outdoor, upcycled apparel.

Student internships and paid roles also feature in institutional support for sustainability. The University of Leeds offers year-long paid internships within the Sustainability Service, as well as paid, part-time Student Sustainability Architect roles, open to students at all levels of study. These enable students to take forward mini projects aligned to University sustainability initiatives and commitments.

Student-led conferences are another mechanism for embedding sustainability into learning. The University of Leeds delivers an annual conference that provides a platform for students, at all levels of study, to showcase their engagement in sustainability research, creating a safe space for them to share their ideas and build new connections. In 2023 and in 2024 the university worked in collaboration with Yorkshire Universities and their membership to open this opportunity up to over 350 students from across our region. This was brought together in a carbon neutral conference that responded to YHCC themes and illustrated the wealth of regional talent advancing sustainability knowledge.

Key themes identified in the audit of SL for sustainability across YU member institutions include alignment with SDGs in university strategies or subject disciplines; implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) frameworks; collaboration with external or local organisations; and the incorporation of sustainability throughout courses of specific modules. Additionally, initiatives such as Carbon Literacy Training for staff and students; emphasis on positive local and global community impacts; and opportunities for community-engaged learning demonstrate a commitment to addressing real-world challenges and fostering student perspectives on sustainability within the curriculum.

4. Examples of Good Practice

The audit revealed existing good practice across the twelve universities in the region. These can serve as examples for other institutions considering embedding sustainability with their own approaches to curriculum design and SL.



Sustainability Knowledge Exchange Partnership at Leeds Arts University



During April 2022 - May 2023 Leeds Arts University and Sustainable Arts in Leeds (SAIL) have partnered to develop a programme of activities as part of their Knowledge Exchange Partnership. This programme included:

- Live Briefs: SAIL & SAIL Members
- Student Placements
- Carbon Literacy Training
- Sustainability Workshops
- Climate Communication Best Practice Guide Development

The objectives of the programme were:

- Developing students' employability through providing student experiences working with SAIL & our members.
- Developing sustainability literacy among students, and an understanding of the importance and relevance of sustainability to students 'creative practice and personal lives.
- Equipping students with the sustainability skills they need to be sustainability advocates in our sector: an essential element to progressing the HE sector towards becoming Net Zero.

Leeds Arts University also undertakes third sector engagement as part of course module learning activities e.g. an industrial visit for BA (Hons) Fashion Design Level 4 students to Oxfam Recycling Centre, to source second-hand shirts to use in a deconstruction workshop. The visit included a guided tour, presentation, and details about the volunteering/placement opportunities available for students.

Find out more:

a.storyblok.com/f/219744/x/8752e34813/231025-sail-x-lau-impact-report.pdf

Beckettsphere at Leeds Beckett University



Beckettsphere is the Leeds Beckett University scheme which enables groups of colleagues and students from across the university to create and implement projects which have a positive sustainable impact within our community and further afield. The scheme provides structure and support to ensure that teams can have a meaningful impact whilst completing a project they are passionate about. These have included running a citizens jury, growing cardboard-eating mushrooms in the secret garden, or bringing awareness to careers in sustainability.

Projects are linked to UN SDGs, audited annually and are given awards based on the impact and reach they have achieved.

Recruitment Activities

For some of Leeds Beckett's in-house recruitment processes employees are selected via assessment centres. Rather than utilising more corporate tasks or activities, we have been offering colleagues from procurement and food services the opportunity to share their sustainability challenges on campus. In the assessment centre, students must work in small groups to solve the challenges, whilst being assessed on the core competencies as part of the particular role they have applied for.

Find out more:

www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/our-university/sustainability/beckettsphere/

Artistic Citizenship at Leeds Conservatoire



Leeds Conservatoire has been involved in UKRI-funded research developed to assess meaning and engagement in artistic citizenship, encompassing sustainability and how that further engages students and graduates in surrounding community settings.

Workshops and panels are delivered to help new businesses and artists navigate careers, acknowledging their role in environmental sustainability, but ensuring it isn't overwhelming or hindering.

Find out more:

www.hepi.ac.uk/2023/11/30/what-universities-can-learn-from-artistic-citizenship-in-practice/



Annual Professional Challenge at Leeds Trinity University



Leeds Trinity University hosts an Annual Professional Challenge, a two-week group project led by regional organisations, such as Leeds City Council. This challenge is themed around addressing the UN SDGs. Students work in small multi-disciplinary groups to research and develop innovative solutions for the challenge, enhancing their understanding of sustainability while honing their employability, consultancy, and teamwork skills. The initiative emphasizes practical learning and real-world application, benefiting both students and local organisations.

Professor Catherine O'Connor, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Experience at Leeds Trinity University, said:

"At Leeds Trinity, we are committed to ensuring that all our students have the opportunity to build their skills and networks during their time at university to benefit their future careers."

"It has been an excellent opportunity to welcome our partners at Leeds City Council and LEEDS 2023 to work with our students on a number of challenges focusing on important issues and developing their key employability skills."

"I am extremely proud of the work our students produced as a result of the Level 4 Professional Challenge and it is an experience they will be able to use to their advantage throughout their Leeds Trinity journey and beyond."

Lee Ashworth, Volunteer Manager at LEEDS 2023, said:

"It has been brilliant to work with students at Leeds Trinity on a project based around the LEEDS 2023 volunteering programme. Participating students brought energy and fresh ideas to our live brief which was a case study in how to engage communities across Leeds in our Year of Culture through volunteering. It was great to see students responding with consideration and enthusiasm. We were really impressed with depth of research and creative responses to the brief."

"We're very much looking forward to further collaborations between LEEDS 2023 and Leeds Trinity University over the next year and into 2023 – and we hope lots of the Leeds Trinity University community will get involved in activity across the Year of Culture."

Find out more: www.leadstrinity.ac.uk/news/archive/2022/leeds-trinity-university-launches-professional-challenge.php

Business Engagement Skills and Employability (BESE) at Sheffield Hallam University



Sheffield Hallam University prioritizes the integration of Business, Enterprise, Skills, and Employability (BESE) into its framework. This is facilitated through the BESE Directorate, which coordinates various activities aimed at fostering employer partnerships, enhancing business development, and promoting employability skills among students. With a focus on flexibility and responsiveness, the university aims to meet the needs of employers and the local economy through innovative approaches to work-based learning and collaborative partnerships. Examples include:

1. Degree Apprenticeships Development

The BESE Directorate oversees the development of degree apprenticeships across Sheffield Hallam University's four faculties. The university has established a flexible approach to work-based learning, enabling the rapid design and approval of programs. Work-based learning activities are combined with specific subject areas, approved by a standing panel.

2. Partnership Development

BESE plays a key role in creating effective partnerships between Sheffield Hallam University, employers, and regional stakeholders. Representation on the Local Enterprise Partnership's Skills, Employment, and Education Board has helped to facilitate collaboration and alignment with regional economic priorities. The Directorate facilitates the placement of apprenticeships at various levels within companies, leveraging different providers to meet diverse needs.

3. Collaboration with Further Education Colleges

BESE collaborates with further education colleges in the region to explore opportunities for developing products and programs aligned with employers' skill requirements. Emphasis is placed on delivering skills that support the economic growth of the region, fostering a relationship between education and industry.

