

Student Sustainability Engagement Strategy (2015/22)

Canterbury Christ Church University's new *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 the Sustainability Cross-Cutting Theme: 2015-2022* 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.

This strategy document aims to expand upon this area 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, which are in turn monitored through our Environmental Management System (EMS) Objectives & Targets document.

Our Approach

In the last six years through the trial, error and ongoing development of a number of student engagement initiatives, informed by research and best practice from across the sector, we have developed a two-pronged approach to student engagement at CCCU:

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, primarily through our *Student Green Office*, through a cross-University *Student Sustainability Action Group* in collaboration with UKC, 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*. (See appendix for more detail on these projects.)

2. From the top down: formal curriculum engagement

We work in collaboration with academic and professional services departments to provide sustainability engagement work to particular modules, through project-based work experience opportunities, and we provide funding and support through the *Futures Initiative* to staff and students around the university to help embed sustainability within the practises and the curriculum. We also have representation from the *Student Green Office* and Student Union on a number of university sustainability working groups including our Sustainability Strategic Management Group, and in turn have Student Green Office representation on the Student Union's sustainability committee. (See appendix for more detail on these projects.)

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 in to university accommodation, they are given more information on environmental best practice in their student handbook, induction and welcome documents.

When they arrive on campus for their welcome weekends in September, they meet students and staff from the Sustainability Team and Student Green Office, and a few days later at Freshers Fair, can sign up for a number of sustainability opportunities and activities across the coming semesters. They receive a free student cookbook produced by the Student Green Office which is made available in every student kitchen, and are each given a voucher for a free reusable coffee cup in their welcome pack. All students are also to attend a student induction event which includes information on sustainability at the University and in the Students' Union.

Student Sustainability Engagement Strategy: Action Plan

The following broad-scope actions for student sustainability engagement have been outlined in our *Framework for the Sustainability Cross-Cutting Theme: 2015-2022*. 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 are utilising 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*, *Us In The World*, work experience opportunities in sustainability – through modules and via module leaders, *Futures Initiative*.

- a) Maintain a coherent portfolio of initiatives that are reviewed and developed every year.

(Due for review: August 2019)

2. Provide opportunities for students (and staff) to develop leadership skills for sustainability

Current opportunities include, as above, *Student Green Office* paid and voluntary roles, *Futures Initiative* projects, sustainability working group memberships, and *Us In The World*.

- a) Monitor and review these opportunities annually.

(Due for review: August 2019)

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

Current opportunities include allotments, bee-keeping, hop-growing, brewing and *Walkways* campus walks, and an annual One World Week, which includes an international food and culture fair and various opportunities for students to engage with the environment and community, and also coincides with National Volunteering Week and SDG Teach-In Week, in which the University also participates.

- a) Maintain a suite of opportunities, and review these annually.

(Due for review: August 2019)

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, and student-initiated projects via *Futures Initiative*.

- a) Monitor and review take-up of opportunities annually, and consider how to meet increasing demand and develop increased capacity with the resources available.

(Due for review: August 2019)

- b) An ongoing partnership with the Students' Union in line with the NUS *Responsible Futures* initiative was started in 2017 and is maintained with monthly meetings, and a Student Sustainability Action Group brings together students from UKC and CCCU to facilitate joint action on sustainability issues.

(Due for update: August 2019)

- c) As and where opportunities arise, consider the possibility of funded internships within Sustainability in line with future business planning.

(Due for review: August 2019)

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

Current opportunities are centred on the *Student Green Office*, *Student Sustainability Engagement Working Group*, a city-wide *SDG Forum*, *Us In The World* and the *Student Sustainability Action Group*.

- a) Monitor levels of attendance and participation annually.

(Due for review: August 2019)

6. Develop methods of evaluating engagement in sustainability

In 2016/17 we developed a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework for sustainability projects, embedded within a project planning process; in 2018/19 we are refining that process to produce a smaller, lighter version of the framework for smaller projects and events.

