

Student Sustainability Engagement Strategy (2015-23)

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, and once the underpinning strategies and frameworks for Vision 2030 are finalised, our sustainability engagement strategies will in turn be 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 Framework, 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 under an umbrella programme called *Us in the World*. We also take 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 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.

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 facilitated and supported by a team which now comprises six 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 £10,000 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 Framework for Sustainability 2015-2023. 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), *Carbon Literacy Training*, *Us in the World* events, 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, and an annual *Climate Action Week* in collaboration with the *Canterbury Climate Action Partnership* and other local businesses and community groups. 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, and with this increased staffing capacity intend to further develop this offer over the next year. We also had several members of the Academy team trained as Climate Fresk facilitators in 2023 with a view to offering Climate Fresk workshops from the 2023/24 academic year onwards to both students and staff, to complement the existing climate education offer.

- a) Maintain a coherent portfolio of initiatives that are reviewed and developed every year. (Next review: June 2024)

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, and funding, physical and digital resources, advice and practical support for student-led projects.

- a) Monitor and review these opportunities annually. (Next review: June 2024)

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 an annual *Climate Action Week* in collaboration with the *Canterbury Climate Action Partnership* and other local businesses and community groups.

- a) Maintain a suite of opportunities, and review these and how we publicise and communicate them annually. (Next review: June 2024)

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. In 2022 we expanded the academy team and appointed a Sustainability Engagement Assistant to increase capacity and support for student and staff sustainability engagement activities, communications and resource development.

- 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 2024)
- 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 2024)

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

Current opportunities are centred on the *Student Green Office*, through *Us in the World* collaborations, the *Carbon Literacy* community, and our wider community networks like the *Canterbury Climate Action Partnership*.

- a) Monitor levels of attendance and participation annually. (Next review: June 2024)

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. Once the underpinning strategies currently under development as part of the new Vision 2030 strategy are finalised, we will develop a revised plan for monitoring and evaluating our progress against both our strategic sustainability commitments and our various engagement initiatives and opportunities. Key changes from the previous model must include methods that are more adaptable and flexible to our wide-ranging needs and the changed engagement environment that we find ourselves in in the wake of the pandemic.

- a) Develop a new, adaptable M&E process for sustainability engagement at CCCU in response to the finalised Vision 2030 and underpinning strategies. (Next review: June 2024)

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 Twitter, monthly *Us in the World* newsletter, *Us in the World* partners, 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 *Us in the World* 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 new Academy for Sustainable Futures brand and the new Vision 2030 commitments. (Next review: June 2024)