Find out more:
blogs.shu.ac.uk/wblapprenticeships/contact/information-about-deep/

Curriculum Opportunities at the University of Bradford



The University of Bradford enables students to engage with sustainability issues within their respective disciplines through various opportunities. These initiatives, including student-led research projects, are designed to address real-world challenges by linking academic study with industry or community organisations. By integrating sustainability into the curriculum, the university equips students with the knowledge and skills to contribute meaningfully to addressing societal and environmental issues. Examples include:

- The student-led Sustainability Society is the umbrella and university-wide forum for students to collaborate and work together on applying their innovative skills to implementing sustainable solutions. Examples include: Fairtrade fortnight-organising activities to promote an understanding of ethical trading, ecological impact of consumption;
- Art from waste activity student-led creativity project working collaboratively with the Visual Arts society;
- Climate action activities to coincide with COP27.

The student-led Social Justice Society leads a range of activities and campaigns aimed to inspire social change, encourage access to resources, promote equality, boost participation, advocate for diversity and raise awareness of human rights.

The Peace Society campaigns for a world free of conflict and promotion of positive peace. The campaigns include working closely with Sustainability Society on climate change issues and also on sports, peace and development.

Find out more:
www.bradfordunisu.co.uk/groups/social-justice-society

Global Professional Award and volunteering at the University of Huddersfield

University of
HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring global professionals

The Global Professional Award (GPA) is a unique co-curricular programme at the University of Huddersfield addressing employability, enterprise and wellbeing, which engages thousands of individuals each year through timetabled sessions in the first and second year of degree study. We use a 'students as partners' approach with regular input into developing and improving the curriculum, supported by a group of students – Team GPA – who help facilitate workshops and promote the programme to their fellow students.

The UN SDGs are deeply embedded in the GPA and complement the programme's profound emphasis upon equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Sessions seek to develop the enterprising skills students need to make a difference and provide an opportunity for students to identify causes that matter to them and find how they can get involved locally.

The GPA encourages students to diversify their range of practical experiences to increase their social and cultural capital by requiring they gain five elective hours in the first year of the GPA, and ten in the second year of the programme. Students decide what sort of electives they would like to do and the university provides ideas and resources. Electives can be learning activities (e.g. online courses) or practical experiences like volunteering or work experience, which includes internships and paid work.

Find out more:

www.hud.ac.uk/undergraduate/global-professional-award/

Professional consultancy project module and SuDSlab at the University of Hull


**UNIVERSITY
OF HULL**

Dissertation projects in a range of disciplines allow students at the University of Hull to solve real problems related to external businesses and organisations, and often focus on sustainability or social justice. In Environmental Sciences, students work with a partner to undertake a piece of research or consultancy aligned to the partner's specific needs. Given the subject area and nature of the programme, these activities often relate to sustainability questions. Students in Biological Sciences work with conservation partners to undertake research or outreach-related projects.

SuDSlab UK is an initiative of the University of Hull to evaluate the effectiveness of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and through engagement with communities, risk management authorities and other partners to better utilise them. SuDSlab UK is formed of sub-projects such as Blue-Green Lab, DIG and a partnership with Living With Water, each of which help contribute to the University's main challenges.

The Blue-Green Lab accords with the University's sustainability goals and with wider community aspirations in Hull around climate resilience and Living with Water. Our approach to using the scheme as a tool for engaging with and educating small businesses has been impactful and innovative, leading to increased opportunities for SMEs to become involved in knowledge exchange. The University is working closely with partners such as Hull City Council and Yorkshire Water to ensure that the scheme meets the needs of key stakeholders. The scheme has also provided support to a number of regional SMEs, has featured in university education outreach programmes as a walking tour, been used as a Nature-Based Solutions CPD case study, and added engaging content into postgraduate programmes.

Find out more:

www.hull.ac.uk/special/blue-green-lab

www.hull.ac.uk/research/institutes/eei/sudslab-uk

Living Labs at the University of Leeds



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Gair Wood

The Leeds Living Labs program at the University of Leeds tackles real-world sustainability challenges by involving students directly in research and action. This initiative aligns with the University's commitment to embed sustainability through knowledge, engagement, collaboration, and innovation. By bringing together students, staff, and city partners, Leeds Living Labs serves as a testbed for sustainable solutions, enhances the curriculum, and addresses local and global challenges at a range of scales and comprising several different delivery models. Examples include:

Planted in 2023, Gair Wood is a new woodland of over 60 thousand trees of regionally appropriate broadleaved species such as oak, alder, lime and willow across a 36-hectare site. This large-scale project on land owned by the University of Leeds was supported by a grant administered by the White Rose Forest, from a Defra Trees for Climate programme. University staff time necessary for planting has been supported by funding from the United Bank of Carbon (UBOC), as well a sizeable number of staff volunteers. Ongoing maintenance has been supported by the Estate Service at the university, and a steering group comprising representatives from the Sustainability Service, Estates, academics and UBOC-funded staff ensures the objectives are assessed and refined as the programme evolves.

Students are involved through field work courses as part of their degree, by using the site as a venue for their dissertation projects, by visiting during a guided tour or outreach day, or by joining one of the volunteering sessions run by the team to either engage in practical woodland creation/conservation or citizen science. The Sustainability Service Student Architect programme also provides paid opportunity for project involvement on the site.

Roger Stevens Pond

Previous campus Living Lab work has seen a former cooling pond on campus transformed into a rich habitat through the installation of floating islands. The next incarnation is the creation of a digital twin through a collaboration with Slingshot

Simulations. This proof-of-concept project has created an interactive virtual space using live data from the pond sensors to aid research and learning and will lead to further exploration into what other data sets can be incorporated to widen the digital twin across the campus, and potentially beyond. The Sustainability Service funded a Post Graduate student from the university to work with Slingshot on the production of the digital twin, and further opportunities for student projects will be created as the project develops.

Community Engagement

Ongoing work through the University's Positive Impact Partners team will increasingly provide a range of opportunities for students to work with community partners, particularly in relation to the University's Climate Plan commitment of supporting Net Zero across campus and beyond. A number of Student Sustainability Architect projects have been devised and ongoing work to identify further opportunities is planned.

Find out more:

sustainability.leeds.ac.uk/category/leeds-living-lab/



Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at the University of Sheffield



Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at the University of Sheffield encompasses a holistic approach to learning that integrates sustainability principles into the curriculum and co-curricular activities. ESD aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to address current and future sustainability challenges, both locally and globally. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, community engagement, and real-world projects, UoS creates a culture of sustainability and social responsibility among its students.

