

UTEA Application Exemplar – Team Award

The application (it should be no longer than 2,000 words)

This application focuses on the period from 2011, the point at which we engaged with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) ‘Green Academy’, a national change programme for sustainability. Since then our team has provided leadership in sustainability education across the University through the *Futures Initiative*. Collaboration has been pivotal to the realisation of our educational aim; **for every student to have the opportunity to learn about sustainability in the context of their chosen discipline and field of work**. We each bring different strengths to the team and have organically developed a collaborative approach that recognises the importance of:

- direct access to the SMT, connecting grass-roots initiatives and strategic priorities; (PR)
- involving academics from different disciplinary backgrounds, with different levels of experience in teaching and learning; (NK, ACM, SS)
- direct connections with students including through the SU and Student Green Office (SGO); (FBW, MH, JH)
- including those who are fully embedded in the life of the University and those whose professional life extends beyond it; (whole team)
- diverse voices (critical, hopeful, resisting, accepting, reflective, pragmatic, hesitant, certain) to support a working culture that is open and flexible (whole team).

Our reach and impact

Over the past 9 years we have engaged colleagues from across the University so that our sustainability community has grown '*from being one person deep*' (Stephen Scoffham) to being '*embedded throughout the university*' (Director of Finance).

Sustainability education has become established as a key focus and differentiator for CCCU. Our Framework for Sustainability provides detailed policy statements, aims, organisational targets and actions to support the university community in putting this into practice. CCCU is now recognised as a leader in sustainability education and has received national and international Green Gown awards for its work. Together with the University of Plymouth we co-host the Sustainability in Higher Education (SHE) network and have held two international conferences (2016, 2020). We have also published a range of books, chapters and papers (see reference list for a selected sample)

Our influence on the University Learning and Teaching Strategy and Graduate Attributes means that sustainability represents a 'golden thread' that connects educational experiences across the University. It is particularly emphasised in the principle of '*educating the whole person*' where it is articulated as a commitment to developing '*a sense of wonder, the quest for knowledge, love of neighbour and a commitment to a sustainable future.*' However, it is also demonstrated tangibly in the campus environment, taught curriculum and extracurricular activity experienced daily by staff and students. In the remainder of the application in-text references illustrate the way in which we address the 9 learning & teaching principles.

Principle	Reference
Educating the whole person	P1
Building learning communities	P2
Curriculum design for transformation	P3
Supporting success for all students	P4
Internationalisation and global citizenship	P5
Flexible and responsive learning environments	P6
Students as partners in learning	P7
Outstanding learning, teaching & assessment practices	P8
An integrated approach to graduate employability	P9

Our approach to sustainability education

Our approach has been strongly influenced by educational theory and research (selected references included). We take a broader view of sustainability education that encompasses the formal, informal and subliminal curriculum (P1). Equally, it is not just about developing knowledge and understanding; it requires us to 'do' education in a different way. Thus, staff development is central to our approach.

We have worked with the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit on the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice to include teaching on enriching curriculum with sustainability perspectives. Through this we have engaged more than 368 academic staff, and some have chosen to focus on leading sustainability in higher education within their assignments demonstrating the impact of our engagement.

We work closely with each of the four faculties to explore what sustainability might mean in their disciplinary areas. The Faculty Director of Learning and Teaching in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities recognises the value of our approach based on,

a formalized process with devolved responsibilities that offered the Faculty flexibility to shape responses to the Sustainability agenda which aligned to the culture and disciplinary environment of the curriculum. This collaboration as lead to creative conversations that have supported the continuous evolution of faculty culture connected to embedding sustainability into the development of new roles, fixed agenda items, curriculum review and program/module design and extra-curricular projects.

We have developed a range of resources for staff and students to facilitate their engagement with sustainability, including teaching resources accessible via Blackboard, a library of sustainability related texts, a monthly reading group, a curriculum review tool, sustainability games, and 'provocation' activities. Our *Exploring Sustainability Website* (with more than 700 views in the last year) has global reach, and through an EU Erasmus Plus project, is now incorporated in programmes for trainee teachers in Israel and Georgia. Feedback from staff affirms the value of our approach:

"Giving me practical resources was great as I am always looking for additional materials to pique the students' interest during taught sessions. I think that giving people practical tools/resources might be a good way in..." (Senior Lecturer in Health Promotion)

This capacity building work has been fundamental to supporting curriculum transformation (P3). Supporting around 15 curriculum development projects annually and more than 100 over its lifetime, the *Futures Initiative* has generated what the Dean of the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing describes as a “*myriad of activity...bubbling and building at ground level.*” One example is our long-running partnership with the Events Management programme and its level 5 Operational Design module. Students are actively involved in the conception, development and delivery of a sustainable spring festival (P7). The value and reach extends to the wider university community who attend the event each year.

