



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

The SDG Accord

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

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

SDG Accord Reporting 2021 CASE STUDY

Describe briefly how the theme selected was implemented within your institution – **max 300 words.**

The University of Leicester's commitment to biodiversity arose from a shared passion for the subject amongst our academic experts, Gardens & Grounds Team, the local community and enthusiastic students. By pooling knowledge and creativity, this partnership has transformed our concrete campus into an urban oasis for all species that is a long way removed from the manicured lawns we expect from University campuses. Tapestry lawns, hedgehog tracks, tree planting with schools and a commitment to native species means that our research-led green spaces provide maximum carbon sequestration, species diversity and an altogether bee-autiful campus.

The University owns and manages over 300 acres of land. This includes the Botanic Gardens and a Local Wildlife Site – Blackthorn Manor. There are over 10,000 trees and a number of protected or rare species to be found on University grounds.

We have moved away from traditional University well-manicured but bland and species-poor and sporadic green spaces and the Biodiversity Working Group (a mix of academic and operational experts from within the University and local partners) have developed a robust Biodiversity Design Guide and a Plants and Pollinators Policy, with ambitious KPIs regarding tree planting and similar to maximise the biodiversity on our sites as well as to add value to the outdoor experience of our students and the wider University communities. Allowing students to shape our campus and working collaboratively with them has won three Green Gown Awards for these students, a legacy we're hugely proud of. Our recent focused projects have improved the plant varieties, maintenance approaches, safety issues, and increased access to the transformative gardens and grounds and we have recently achieved Hedgehog-friendly campus accreditation.

<https://le.ac.uk/about/making-a-difference/sdgs/biodiversity>

BENEFITS

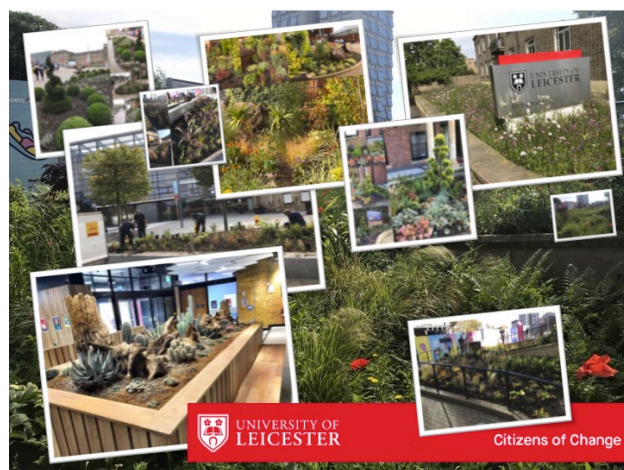
1. We achieved first place in the THE Impact Rankings for Goal 15: Life on Land in 2020 and have won four Green Gown Awards so far.
2. Students have seen their ideas become a reality and have learned a lot about affecting change within a large organisation as well as leaving a legacy for future students to enjoy.
3. Campus looks lovely and has inspired staff, students and visitors to consider biodiversity in their own homes and organisations.

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BARRIERS

1. This was largely possible due to the can-do attitude of our Gardens and Ground Team as well as academics taking a keen interest in what they look at from their office windows.
2. Senior management fear of campus looking untidy.
We created a trial tapestry lawn and explanatory signage before an open day and canvassed opinion. It was very popular, which gave us the green light to do more.
3. Capital development projects have delayed some wildflower planting for fear of having to dig it all up. The Biodiversity Design Guide has ensured that all landscaping works are compliant with our aspirations in this area.

Examples of the Gardens and Grounds physical biodiversity campus initiatives:



The ever-changing tapestry lawn on Entrance One

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BARRIERS

Taking a Living Labs approach to Life on Land has enabled the barriers between academic colleagues, operational colleagues and students to be removed and opened up exciting project ideas and opportunities. We have also worked closely with Leicester City Council, Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and other partners to exchange knowledge and resources.

We started with an urban campus and did not have additional resource for any project so we encourage all universities and organisations to look at their estate and see what may be possible. Frontline staff and students have driven this – they are often the best innovators and implementers for positive change. Even urban, concrete campuses can be species-rich and bee-autiful with the right design and commitment. It can be as simple as planting wildflower seeds in between regular planting, mowing less and pruning your hedges differently to allow hedgehogs safe passage.