Find out more:

sheffield.ac.uk/sustainability/education-sustainable-development



Environmental Sustainability Academy at the University of York



Environmental Sustainability at York (ESAY) is a pioneering initiative at the University of York designed to promote environmental sustainability in research, teaching and operations. ESAY serves as a collaborative platform, bringing together researchers, educators, policymakers, and campus operations to address real-world sustainability challenges. Through innovative programs like the Sustainability Clinic and the Living Labs Initiative, ESAY fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, engages with external partners, and cultivates sustainability leaders for the future. Examples include:

1. Sustainability Clinic

The Sustainability Clinic offers students the opportunity to work on real sustainability challenges in collaboration with community organisations and start-up businesses. It has been delivered as an assessed module from September 2023, allowing undergraduate and postgraduate students from all academic departments to participate. Students work with real clients, collaborate with peers from diverse disciplines, and engage in community engaged, project-based learning to develop practical solutions for sustainability issues. The clinic enhances students' skills, expands their understanding of sustainability, and provides valuable experience for their future careers. The clinic uses experienced academic staff to set the theoretical context for the students to test in practical projects, which are sourced and designed by professional services staff. Post graduate research students provide the undergraduate teams with facilitator support, contributing to their experience as teachers. In 2023 the Sustainability Clinic received a Green Gown Award for Student Engagement.

2. Living Labs Initiative

The Living Labs Initiative focuses on using the campus as a test-bed for sustainability solutions, with current projects including biodiversity considerations. Living Labs are structured around key focus areas such as biodiversity, food, or travel, engaging the university community in sustainability efforts. Through days or weeks of action, the initiative aims to educate and empower the campus community to drive sustainable changes. A notable example is the biodiversity

pilot, where student interns conducted a baseline ecological survey of campus grounds to guide future decisions on improving biodiversity. The initiative provides valuable learning opportunities for students, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and developing essential competencies for addressing sustainability challenges.

Professor Charlie Jeffery, Vice-Chancellor and President:

“Our vision is to be a university for public good, which is why we are proud of this initiative – engaging students with a chance to learn and put into practice sustainability skills, while also making a sustainable difference to local communities and businesses.”

Find out more:

www.greengownawards.org/university-of-york1



Living Lab at York St John University

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The Living Lab at York St John University represents a dynamic collaboration network involving students and staff from various disciplines, all focused on addressing real-world local ecological challenges. This initiative aims to empower students by developing their skills through hands-on experience in leadership and innovation. Opportunities within the Living Labs range from paid internships and student researcher positions to volunteer blogging and project officer roles, demonstrating York St John’s commitment to foster student-driven initiatives. In recognition of its impactful approach to enhancing student employability and contributing to environmental sustainability, the Living Lab was honoured at the UK-wide Green Gown Awards in 2022, winning in the ‘Tomorrow’s Employees’ category.

Living Labs to date have included ‘Learning at the Junction’ (focused on air quality) and ‘Feeding the Campus’ (focused on the food system) and have involved up to 1,000 students per year.

Find out more:

yorks.ac.uk/research/institute-for-social-justice/research-themes/ecological-justice/living-lab/feeding-the-campus/

yorks.ac.uk/research/institute-for-social-justice/research-themes/ecological-justice/living-lab/learning-at-the-junction/



5. Examples of new activity enabled by the project funding

The YU-UPP project allocated £1,000 funding to each of the twelve YU member institutions to use towards enabling or boosting sustainability service-learning activity. The aim was to identify the types of activities that could be enabled across a diverse set of institutions. The funding was used across the following five broad areas:

Prize money for a sustainability challenge activity



Student Sustainability Society



Student intern/ employment



Producing resources/ materials / insights



Fieldwork project



Institutions reported that the funding made a considerable positive difference, illustrating that small investments can yield significant outcomes. Some initiatives, made possible by the funding, are looking to expand further.

In many cases the funding allowed for collaboration between different stakeholders including the Student Union, academic

departments/schools, Student communities and external organisations and across universities, setting the foundation in relationships for the future. While it wasn't anticipated to uncover this during the audit, this underscores the significant impact of even modest investments in fostering sustainability initiatives within university settings.



Joint brief with third sector organisations led by Leeds Arts University



YU-UPP funding was spent on prize money for a live brief titled “Sustainability or community led creative activity and opportunity concept designs”. The live brief was run during November 2023, in advance of the YU Multi-University Challenge Day event on 1st December.

The live brief was developed by Leeds Arts University in collaboration with three other Yorkshire Universities member institutions; University of Leeds, Leeds Conservatoire and the University of Huddersfield. £1,000 funding was allocated to provide a prize of £250 for a student from each institution. In addition to the prize money for winning entries, the intent was for the winner from each institution to attend the 1 December Multi-University Challenge Day.

The difference that the funding made was by incentivising student engagement in sustainability service learning and beginning to prompt consideration of ideas ahead of participation at the Multi-University Challenge Day.

The concept for the joint live brief was initiated by the Careers, Employability and Enterprise team at Leeds Arts University with support from Sustainability. Academic staff and the Student Union were mobilised in order for the brief to be promoted to students.

Key insight

Having the funding available undoubtedly facilitated activity that would not have otherwise occurred – without it, the live brief would not have been developed and Leeds Arts University would have not gained learnings and reflections on student engagement from the process. The main value has been the coming together of the four institutions as a subset of the full Yorkshire Universities to brainstorm and collaborate on a common solution and approach – valuable peer support and partnership have been developed through the collaborative approach.

Sustainability Challenge Day with Green Building Renewables at Leeds Beckett University



In March 2023 Leeds Beckett piloted Challenge Week, an opportunity for students to build transferable skills and develop work experience in a time efficient way. The University worked with a business (Green Building Renewables) to offer a sustainability challenge on one of the days. This was so successful that Leeds Beckett decided to embed sustainability across all of the challenges in future years.

The £1k funding from the YU-UPP project was used as prize money for a sustainability challenge, run as part of our Challenge Week. The challenge involved students working in groups to address a ‘real-life’ brief, with the winning group of five students winning £200 each. Being able to offer prize money incentivised students to take part, demonstrated that their time and ideas were of real value, and provided due recognition for their contributions.

Green Building Renewables provided positive feedback on the experience of having students working on their business sustainability challenge. Students involved said that this event helped with their transferrable skills and their understanding of sustainability issues.

Find out more:

greenbuildingrenewables.co.uk/inspired-by-and-inspiring-the-next-generation-of-sustainability-leaders-at-leeds-beckett-university/

Key insight

Working collaboratively with Green Building Renewables enabled Leeds Beckett University to provide students with a ‘real-life’ brief to work on, rather than a less relatable, contrived scenario. Having staff from the business set the briefs and be present on the day also helped with students’ focus and ensured the company got what they were seeking. They provided support to students throughout the challenge event, enabling students to have professional interactions and build their professional networks. They also provided valuable feedback to each team, ensuring that their contributions were acknowledged and valued.

Leeds leg of the Guardians of the Great North Wood Project at Leeds Conservatoire

LEEDS
CONSERVATOIRE

Leeds Conservatoire organised a Hackathon during which they put a call out to organisations to come forward to work with the institution. The London-based ‘Guardian of the Great North Wood’ came forward to collaborate.

Leeds Conservatoire funded the first (London) leg of the project, but the YU-UPP project funding was essential to support the Leeds leg, and to fund travel for the Resonance FM activity in March 2024.

The Leeds leg has been crucial in adding overall value to the project – it has provided more context, applying what students learned about reforestation and ecological concerns in London to similar areas in their own back yard, giving a greater geographical, cultural and thematic scope to their creative recording pieces, and allowing them more designated time to work on those pieces onsite.

