

Advance HE and University awards for Teaching Excellence

2020 was a special year of recognition for the wider sustainability team at Canterbury Christ Church University, we were awarded a Collaborate Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) by Advance HE and a University Team award for Teaching excellence.

CATE

The CATE recognises and rewards collaborative work that has had an outstanding impact on student learning and the teaching profession. The application was based on the influence of the *Futures Initiative* since 2012, on strategy, curriculum, and leaning and teaching, that supported and facilitated academic development in a wholly collaborative way. Extensive feedback identified strong and clear evidence of the teams' reach, value and impact:

"There is outstanding evidence of excellence in your sustained approach to working collaboratively. The rationale and approach are explained thoroughly through a comprehensive spectrum of activity that fulfils collaboration in your context. You demonstrate direct engagement with students, diverse University groups and community groups. You have taken a priority area with no discipline boundaries and demonstrated how your collaboration has supported embedding practices across and beyond the institution."

University Teaching Excellence Team Award

The purpose of the award is to recognise, reward and celebrate collaborative work to promote teaching excellence and to create a proactive learning community within the University. The judging panel was impress by the strength of the claim:

"which clearly demonstrates the extent of the impact that your many initiatives have had on students and colleagues within the University and beyond. The scope of the changes you have initiated is very wide and sustained over the last 9 years. The nature of the activities you have pursued is also impressive by their diversity (programme development, staff development, exhibitions, set of talks through Project 93, conferences, publications, etc.) and the public you have reached are also very varied. You are clearly driven by the key principles of the University Learning and Teaching strategy, and it is pleasing to learn that the momentum will be kept with the setting up of the Academy."

Case studies

Project 93

The *Futures Initiative* supported 'Project 93' since 2016, which aims to enrich the academic experience, enhance critical engagement, encourage social activism and incite solidarity and hope amongst our staff and students. Over the first two years, Project 93 organised over 50 collaborative events, each attracting 30-40 participants to a mixture of lectures, discussions, film screenings, interactive workshops, poetry readings and podcast projects on themes to do with sustainability and social justice. The input of the Students' Union has been central to its impact, creating:

a new collaborative approach... it has been a revelation to have academic staff members believe in us so wholeheartedly, to make us feel empowered and integral to the student experience... (Students' Union President)

This dynamic has then enabled us to access individual tutors, University departments such as the Equality and Diversity Unit and the International Office, the BAME Staff Network, LGBT Staff Network, Women's Staff Network, and student societies to create further collaboration. Project 93 has developed a distinctive approach that involves:

- holding events within specific seminar times to guarantee a minimum audience whilst making them open to all
- aligning sessions across Faculties and combining students to make a large multi-disciplinary, rich and diverse audience
- advertising events through the official University and Students' Union channels as well as the social media.

The impact of Project 93 is recognised internally by staff. One colleague commented: *"Social activism and political engagement do not have a strong or embedded history at our university, but this is now changing thanks to Project 93"*. Meanwhile, feedback from students shows that the project had enabled them to expand their horizons. In a particularly telling comment, one of them declared: *"It has changed the way that I question and feel about myself, my capabilities, the world, culture and everything and everyone around me"*.

Importantly, Project 93 has led to a University-wide initiative to encourage active participation in debate and action around sustainability, equality, environment and social justice, entitled 'Us in the World' that has, for the first time, brought together multiple partners across the University.

Us in the World



Case study 2: Curriculum Review in the Faculty of Health & Wellbeing

The *Futures Initiative* team was invited to join the Faculty of Health & Wellbeing to Sustainability Committee, which includes representatives from Academic and Professional Services, a community partner, Kent County Council, and the NHS. We worked with the Faculty to adapt our curriculum review tool that assess academic programs with respect to the HEA/QAA ESD guidance, to meet their specific needs. With the help of experts from the University of Plymouth, we collaboratively developed the concept of 'health sustainability' within the curriculum and proposed a bespoke set of Graduate Attributes for sustainability.

Two academics were given the role of 'sustainability champions' with pre-registration programme teams and seven programmes embedded these unique 'Graduate Attributes' into the newly designed curricula. This has impacted both curriculum content and the way in which teaching and learning is approached across the Faculty. The link to NHS and Public Health policy provides 'real world' connections to issues which can otherwise feel remote. Student skills such challenging assumptions and negotiating alternatives in professional practice are fostered. Feedback from an academic noted how we

act[ed] as advisors for sustainable development while allowing the project to be owned by the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing. The outcome of this project was a set of graduate outcomes that have since been used in all programmes validated or revalidated within the Faculty. The outcomes have facilitated staff engagement and knowledge around sustainable development, and they have also embedded sustainable development within curricula.

The feedback below from a student, who also works in the NHS as a health trainer, is another good illustration of the impact:

I hadn't even considered the relevance of my role to sustainability until my tutor pointed it out and then it became obvious. This ignited an interest in me to learn more around the connections between health and well-being and sustainability. At the same time, I began working on a workplace health assignment and this really was a catalyst for me in seeing the connection between my role and sustainability

This student went on to participate in a panel discussion at our Sustainability in Higher Education conference and wrote a reflective commentary which was subsequently published (CCCU, 2017).

Case Study 3: Whole Earth? Exhibition

Collaboration with photographer Mark Edwards resulted in the team contributing to the text of a major exhibition on sustainability education called *Whole Earth?* which was subsequently displayed at universities across the world. We launched the exhibition at our Canterbury campus in September 2015 with an open lecture by Michael Morpurgo and 250 staff and students from many disciplines engaged with it. At the end of the academic year more than 120 delegates attended a conference organised around the exhibition in conjunction with the University of Plymouth to discuss advancing sustainability in HE.

Feedback gathered through an online survey as well as qualitative comments collected over the period of the exhibition demonstrate its impact. The following comment was offered by a Business student:

"My tutor sent us all out to look at it and write an essay on the issues it presents...then I got it...the impact MY plastic, MY meat, MY waste paper is making to the planet that is keeping me alive...What's good is that the exhibition doesn't just show problems, it shows what my generation – and universities- can do to bring about real change. Now I'm going to campaign to make those changes..."

Our partnership with the University of Kerala created an opportunity to take the exhibition to India where it served as the centrepiece for a joint two-day conference on Science and Sustainability for staff and students. It was then exhibited at seven other institutions in South India where lead academic Dr Lal C.A. reported he *"had the opportunity to directly address about 1,250 students in nine spells of two hours each"* in sustainability awareness-raising sessions. He also noted that *"the feedback has been overwhelming."* An article on the impact of the exhibition was published in the

Journal of Education for Sustainable Development (Scoffham & Consorte-McCrea, 2018) which has international reach.

At CCCU, the exhibition catalysed educational projects in diverse disciplinary areas including a highly successful new undergraduate module on 'Criminology in a Just Society' and an MA module on Early Childhood Education for Sustainability.