

The SDG Accord

The University and College Sector's Collective Response to the Global Goals



University
of Exeter

Career Zone



The image is of an Instagram post, with a photo of a student who participated in the Green Consultants scheme. The student's photo is surrounded by images of stage lighting focused on the student. The Instagram caption includes a quote from the student.

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Integration of SDGs in

- Institutional governance/strategic level
- SDGs in research
- SDGs in campus operations
- SDGs in curriculum development
- SDGs in student engagement activities
- SDGs into community activities
- SDGs at a whole-institution level

Focus on

- Goal 1 - No poverty
- Goal 2 - Zero hunger
- Goal 3 - Good health and wellbeing
- Goal 4 - Quality education
- Goal 5 - Gender equality
- Goal 6 - Clean water and sanitation
- Goal 7 - Affordable and clean energy
- Goal 8 - Decent work and economic growth
- Goal 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- Goal 10 - Reduced inequalities
- Goal 11 - Sustainable cities and communities
- Goal 12 - Responsible consumption and production
- Goal 13 - Climate action
- Goal 14 - Life below water
- Goal 15 - Life on land
- Goal 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions
- Goal 17 - Partnerships for the goals

Summary:

Green Consultants has a ten-year history of training students in the skills and knowledge required by consultants in the green sector.

The Green Consultants extra-curricular programme is composed of three elements. Online training, covering 1) working as a sustainability consultant, 2) soft skills (networking, persuading, influencing and negotiating, and problem solving) 3) Project Management and auditing and 4) Technical skills such as Environmental Impact Assessments, BREEAM, ISO14001 and BCorps. During the second stage (on-campus projects, OCPs), students work in groups for the Sustainability Team on real projects related to the University's own Net Zero policy. Recent OCPs have included 'Anthropogenic impact on biodiversity and wildlife on campus' and 'Devising a methodology for monitoring sustainable transport provision'. These projects have a real impact on the operation of the institution. The third element is a week-long Internship with an external organisation, e.g. SageTech Medical Equipment, ClearLead Consulting and Optix Solutions. These internships are designed to improve the sustainability of the host organisation and vary according to need.

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Since the training was launched online in September 2021, more than 330 students have engaged with the training and more than 200 have completed it. Our model creates a funnel, where students can engage as much or as little as they want, test career ideas, dip in and out and progress if they want to.

Recent graduates from the Green Consultants programme have gone on to work in roles such as a Graduate Sustainability Consultant, Solar Specialist and Regeneration and Sustainability Assistant.

'Because of Green Consultants we were able to demonstrate to our funders that we are becoming more environmentally responsible and putting things in place to measure the carbon footprint for our theatre company on an annual basis. Boo-to-a-Goose Theatre Company

Outline the 3 key benefits of integrating this theme:

- 1.** Any student who wishes to participate in the programme is entitled to do so – with no restrictions. By operating an open-to all-education programme we directly **reduce inequalities** of opportunities within student groups and maximise engagement in SDG awareness and activities.
- 2.** By training a significant pool of students who undertake substantial projects on campus, we are directly contributing to the University's Net Zero ambition and improving sustainability directly.
- 3.** We diffuse the knowledge and skills of the SDGs throughout the community by placing students in internships in a range of organisations that demonstrate a desire to improve their sustainability but lack the skills or resource to do so.

Outline the barriers or challenges encountered in integrating this theme and how you overcame these:

- 1.** While students are often well educated on the need for improving sustainability generally and of the personal actions they could take, there is a lack of awareness of employment opportunities for sustainability jobs and of the practical implementation of sustainability improvements in the workplace and industry. To compensate this, we need to operate from a low base point.
- 2.** Because of the skills shortage in the Green Sector the expectations on our students undertaking internships can be too high – they are over desirable to organisations and our students cannot always meet these expectations. We need to actively manage the expectations of employers to obtain realistic objectives.
- 3.** Some internships are based within organisations in rural locations. These can be difficult for our students to access due to the lack of public transport, which makes it hard for us to engage with these organisations in a meaningful way.

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Please outline your conclusions and recommendations to others (Max 200 words):

Students have reported that learning about sustainability challenges academically induces significant climate anxiety. Added to this is a prevailing belief that young people are the experts in sustainability and will solve the climate crisis, which can put unfair and unwanted pressure on young people to be the experts within their sphere of influence.

The Green Consultants programme offers a practical, actionable activity with which students can engage and take action to calm their climate anxiety. This programme helps to upskill students and enable them to respond professionally and with purpose to the challenges they face.

There is a huge demand for students with sustainability skills and knowledge from organisations offering internships and graduate jobs. Currently, this demand outstrips the supply of students with the relevant skills. This offers an incredible opportunity for students and graduates.

Offering a non-selective programme (at initial stages) offers genuinely inclusive learning, while standards are maintained by incorporating threshold standards for later stages. Thresholds mean that minimum standards must be achieved for students to progress on the programme, but multiple attempts to cross the threshold are permitted, so genuine learning and development can take place.