Student testimonies:

‘I really enjoyed exploring Leeds through a new lens and perspective, as well as having the opportunity to take field recordings through a variety of types of microphones (zoom, shotgun, hydrophone, contact). I found exploring the way the natural world changed as we drew closer to the centre of the city especially interesting and the discussions that it provoked highly useful in creating a greater understanding of our relationship with nature.’ — Ella



‘I had a great time in London on this trip, it was very interesting to learn about the work that goes into conservation, and how easily plant species can become endangered. Kat was a great group leader and all of the other people we talked to on this trip such as Nick and Rob were very interesting to talk to. Thanks a lot for the great opportunity.’ — Harry

‘The Great North Wood project has been an amazing opportunity to learn more about the natural heritage of England, and in particular the trees which form such a huge part of our ecosystem. I was able to gain a great sense of achievement through helping on the land which the guardians project looks after. I also got a lot out of the brief field recordings we were able to do, which has made me more confident in capturing audio in outdoor environments. The project has given me the impetus to actively listen to my surroundings, rather than passively hearing. It has helped me to find the beauty in the everyday.’ — Luke

Key insight

Due to the extra-curricular nature of this project and the requirement that the student volunteers produced some creative work, we found it necessary to have a member of academic teaching staff on board to liaise with the students and support with engagement and folding it into the curriculum. In future, we are exploring building in some official transferrable skills and experience accreditation for partnership activity of this nature, to ensure that students taking part are a) clearly and fully equipped with the benefits of the activity they have undertaken, b) incentivised to fully engage and give their time and resource, and c) supported in their future employability.

Student sustainability society Leeds Trinity University



At Leeds Trinity University, findings from a focus group in 2023 conducted with funding from the YU-UPP project, showed that students wish to see a more proactive approach to sustainability from the university. This funding has supported Leeds Trinity University to increase sustainability action and awareness within the student community. Prior to this funding being in place, initiatives have struggled to get off the ground within the student community or there has been a lack of engagement within the student community, so funding from the YU-UPP project has been vital to progressing this agenda.

The funding is being used to set up a new student sustainability society at Leeds Trinity University, with the purpose of creating engagement and a community focused on the sustainability agenda. The society is a collaboration between the University and the Student Union and student community, allowing for a joined-up approach to sustainability initiatives and enabling the student community to influence and be involved in University initiatives in sustainability. The society will also inform progress with the University's sustainable curriculum.

It is critical for the project to be student led to ensure maximum engagement and relevance to the student community. The plan for the funding is still in development to ensure that it is used when students have the greatest capacity to engage in the sustainability agenda, aligning to their studies and placement schedule. Planned activities are likely to include:

- Workshops and seminars - Interactive sessions consisting of educating students on what sustainability means for Leeds Trinity, discussing and gathering feedback from students on what action can be taken to implement a more sustainable curriculum and sustainability projects. Sessions with guest speakers will be hosted to demonstrate the importance of sustainability and how it is applied in a wider context.
- Interactive activities with prize incentives - These include fun competitions where students can express what sustainability means to them in creative writing, talk or performance regarding sustainability and/or physical art projects made with recycled materials to win monetary prizes.
- Support for local charities - e.g. Collaborating with the chaplaincy to gather and donate clothing from students and put money towards hot food and drink to distribute to the homeless.
- Travel to the countryside to walk/hike and learn about the surroundings, with possible collaborations with local nature-based organisations.

Key insight

Findings from a focus group in 2023 showed that students wish to see a more proactive approach to sustainability from Leeds Trinity University. This funding will support Leeds Trinity University to increase the desired sustainability action and awareness within the student community. By getting involved in sustainable projects at university, students can gain a sense of achievement and belonging. Furthermore, by learning about sustainability, students can carry these principles with them throughout their lives, influencing their actions in future advancements such as, climate change and green economy, and teaching others about the importance of sustainability. Prior to this funding being in place, initiatives have struggled to get off the ground within the student community or there has been a lack of engagement within the student community, so this funding will be vital to progressing this agenda.



Pilot Conservation Challenge Day at Sheffield Hallam University



The funding from UPP and YU allowed Sheffield Hallam University to run a Conservation Challenge Day on the Moors above the Woodhead Pass (Sheffield-Glossop road) to plant 10,000 moss sphagnum moss plugs.

The funding enabled the hire of two coaches to bring around 40 people out to the Moors for a Conservation Day supported by Moors for the Future (a project of the Peak Park Authority). The funding also provided some food and refreshments as well as a prize for the team planting the most plugs in a day.

This Challenge Day enabled 10,000 moss sphagnum moss plugs to be planted on the moors. Planting sphagnum moss prevents the erosion of delicate moorland peat landscapes (and therefore protects against the loss of carbon stores), and the moss itself also acts as a carbon store. In these landscapes, moss is a more effective and ecologically appropriate means of achieving these outcomes than tree planting, which may be more suited to lowland areas. This event allowed Sheffield Hallam University to test student volunteering linked to employment opportunities.

Key insight

Sheffield Hallam University is exploring how Conservation Days like this pilot could help further strengthen the following outcomes:

- Student employability benefits
- Institutional benefits around engaging more staff in conservation as part of SHU's climate action strategy and actions around climate literacy
- Environmental benefits
- Organisational benefits for SHU partner organisations.

World Environment Day at the University of Bradford



YU-UPP project funding was used to celebrate World Environment Day by engaging students and staff in interactive activities. The day included a Sip and Paint Poster Competition, where participants chose a cause or a UN SDG that they were most passionate about. All participants were given a blank canvas and had three hours to create their art or poster within the room. All material was provided. Just after completing their semester, students enjoyed the therapeutic session where they were free to work with their creativity and colours. These were then displayed, and a panel comprising the Dean, an academic, a member of Professional services staff and a representative from the Students' Union adjudged the entries and prizes were given.

In the afternoon, a Munch & Crunch Panel Discussion was organised, and speakers from across the globe were invited (speeches included focussing on the importance of peacebuilding for sustainable development; Plant-Based Universities as the newest and biggest wave of student activism; and seeking sustainable solutions in brands and businesses). Participants engaged with each speaker via Q&A sessions.

The event ended with planting a tree on the University of Bradford premises and presenting students with participation certificates.

The event required collaboration between students, academic and professional staff within the University. By design the executive members of the Sustainability Society were given leadership, and academic and professional services staff took a back seat. Student participants felt well-supported and they said the event gave them confidence in their organisational skills and will enable them to do more for the environment in the future.

Key insight

The mental well-being impact of such events is something that was not anticipated. This is an area in which The University of Bradford would like to continue doing activities in the future. Without this pilot, the University would not have been able to test this approach.

International Students as Green Champions University of Huddersfield



At the University of Huddersfield, two student Green Champions were employed to produce social media content and undertake direct face to face marketing to promote our Green Volunteering Programme to International Students and the wider student population. The funding enabled two international students to be deployed on the project. The project resulted in the creation of student friendly marketing assets and helped increase engagement in a flagship 'Big Clean Green Canal Week' which was undertaken in partnership with the Canal and River Trust and supported by the Students Union.

Without funding from the YU-UPP project this would not have been possible. The involvement of the Green Champions enabled student-shaped social media content to be created at pace. The content was then made available to the Students Union and to the Student Services Communications and Engagement team to share more widely. Employing students also meant that the project had access to students who could advocate and advertise green volunteering events directly to their peers, increasing the capacity to connect effectively with the student body in a way that would not otherwise have been possible. This provided students with the opportunity to develop employability skills.

