

# Dissertations for Good

## About the programme

Dissertations for Good offers a completely new way of conducting research. It connects students to organisations external to their further/higher education institution (FHEI), for them to complete research projects into sustainability together.

Our ultimate vision is to have a national online match-making platform bringing together students, organisations and FHEIs to research sustainability. It will boost the skills, experience and employability of students, and will provide the capacity for organisations to become more sustainable and positively contribute to the wider community.

## The value and benefits

1. You and your students will create a piece of work that may have a powerful impact on the organisation you work with and, depending on the subject matter, have a good chance of getting published
2. Your students will gain valuable skills and experience beyond that usually gained through a major project, including collaboration with and reporting to key stakeholders in a non-academic organisation
3. You will have the chance to build mutually beneficial relationships with external organisations
4. Your FHEI will show that you are working to support and improve your students' employability, enhancing your reputation
5. Organisations will be able to carry out important research into sustainability that they may not have the time or resources to complete otherwise

October-December 2014: student produces a plan, once confirmed this is sent to the organisation

November 2014-June 2015: data collection and analysis

May/June 2015: submission of final report, external marking

July/August 2015: final report made available to organisation

## Project Scope

The project will first and foremost meet the requirements set by FHEIs for their course. The student's academic progress will always come first, as it is an important part of their degree.

The research topic must be related to sustainability, but other than that will not be limited by NUS. The subject could be anything from the social effects of fuel poverty to carbon management to sustainable economics and finances.

## Proposed timeline

N.B. This is flexible depending on module requirements and will be confirmed in the planning meeting.

August-November 2014: pairings confirmed and planning meetings organised

## Student opportunities

As part of Dissertations for Good, we are working on giving students the opportunity to present their work at the British Conference of Undergraduate Research (BCUR), held annually at UCLan. The presentation can take place up to 1 year after the submission of the dissertation.

We are also in discussion with the University of Bristol regarding an agreement to publish high-quality projects in a new peer-reviewed, student-led publication they are developing.

## Parties' responsibilities

These are laid out more comprehensively in the Preliminary Project Plan, which will be issued to each organisation and FHEI before the planning meeting. It will inform the Project Plan, which will be the main deliverable from the planning meeting and will outline exactly how the project will run. All parties must attend the planning meeting (although this can be done remotely).

Academic supervisors will:

- Carry out their usual duties as academic supervisor, e.g. regularly meeting with the student to check their progress
- Discuss any problems with the student before involving the organisation or NUS
- Organise marking of the report, as with a normal dissertation project, before it is handed over to the organisation

Students will:

- Work to the brief as agreed in the planning meeting
- Dedicate an agreed minimum amount of time to the project as agreed in the planning meeting and advised by their FHEI
- Contact their supervisor in the first instance if they encounter any problems or difficulties
- Report back to the organisation regularly as agreed in the planning meeting

Organisations will:

- Ensure that the student/FHEI are fully aware of what the organisation desires from the project
- Commit to dedicating a certain amount of time regularly to catch up with the student and ensure that all are happy with the progress of work
- Ensure that the student has access to information, resources and equipment and in-house expertise where necessary
- Follow up on the project by providing updates after 6 months, 12 months and 24 months.

## Your next steps

Identify a member of academic staff from your FHEI who will agree to be a representative during the pilot and supervise a student completing a research project. This member of staff should make themselves known to Kim Croasdale (details below). Kim will then organise the pairing, send the Preliminary Project Plan and organise the planning meeting.

**Kim Croasdale**

**Sustainability Project Officer**

**National Union of Students**

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