- a) Develop and adapt the M&E framework for sustainability engagement at CCCU, based on the pilot-year's review

(Due for review: September 2019)

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

Currently we publicise through the following channels:

DIGITAL: Departmental website, Student Communication pages, Student Green Office blog, Facebook and Twitter feeds utilising student bloggers, Us In The World partners, email mailing lists and via the SU Communications team.

PRINT: Termly and annual posters and case studies, print publications of annual report highlights and Futures Initiative projects, information leaflets on individual sustainability projects such as: *Futures Initiative*, *Student Green Office*, *Bioversity* etc, articles in *Inspire* and, when available, *Unified*.

- a) Review and update our social media strategy for student engagement with sustainability annually.
(Due for review: September 2019)
- b) Explore integrating current blogging activities and other social media feeds with the sustainability pages on the University website, in a similar vein to the student pages.

(Due for review: August 2019)

Student Sustainability Engagement Strategy (2015/22) - Appendix

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

Student Green Office

First piloted in early 2012 as a series of three month projects initiated by students and funded by Sustainability Development, the Student Green Office has now developed into a permanent installation within the Sustainability team. Students are employed year-round in part-time roles designing and running their own events and engagement initiatives, establishing regular communications through a shared online blog, Facebook and Twitter pages, and continually building capacity. Short-term paid project, work experience and volunteering roles for current students are tailored to the individual's interests and development needs as much as possible.

The Student Green Office acts as an umbrella for our various student engagement projects, providing physical space and resources for project work and engagement, and peer-to-peer support for one another and the students they engage with on their sustainability journey.

A working partnership has been established with the Students' Union remains a priority for the Student Green Office who provide a peer-based launching-off point to engage with current and potential students through SU events like Freshers' and Re-Freshers' Fairs, and University Open Days. They have developed ongoing working relationships with individuals and teams of staff across the University, and with representatives from local and national community organisations and other Higher Education establishments.

Us In The World

Launched in 2018, Us In The World is a partnership approach to raising awareness of and engagement with the UN's SDGs, through co-branding and cross-promotion of the increasing variety of events and campaigns from different staff and student teams, societies and groups across the University. New partners are added across the year, with regular contact between all partners, encouraging motivated individuals and groups, both staff and student, to learn from one another and boost one another's reach in trying to increase engagement and exploration of the SDGs.

Student Sustainability Action Group

Also launched in 2018, the Student Sustainability Action Group is an informal partnership between students of both CCCU and the University of Kent (UKC) which includes the elected Environmental Officers of both unions, and a number of students with an interest in sustainability and the environment, supported by sustainability staff from both universities. Its focus is on sharing experiences and best practise, and organising partnership action for students in and for their local community.

From the top down: formal curriculum engagement

Sustainability Projects

Our second approach to student sustainability engagement is a top-down approach, working in collaboration with academics on module-wide projects or by engaging students directly with opportunities through their module leaders and personal tutors.

Projects may involve funded roles, work experience placements with support and training from the Sustainability team, or sustainability modules developed with or supported by the sustainability team. Courses on which we have collaborative modules include PR & Media, Events Management, Psychology and Animation.

Futures Initiative

The second stream of our top-down approach is through our *Futures Initiative* project. Originally, the *Futures Initiative* was designed to provide funding and support to staff looking to embed sustainability into their curricula. In the last three years this has been opened up to students who, either in collaboration with their teaching staff or through the Student Green Office, may make a pitch for funding for a sustainability project or initiative related to their academic studies, supported by the Sustainability Development team.

In counterpoint to the Sustainability Projects route which provides opportunities for students to engage with existing sustainability initiatives or ideas, the *Futures Initiative* allows students to initiate and lead their own sustainability-related activities.

Sustainability Working Groups

Members of the Student Green Office sit on the Student Union's Sustainability Committee to support the SU's Green Impact and sustainability initiatives, and students from the Student Green Office, and Sabbatical Officers from the Students Union are represented in the membership of the following working groups: Sustainability Strategic Management Group; Biodiversity and Heritage; Energy, Emissions and Water Efficiencies; Education for Sustainable Futures; Fairtrade and Sustainable Food; Student Sustainability Engagement; Waste Management and Recycling; and Travel and Sustainable Business. These working groups sit within the sustainability reporting and governance structure.