The use of Green Champions contributed to the success of the 'Big Clean Green Canal Week' which saw the highest number of student volunteers take part in any of the events organised up to that point.

Key insight

The effectiveness of the Green Champions hinged on their readiness to work with a high degree of autonomy in partnering with internal and external stakeholders, as well as stakeholder readiness to support them. This would not have been possible without the strong relationships built up with stakeholders over a period of time through joint working with the Careers Service on the Green Volunteering Programme.

Climate Café at the University of Hull



The YU-UPP funding enabled the Climate Café at the University of Hull to run a competition, complete with prize money for winners and free pizza for attendees. Without this funding this competition would not have been possible. The climate café is an existing social infrastructure working in collaboration with the Student Union, allowing the university to maximize awareness and engagement of students.

During the workshop, students engaged in discussions about key sustainability issues and the University of Hull's role in addressing them. They were tasked with pinpointing sustainability challenges specific to the university and devising potential solutions for the competition. Submissions took the form of 'pitches,' in which students outlined their sustainability issue and solution. Winners received cash prizes, and the top four participants went on to represent the University of Hull at the YU Multi-University Challenge Day on 1 December 2023.

Key insight

Events like this can inspire students to consider and identify sustainability problems from a range of perspectives, and develop creative and forward-thinking solutions. In engaging with students, it was important to utilise existing social infrastructure (like climate cafés) that already had student engagement as opposed to trying to rapidly create new mechanisms that focused on project delivery but not so much on longer-term student needs and desires.

Focus Group on Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) at the University of Leeds



YU-UPP project funding was allocated to a range of activities for enhancing sustainability and service-learning at the University of Leeds. To get a sense of students' existing experiences and future hopes around Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) and their understanding of sustainability, a questionnaire and focus group protocol were designed. This facilitated the collection of valuable insights and feedback essential for understanding students' perspectives and fostering deeper engagement in the development of tailored future initiatives and the enrichment of the overall service-learning experience. Promotion materials, vouchers, refreshments, prize draws, and compensation for participation were aids for reaching and collecting data from a wider student audience.

Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) and sustainability are pathways that connect students at the University of Leeds with local communities to go beyond the skills developed in the classroom. As part of the YU-UPP project, the Sustainable Curriculum programme team and the Community-Engagement Network in Research, Education, and Civic Engagement (CENTRE) explored how students with a passion for sustainability see the potential role that CEL can play in making courses more oriented towards sustainability and social justice. Focus groups were held with six Student Sustainability Architects (SSAs) and a broader range of students in the Autumn semester 2023-4.

Although students participating were aware of intra-curricular modules, they had mostly gained community engagement experiences through volunteering. They identified a gap around community engagement in the curriculum and voiced a desire for local issues and social responsibility to be more present in credit-bearing courses. These insights will be used at the University in future curriculum design.

Key insight

Integrating the student voice into curricular innovation and sustainability initiatives is paramount for a university. Running a student-led project with student participants and reflecting students' interests and perspectives enabled the University of Leeds to understand relevant student profiles and highlighted significant lessons:

- Clarity of project aims is vital to students' engagement. For example, CEL is better comprehended by students through practical examples linking it to potential benefits and concrete opportunities between university and local communities.
- Student life is stretched over a diverse range of activities, fluctuations in workload and academic calendars need to be considered when inviting them to get involved.
- It is crucial to question and define the potential outcomes of CEL and sustainability activities from students' perspectives. Priming and gradually introducing students to a university CEL-Sustainability culture, with suitable incentives, can build interest and engagement which benefits students and the local communities we seek to serve.

Filming internships for ESD at the University of Sheffield



The YU-UPP project funded two students who had demonstrable skills in filming and video editing to take on short internship roles filming and creating video resources on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The resources can be repurposed within various contexts including student advocacy, staff training, and teaching. This is something staff members would not have had the time, or necessarily the expertise, to do.

Additionally, this project offered the chance for staff members, the Students Union and Sabbatical Officers to come together to share a vision. This will have an impact going forward with future collaborations.

The student interns were tasked with filming and creating videos for ESD to be used in several contexts. For example, campaign work (advocating for increased ESD content in the curriculum), social media 'takeovers', staff training and ESD webpages.

'My role [...] has made me realise the importance of building sustainability more deeply into the foundations of the university and its courses. As a PhD student, I was not aware of the work the department is doing to ensure taught courses are considering and sharing sustainable practices and now, hopefully my videos can help to show this to others across and outside of the university.'

— Student Intern

Key insight

Collaboration with the Students Union was particularly valuable in this case. This micro-project offered staff members working on ESD in the University of Sheffield and Students Union Sabbatical Officers, the chance to come together, identify key areas of shared vision, and collaborate on resources that would be of mutual benefit for both groups. This will have an impact going forward on future collaborations and initiatives, with both parties having a shared sense of purpose.

Equipment to enable biodiversity surveys at the University of York



YU-UPP project funding was used to purchase a range of equipment and materials to enable groups of up to 30 students at a time to undertake scientifically valid biodiversity surveys. This includes basic tools such as binoculars, metre grid templates, bug pots and dust pan and brushes as well as more sophisticated pieces of equipment such as bat detectors and field guides.

The equipment purchased is being used to support the ongoing work of the **ESAY Sustainability Clinic**, which is an academically accredited module that can be taken by all undergraduates at York. The Clinic provides the opportunity for community-based organisations and local businesses to work with student teams to achieve tangible environmental goals. Survey and dissemination projects are frequently requested by community partners and it is anticipated that the equipment will support multiple projects well into the future.

The equipment has been used to support a biodiversity survey on behalf of **Friends of Rowntree Park**, enabling groups of students to undertake work with a high level of scientific accuracy and consistency. As many community partners are charities, reliant on volunteers and ad hoc funding, being able to deploy student teams already equipped with the tools to deliver projects to high specifications can make the difference between the work taking place or not.

Key insight

The University of York Sustainability Clinic is based on the concept of partnership working. Community and small business partners define the terms of reference for their own projects, which are designed to produce tangible benefits. Student benefits – such as employability skills and greater facility with the concepts underlying sustainability – flow from the partner led nature of the projects they undertake. In some cases, partners need to be supported to define their goals in terms of what can realistically be achieved by students operating in a fixed timeframe. This requires experienced and skilled university staff facilitators.



Part time internship at the Living Lab at York St John University

Est. 1841
YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

During 2023-24 the Living Lab and York St John University Student Union worked together to establish a student-led café on campus. This café will provide affordable, healthy, locally sourced food, a hub for socialising and opportunities for volunteering and developing leadership skills. A successful trial session proved the demand from students for a café space.

YU-UPP project funding supported a psychology student and Living Lab intern to lead the project, creating a business plan with the support of the Enterprise Adviser and Student Union. The intern established safe food preparation, and storage practices, and ensured that the café was staffed and trained, creating rotas and dividing up responsibilities. The intern also took part in the Multi-University Challenge Day.

Key outcomes have been the establishment of a network of relationships between student societies, the Student Union, the Catering team and the Living Lab around the planning of the cafe, and a shared sense of purpose around making it happen on a permanent basis.

