

Student Sustainability Engagement Strategy (2025-30)

Canterbury Christ Church University's Strategic Framework 2015-2022 announced our commitment to transforming individuals, creating knowledge, enriching communities and building a sustainable future, with sustainability as a cross-cutting theme.

In response to this, we developed a Framework for Sustainability 2015-2023 which articulates our vision, commitment, approach and responsibilities with regard to sustainability, and outlines as one of four key areas the 'Student and Staff Experience' at CCCU. In 2022 we published 'Our Response to the Climate Emergency' and launched our new Academy for Sustainable Futures.

In 2023 we began the transition to the University's new Vision 2030 strategy which outlines our commitment to building and shaping sustainable futures over the next seven years. In response, the Academy for Sustainable Futures developed a 2024-2030 Sustainability Strategy, upon which our sustainability engagement strategies are updated to reflect these new commitments, targets and ways of working.

This strategy document aims to outline our approach to student sustainability engagement and to develop an action plan to build capacity and meet our sustainability commitments in this area going forward. The policy statement is as follows:

The University recognises the importance of the interrelationship between student and staff experience, and that a sustainable community is one in which everyone feels able to engage and contribute. Concepts of inclusion and accessibility are central to this principle, as well as developing a sense of belonging, to ensure enhancement of the breadth and depth of community experience.

Objectives outlined in this framework with regard to student sustainability engagement are as follows:

- Enhance the level of engagement and participation in sustainability related initiatives
- Encourage the development of student initiated and led sustainability-related activity
- Foster connections between individuals, communities and their environment
- Create spaces to support health and wellbeing

This strategy sets out the approaches and targets outlined in the Sustainability Strategy 2024-2030, and is annually reviewed and updated to reflect the current provision and any expected changes or additions for the coming year.

Our Approach

For over a decade, we have been developing and refining our initiatives, opportunities and processes, informed by research and best practice from across the sector, through a two-pronged approach to student engagement at Christ Church:

1. From the ground up: informal curriculum and peer-to-peer engagement

We run a number of projects which allow students to demonstrate initiative and leadership in tackling sustainability engagement issues with their peers, including our *Student Green Office*, certified *Carbon Literacy Training*, *Wilder Campus* initiative to connect students and staff with the care and development of sustainable outdoor campus spaces, supporting and

engaging with our Students' Union and sustainability-focused student societies, and through collaboration and cross-promotion of events and campaigns that engage with the UN SDGs. We have previously taken part in an annual *Climate Action Week* in collaboration with local community partners and invite students to both attend and participate in the delivery of projects like these, and now annually celebrate the COP events through a series of cross-collaboration events and activities across the running of the conference, as well as offer funding, expertise and practical support, through the SGO, for students that engage with us through modules and activities to create and lead their own sustainability initiatives and campaigns.

2. From the top down: formal curriculum engagement

We work in collaboration with academic and professional services departments to provide sustainability engagement opportunities through particular modules and project-based work experience opportunities, and we provide advice, support and numerous tools and educational resources for staff and students around the university working to embed sustainability within their curriculum.

Induction Processes

Prospective students have the chance to meet the Student Green Office and get an introduction to sustainability when they attend University open days and applicant days. When they then book into University accommodation, they are given more information on environmental best practice in their student handbook, induction and welcome documents. During Induction Week and the first month of the academic year, many classes include segments from the Academy for Sustainable Futures from short, 15-minute talks about how to get involved, to full 1-hour lecture slots, in which they might be taught the *Carbon Literacy Introduction* or any other number of prepared talks on sustainability issues.

Prior to arrival, they are encouraged to explore a digital Welcome Hub which includes, among other things, information on sustainability initiatives at Christ Church, and when they arrive on campus for their welcome weekends in September, they meet students and staff from the Academy for Sustainable Futures and Student Green Office across the course of the Welcome Week and at Freshers Fair, where they can sign up for a number of sustainability opportunities and activities across the coming semesters including *Carbon Literacy Training*.

Staffing and Resources

Sustainability at Christ Church is currently facilitated and supported by a team which now comprises two full-time and three part-time salaried staff, including professional services, academic and research team members, whose roles are entirely sustainability-focused. We are additionally supported by two part-time voluntary academics, four part-time paid student SGO roles, and a wider community of staff and students across the University and beyond who contribute their time, energy and expertise to our work.

Though the budget distribution across different aspects of our staff and student engagement work varies from year to year as needs and opportunities arise, we currently budget around £12,000 for student staffing between our Student Green Office team of four (recruited annually), and at least one or two paid project-based work experience opportunities for students each year. Our annual

spend for resources, materials and educational and engagement tools is around £4,000 - £5,000, not including the cost of externally validated engagement programmes or initiatives, such as Responsible Futures or Green Impact, when we engage in them.

Student Sustainability Engagement Strategy: Action Plan

The following broad-scope actions for student sustainability engagement have been outlined in our Sustainability Strategy 2024-2030. In this section we have expanded on these to reference actions we have already or are currently completing, and to develop an on-going action plan.