The team support us through the different stages of developing a sustainable Spring Festival...They are involved at every stage of the event, from ideas exchanges with myself as tutor, feasibility study and logo design to the post-project review... most importantly, the team are always accessible, generous with their time, innovative, interested and have inspired our students to join their Student Green Office and change their own awareness and behaviour. (Module Lead, Jane Lovell) (P8, P9)

Across the University, we work directly with around 300 staff and students who we would consider to be part of our growing community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Increasing numbers of students are also recognising their tutors as sustainability champions via the Students’ Union ‘Golden Apple’ awards with 50 nominations in this category in 2019 (P2).

CASE STUDIES

Below, we offer three more detailed case studies that illustrate the impact of our approach to sustainability education on staff and students and demonstrate how they link to the teaching and learning strategy by in text references. These have been selected from a diverse body of work we have supported over the past nine years.

	Reach	Value	Impact
Case Study 1 Project 93	University-wide	Breaking down boundaries between formal and informal curriculum	Deeper collaborative relationship between CCCU and SU Staff and student engagement in 'extracurricular' activities increased Staff and student awareness of global issues increased
Case Study 2 Curriculum Review in Faculty of Health and Wellbeing	Faculty-wide	Addressing Faculty responsibilities in the education of the future workforce Creating opportunities for staff development (sustainability champions) Making 'real world' sustainability connections to NHS/public policy and preparation for professional life	Faculty Sustainability Committee set up Programmes revalidated to include sustainability attributes Enhanced awareness of sustainability and its professional relevance
Case Study 3 <i>Whole Earth?</i> Exhibition	University-wide and international	Engaging staff and students creatively	Enhanced profile of sustainability in university and communities New curriculum development projects Publications

Case Study 1: Project 93

'Project 93' aims to enrich the academic experience, enhance critical engagement, encourage social activism and incite solidarity and hope amongst our community. 50 collaborative events have been organised, 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 (P1). 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)

The project has is inclusive and works closely with the Equality and Diversity Unit, the International Office, BAME Staff Network, LGBT Staff Network, Women's Staff Network, and student societies to create and promote opportunities for all (P4). Inclusion is further supported by:

- 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 (P5). 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”.

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

The Faculty of Health and Wellbeing Sustainability Committee includes representatives from Academic and Professional Services, a community partner, Kent County Council, and the NHS. With the team we adapted our curriculum review tool, based on HEA/QAA ESD guidance, to develop the concept of ‘health sustainability’ within the curriculum that became a bespoke set of Graduate Attributes for sustainability (P3).

The link to NHS and Public Health policy provided ‘real world’ connections to issues which could otherwise feel remote. Student skills such challenging assumptions and negotiating alternatives in professional practice are fostered (P8). Feedback from an academic noted how we:

“act[ed] as advisors for sustainable development while allowing the project to be owned by the Faculty. The outcome was a set of graduate outcomes that have since been used in all programmes validated or revalidated within the Faculty. They have facilitated staff engagement and knowledge around sustainable development and have 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 (P9):

“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.”

Case Study 3: Whole Earth? Exhibition

Initial meetings with renowned political and environmental photographer Mark Edwards, resulted in us contributing to the text of a major exhibition on sustainability education called *Whole Earth?* That was subsequently displayed at universities across the world. It was launched in September 2015 with an open lecture by Michael Morpurgo and an audience of 250 staff and students from many disciplines (P6).

Feedback from the exhibition demonstrated its impact, with the following comment offered by a Business student (P1):

“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...”

The exhibition was then passed to our partner University in Kerala where it served as the centrepiece for a joint two-day conference on Science and Sustainability for staff and students, and then exhibited at seven other institutions in South India (P5). The local academic lead, 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.”*

The exhibition also 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 (P3).

The Academy for Sustainable Futures

Our next step is to launch an Academy for Sustainable Futures, a structure through which the University can build momentum, showcase activity and demonstrate leadership for

sustainability in HE. It builds upon the approach we have developed through the *Futures Initiative* whilst acknowledging the need to upscale and to extend the focus.