Find out more: blog.yorks.ac.uk/isj/2024/03/12/the-garden-project-student-innovation-concentrated-on-ecological-sustainable-goals/

Key insight

In planning a student-led catering initiative of this nature, it is vital to keep in close discussion with the university's own Catering team, to ensure complementary agendas. Likewise, to ensure the engagement of the SU and student societies in the project, inviting them to be part of the ideas formation stage from the outset is the best approach. This project demonstrated the importance of consistent and close engagement between stakeholders to ensure successful outcomes.



The Multi-University Challenge Day by Yorkshire Universities

On 1 December 2023, jointly with the YHCC and with support from the UPP Foundation, YU hosted a Multi-University Challenge Day. The event showcased the power of collaboration among students from across the twelve universities in Yorkshire. Working together, they generated innovative ideas on a challenge that helped advance the YHCC Climate Action Plan.

This day marked a significant milestone for the YU-UPP Regional Sustainability Service-Learning Pilot Project. The students ranged from undergrads to PhD candidates and brought a rich blend of skills and perspectives to the challenge. A range of diverse academic backgrounds of the students included geography, psychology, international relations, finance, law, worldbuilding and creative design, computer and cyber security, popular music, environmental science, and the natural and built environment.

32 students were divided into three mixed groups and were asked to develop ideas on how to engage more students with sustainability while studying at university. This theme was jointly set with the YHCC as it directly aligns with the Regional Climate Action Plan priority on advancing education and engagement.

Students were set the task to bring together their ideas in each group and to combine them into a single proposal. What truly stood out about this event are the remarkable students who participated in it. Not only did they offer insightful personal sustainability tips, but they also displayed their creativity; their ability to work in a team; their insights and experience; and their care for communities throughout the challenge. This was a truly great opportunity for discussion with experts, to raise awareness, and to learn about sustainable actions among students.

Key insight

These innovative ideas all shared a common thread – they focused on aspects highly pertinent to students and young people. This is essential because students and young people represent not only the future but also a dynamic force in driving change today. By tailoring sustainability initiatives to their interests and needs, we can ensure greater engagement and commitment to sustainable practices. This approach acknowledges that students and young people hold significant potential to instigate positive change through their daily choices and actions, creating a ripple effect that extends well beyond their academic years.

Read more about the ideas developed, the results and feedback we received from the participants: yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk/2023/12/07/our-multi-university-challenge-day-fostering-sustainability-through-collaboration/

Watch a short video on student testimonies: youtu.be/umKZm_EVq9Y

Read a student participant blog: yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk/2024/05/01/reflecting-on-the-power-of-student-collaboration-for-sustainability/



6. What works? Lessons Learnt and Advice for Other Universities.

When engaging students in sustainability through service learning the following main 'what works' themes emerge:

Collaboration with external partners to embed positive impacts beyond the university;
Amplifying the student voice and student engagement within the curriculum;
Presenting opportunities that have a clear link to employment and / or employability skills for students;
Providing authentic opportunities to address real-life challenges; and
Developing student personal experiences.

The table below summarises the lessons learnt relating to the following categories of activity:

1. Surfacing employability and skills
2. Engagement, communication and promotion
3. Challenge days and sustainability events
4. Acknowledgement and recognition
5. Student employment / internships
6. Student Sustainability Society
7. Producing resources / insights with students
8. Fieldwork projects

It should be noted that many lessons learned have broader applicability for SL for sustainability delivery, beyond the implications for specific types of project activity.

Table 3: Lessons learned from the project by activity category.

1. Surfacing employability and skills

Offering activities with an employability focus or that are linked to future employment works well

Offer activities that provide authentic opportunities for students who can clearly see the links to their own employability and support them in identifying the knowledge, skills attained.

Offer activities that are embedded into relevant curricula and clearly align to other aspects of a student's programme of study.

Providing staff support & training for students is valuable

Find tutors who can arrange for students to attend from their class as part of a directed skills development activity.

Support students with appropriate skills training and academic expertise, including training and advice for students to understand how to approach group work, problem solving and innovation.

2. Engagement, communication and promotion

Securing senior level buy-in is key

Ensure high level buy-in and commitment to sustainability from executive and senior leadership team to help with delivery.

Communicating opportunities to students is challenging within universities where there are so many competing demands for their attention and time

Allow time to market opportunities to students. Use students for in-person, peer-to-peer advocacy to help to promote and communicate a wide range of employability-related activities.

Using clear language and avoiding jargon is helpful

Ensure communications about opportunities are presented in clear language, avoiding specialist terms such as 'Sustainability Service Learning'.

Offering opportunities for different levels of engagement helps to broaden participation

Make invitations to students to get involved on different levels - some will want to be heavily involved and take responsibility for leading projects, whereas others will want a smaller more defined role, or simply to watch and learn.

3. Challenge days and sustainability events

Offering a range of incentives for participation helps to engage students - cash incentives alone do not always work

Consider other ways of demonstrating value (rather than relying solely on cash incentives).
Recognise the importance of students, and their contributions and demonstrate that their time is valuable.
See more in 'Acknowledgement and recognition' section below.

Choosing an appropriate format & length for engagement in challenge events

Organise incentivised challenge events that last no longer than a day, so that students can commit to these events and have the opportunity to build employer interactions and professional networks.

Creating mixed teams helps with the development of novel solutions

Create interdisciplinary student teams, so that each member can bring a different approach to working towards solving the SDGs.

Note there can be differing lead-in times for students with differing prior engagement with sustainability or from disciplines where sustainability links are less prevalent within their discipline.

Setting real life challenges helps to connect activities to positive impact

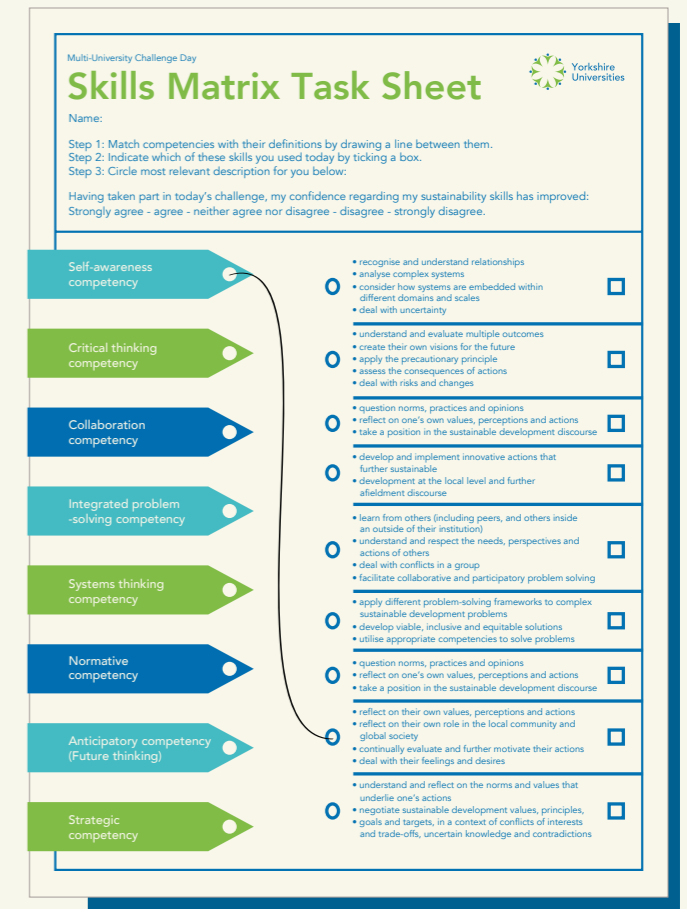
Find out what sustainability goals Estates/ Catering teams already have and consider how sustainability projects can help progress towards these.