We utilised the LiFE Index framework to oversee key areas of improvement in sustainability engagement; including strategy, action planning, stakeholder engagement, measurement, communication, training and support, implementation and links to the curriculum.

1. Provide opportunities that develop knowledge, skills and experience for sustainability

Current opportunities include, as outlined above: *Student Green Office* (both paid and voluntary roles, as well as events run by this team across the year, the *Climate Ready* programme that includes *Carbon Literacy Training*, *Climate Fresk*, *Potter and Prune* and the *Climate Escape Room*, work experience opportunities in sustainability through curriculum collaborations, engagement with our natural environment through *Wilder Campus*, an annual *One World Week* including an *International Food and Culture Fayre* run by the Students' Union, the *Blean Advisory Steering Committee* through the Kent Wildlife Trust, and an annual *COP* celebration programme in collaboration with other departments of CCCU. In 2023 we appointed two new roles within the academy team: a climate education officer and a Dean of the Academy to lead on sustainability curriculum and research. We also had several members of the Academy team trained as *Climate Fresk* facilitators in 2023 and two members of the Academy team are trained as *Carbon Literacy* facilitators officially in 2024 in order to provide more of these opportunities to students in upcoming years.

- a) Maintain a coherent portfolio of initiatives that are reviewed and developed every year. (Next review: June 2026)

2. Provide opportunities for students to develop leadership skills for sustainability

Current opportunities include, as above: *Student Green Office* paid and voluntary roles, *Carbon Literacy Training* including support to deliver this training to others, work experience opportunities following engagement with sustainability through module collaborations, volunteer roles and projects, and funding, physical and digital resources, advice and practical support for student-led projects.

- a) Monitor and review these opportunities annually. (Next review: June 2026)

3. Develop opportunities to support engagement with a sense of place within the natural and cultural environment

Current opportunities include *Wilder Campus* spaces and events, community allotments, drop-in community gardening projects, hop-picking, campus heritage and biodiversity walks, fully funded student trips to local wildlife parks engaged in conservation work, an annual *One World Week* including an *International Food and Culture Fayre* run by the Students' Union, and annual *Foraging* activities with a hired instructor.

- a) Maintain a suite of opportunities, and review these and how we publicise and communicate them annually. (Next review: June 2026)

4. Increase capacity for student initiated and led activities

Current opportunities include, as above, paid roles and work experience roles within the *Student Green Office* which focus on student-led projects across a broad spectrum of sustainability areas including climate education, activism, social justice and equality, biodiversity and carbon reduction, and student-initiated projects and campaigns supported by the Academy and SGO.

- a) Monitor and review annual take-up and breadth of opportunities and resources, and consider how to increase capacity where needed to meet both demand and our strategic commitments to sustainability. (Next review: June 2026)
- b) As and where opportunities arise, consider the possibility of funded internships within the Academy for Sustainable Futures in line with future business planning. (Next review: June 2026)

5. Develop networking opportunities for sharing ideas, knowledge and experience

Current opportunities are centred on the *Student Green Office*, the *Carbon Literacy* community, and the community-wide network like the *Blean Advisory Steering Committee* through the Kent Wildlife Trust that now takes place at CCCU.

- a) Monitor levels of attendance and participation annually. (Next review: June 2026)

6. Develop methods of evaluating engagement in sustainability

Though we developed a comprehensive planning, monitoring and evaluation tool alongside our Strategic Framework 2015-22, we found it impractical to employ consistently given the broad and variable nature of our collaborations and engagement initiatives; further compounded by the pandemic which fundamentally changed the landscape for campus engagement. After Vision 2030 was finalised, a revised plan for monitoring and evaluating our progress against both our strategic sustainability commitments and our various engagement initiatives and opportunities was created through The Record of Engagement which tallies attendance numbers, anecdotal evidence of interest and a qualitative impact estimate. This was found to be more flexible and useful, however likely needs something more rigorous for evaluation.

- a) Improve upon the current M&E process for sustainability engagement at CCCU (Next review: June 2026)

7. Raise the profile of sustainability activities to support enhanced participation

Currently we publicise through the following channels:

DIGITAL: Academy for Sustainable Futures web pages, Student Communications team pages, blogs and social media channels, our own student-led Sustainability blog, Facebook, Instagram and Bluesky, monthly *Greenhouse* newsletter, email mailing lists, via the Students' Union communications team, and through staff-focused channels like *In Touch* and *StaffLearn*.

PRINT: Termly and annual publications including case studies, print publications of annual report highlights, monthly *Greenhouse* newsletter, information leaflets on individual sustainability projects and opportunities, engagement resources including *Wilder Campus* self-guided tour maps, skill-building activity and recipe cards, activity zines and where opportunities arise, through student-led media channels like *Unified* and *Canterbury Student Radio (CSR)*.

- a) Review the clarity, cohesiveness and effectiveness of the sustainability identity and opportunities on offer in light of the Academy for Sustainable Futures brand and the new Sustainability Strategy 2024-2030 commitments. (Next review: June 2026)