Provide opportunities that have impact on sustainability wider than the university. Working with an external organisation can help students to be more focused and engaged in the activity.

4. Acknowledgement and recognition

Providing certificates for participation helps students to demonstrate the skills and experiences they have acquired

Consider issuing 'Certificates of Achievement' recognising student contributions. Students participating in the YU Multi-University Challenge Day were issued a certificate recognising their contributions in taking forward the YHCC's Climate Action Plan which was endorsed by YU, the YHCC and the UPP Foundation. They also completed a sustainability skills assessment session to explore the skills and experience gained through participation in the Challenge Day.



Choosing an appropriate format & length for engagement in challenge events

Organise incentivised challenge events that last no longer than a day, so that students can commit to these events and have the opportunity to build employer interactions and professional networks.

5. Student employment

Providing structure and support for intern roles improves student experience and leads to better outcomes

Provide clear written briefs for students; weekly check ins for welfare; regular opportunities for staff to see progress and offer feedback; reflection opportunities for students; signposting students to right people; and a 'line manager' to whom they can ask questions and receive support.

Employing internal student interns brings with it a responsibility to support those students to develop and deliver their project goals and to reflect on how participation has enhanced their own knowledge and their employability skills.

Providing shared learning opportunities spreads impacts across student and staff communities

Offer a range of staff and student interactions to support sustainability.

Create forums where student interns/ researchers/ volunteers can collaborate with each other and learn from each other.

Giving students a voice in the design and delivery of internships is key to their success

Seek to create activities and internships out of students' own enterprising ideas.

Involve students in designing and participating in sustainability learning.

6. Student Sustainability Society

Starting from scratch takes time

Be prepared to take time and give careful consideration when setting up a new student society to ensure that it adds value and engages students, who are busy with their studies and other commitments.

Funding is essential for the success of student-led societies

Identify and secure appropriate funding to be able to create incentives for attendance of students at meetings (such as catering) and to fund initiatives that are developed.

Having a joint focus & commitment is key to the success of collaborations

Ensure regular communications are in place to develop a shared understanding and commitment. In collaborative projects between a university and the Student Union and student community, frequent meetings to communicate progress between the Student Union and university leadership will help to demonstrate the commitment to the work of the society.

7. Producing resources / insights with students

Delivering mutual benefit and shared sense of purpose is key to generating positive impacts

Develop activities iteratively to ensure that they align to the needs of both students and external partners.

Base projects around the principles of ensuring mutual benefit (for the university/ students and community partners) and include the production of a tangible output that can be used by the community partner.

Collaborate with the Students Union where possible. A micro-project can offer staff members working on ESD in the university, and Students Union Sabbatical Officers, the chance to come together, identify key areas of shared vision, and collaborate on resources that would be of mutual benefit for both groups. This will have an impact going forward on future collaborations and initiatives, with both parties having a shared sense of purpose.

Recruiting students is effective for content creation

Consider recruiting students who have already demonstrated suitable skills and attitudes.

Increase the involvement of marketing staff in supervising student content creators or work through a relevant student society, if well established.

Hiring students for a time-limited project has the benefit of creating immediate extra low-cost resource, which can be flexibly deployed generating a range of touchpoints with students. The downside of employing student helpers for an intensive period only is the limited opportunity to develop common approaches to tasks and content creation.

8. Fieldwork projects

Supporting University engagement with community partners helps to build relationships

Ensure projects build on strong, established reciprocal relationships with community partners and provide staff resource to nurture and develop these relationships.

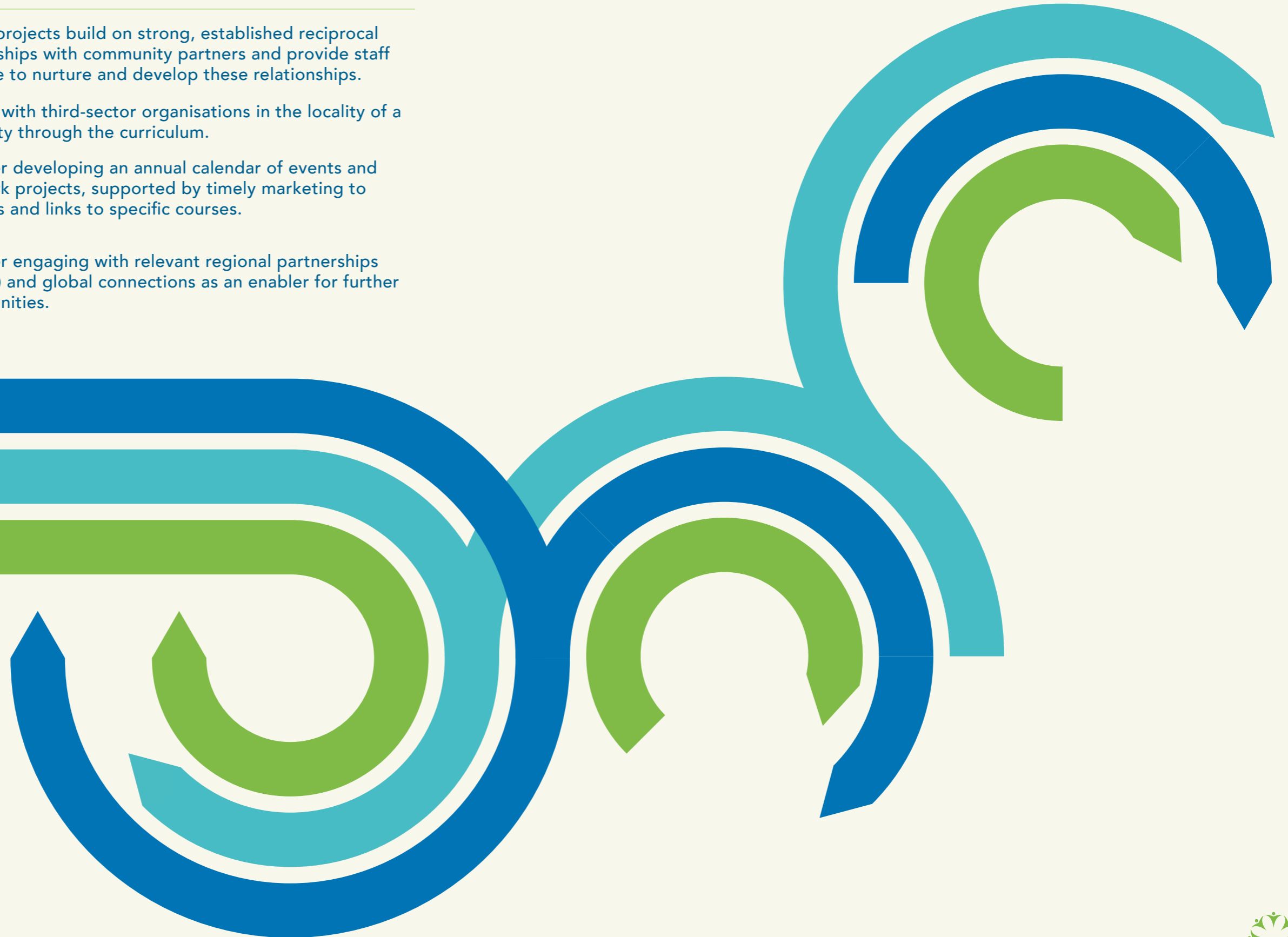
Scheduling & planning is important to maximise engagement and impact

Engage with third-sector organisations in the locality of a university through the curriculum.

Consider developing an annual calendar of events and fieldwork projects, supported by timely marketing to students and links to specific courses.

Working in partnership brings benefits

Consider engaging with relevant regional partnerships (like YU) and global connections as an enabler for further opportunities.



Conclusion

This pilot YU-UPP project reveals a significant dedication to sustainability across all twelve members of Yorkshire Universities, evident in their curriculum approaches.

Despite the diverse array of activities, methods, and scales, it's apparent that each of the twelve institutions is actively striving to integrate sustainability into their degree programs and curricula. Moreover, the auditing exercise and the institutional pilots underscore the universities' engagement in activities that benefit their local communities, offering students valuable real-world opportunities and experiential learning.

It's evident that all twelve universities acknowledge the pivotal role of sustainability within their curricula. The overviews in chapter 4 & 5 aim to highlight the breadth of activities available to students across the region. Key themes identified include alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in university strategies or subject disciplines, implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) frameworks, collaboration with external or local organisations, and the incorporation of sustainability throughout courses or specific modules.

Additionally, initiatives such as Carbon Literacy Training for Staff and Students, emphasis on positive local and global community impacts, and opportunities for community-engaged learning demonstrate a commitment to addressing real-world challenges and fostering student perspectives on sustainability within the curriculum.

Diversity

We've been able to reach and engage students who might not ordinarily have engaged with sustainability. This approach has a potential implication of developing a regional talent pipeline.

'The students, representing diverse academic disciplines, ranged from undergrads to PhD candidates and brought a rich blend of skills and perspectives to the challenge. Among the subjects studied we had: geography, psychology, international relations, finance, law, worldbuilding and creature design, computer and cyber security, popular music, environmental science, natural and built environment just to name a few.' (YU Multi-University Challenge Day)

Capacity Building

We've supported the production of resources that help build capacity for both students (by breaking down barriers for engagement and focusing on experiential learning & employability skills) and staff.

'The money funded two students to take on short internship roles filming and creating video resources on Education for Sustainable Development that could be repurposed within various contexts including student advocacy, staff training, and teaching. This is something staff members would not have had the time, or necessarily the expertise, to do (we employed students who had demonstrable skills in filming and video editing).'

'Additionally, this project offered the chance for ESD members, UoS, the SU and Sabbatical Officers to come together to share a vision for the first time. This will have an impact going forward with future collaborations.'

(Video production raising awareness of ESD for students and staff at the University of Sheffield)

Collaboration in Partnership

We've been able to strengthen partnership between universities through the project network via the annual Student Sustainability Research Conference, a collaboration between the universities and the Y&H Climate Commission (Community & Engagement Group) and non-university partners (employers in the region).

'Having employers set 'real-life' briefs for students to address helps with ensuring that students feel they are making a difference to a real challenge and see the impact they could have. This also helped us to foster a positive relationship with this employer and gave our students access to further opportunities with them.' (Institutional Challenge Day at Leeds Beckett University)

Annex Added value overview table

1 Leeds Beckett University Sustainability Challenge Day with Green Building Renewables (GBR)

Funding use: As a prize for the winning group of the student sustainability challenge. Made a big difference ensured participation and recognition.

2 Leeds Trinity University Student Sustainability Society to be launched 2024

Funding use: Will be spent on catering, travel, project activities and competitions. Prior to funding, initiatives like this have struggled to set off within the student community.

3 Sheffield Hallam University Challenge Day supported by Moors for the Future

Funding use: Able to hire two coaches, provide food and refreshments and a prize for the team planting the most plugs in a day. Contributed to areas where they wanted to test & develop – such as student volunteering linked to employment opportunities

4 University of Huddersfield Paid Student Green Champions

Funding use: Enabled two Green Champions to be employed, based on recommendations from supervisors and lead a social media and marketing campaign to engage students and increase volunteering. Without the funding, this would not have been possible.

5 University of Sheffield Paid Student Internships for ESD

Funding use: Enabled two student interns to work for Education for Sustainable Development. Without the funding, UoS wouldn't have had the staff capacity or expertise to produce the videos. Additionally, this project offered the chance for ESD members, UoS, the SU and Sabbatical Officers to come together to share a vision for the first time. This will have an impact going forward with future collaborations

6 University of York Resources & Materials for Biodiversity Surveys, ESAY

Funding use: Used to purchase a range of equipment and materials. For example, binoculars, metre grid templates, bug pots, dust pans, bat detectors, field guides, podcasting microphones and interview kits. The equipment will be able to support multiple projects in the future and overall made a significant contribution to the ongoing initiative.

7 York St John University Paid Part-Time Student Internship

Funding use: Enabled a student to have a paid part-time internship to trial approaches to establishing a student-led sustainable cafe. This in turn provided further volunteering opportunities for a wider range of students and cemented collaborative relationships between the Students Union and Living Lab staff team.

8 Leeds Art University Live Brief 'Sustainability or Community Led Creative Activity and Opportunity Concept Designs'

Funding use: Used as a prize for the winner of the Live Brief. The funding facilitated activities that would not have otherwise occurred such as reflections on student engagement and the collaboration between institutions.

9 Leeds Conservatoire The Guardian of the Great North Wood project, Leeds Leg

Funding use: Used for the Leeds leg part of the project and as travel towards the Resonance FM activity in March.

10 University of Leeds Focus Group on Community Engaged Learning

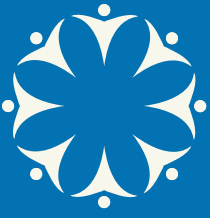
Funding use: Collection of valuable insights and feedback essential for understanding students' perspectives and fostering deeper engagement in the development of tailored future initiatives and the enrichment of the overall service-learning experience. Promotion materials, vouchers, refreshments, prize draws, and compensation for participation were aids for reaching and collecting data from a wider student audience.

11 University of Hull Climate Cafe

Funding use: enabled the Climate Café at the University of Hull to run a competition, complete with prize money for winners and free pizza for attendees. Without this funding this competition would not have been possible

12 University of Bradford

Funding use: Enabled the World Environment Day event which included a poster painting competition morning followed by a panel where external sustainability speakers were invited, and students could engage with them in a Q&A. Without the project funding the artistic approach would not have been tested. This made such a huge difference in lifting the morale and enabling the hidden talents of students to be displayed. The funding helped to buy sustainable material for the arts project. The mental well-being impact of such events is something that was not anticipated and encouraged the university to proactively think about continuing with such activities in the future.



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