

University of the Arts London

Food and drink

Food for Life



About the project

Summary

This project aimed to bridge the diverse issues associated with a 'sustainability' agenda at the University of the Arts London. Through providing good quality organic food at a competitive price we have demonstrated the sustainability and day-to-day operations are not mutually exclusive agendas. Building on the progress made the institution to embed environmental stewardship at UAL the Gold Award contributes to a narrative of progressive environmentalism. Redefining sustainability to include health issues and guide society towards a **life well lived** we hope to have contributed to the UAL spirit - excitement being alive, and the urgency of making life better for humans and nature. By aiming for Gold, it sent out a very visual statement of the intent and commitment the University has on becoming the most sustainable in the HEI sector.

Profile

- HEI
- 23,440 students (includes full and part time students)
- 2500 staff
- Urban

Project partners

The University's Sustainability & Environment Project Board, chaired by a Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor and Baxter Story, the University's contract caterer.

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The results

The problem

Originally the 'Food for Life' (FFL) standard was not included in the tender for our contract caterer. The Sustainability & Environment Project Board commissioned a detailed gap-analysis of all university business operations, including areas for improvement included sourcing local suppliers offering a wider selection of organic produce. At the same time we were required to offer value-for-money. The UAL Catering Policy was reviewed with our key stakeholders (academic and non-academic) and re-drafted written to include minimum standards on food sustainability, its aims, and values and long term aims (inspired in part by the P&P Green League). Additional funding beyond the agreed contract with the caterer was agreed and the new pricing policy to students carefully evaluated.

The current level of FFL points is calculated at 80 points above the required points for Gold. Organic produce is currently running at 19% of locally sourced fruit and veg comes from a radius 50 miles from the Colleges. The number of Gold Certified meals being delivered daily is just under 1,800 in term time. Meeting at Deans Forums with students also showed an improved perception, not only of the food provenance but also quality and values for money. By achieving Gold it showed students and staff the commitment UAL has had on improving its sustainability credentials.

Finalist's case study

The approach

The journey started the university dropping to 127th in the People & Planet Green League in 2013. All areas of the university were scrutinized, a new Head of Sustainability was recruited and a new governance structure was embedded (using the LiFE Index). It was agreed that providing an organic food offering would send a strong message of UAL's willingness to improve.

A request for additional funds was submitted to the Vice Chancellor and the Executive Committee to bridge the gap in obtaining the Gold Award. The request was endorsed following reductions in the utility budget, achieved by implementing projects identified in the UAL Carbon Management Plan. UAL provided 50% of the total cost upfront with an additional 5% tariff increase to customers, charged on every meal.

In addition, all suppliers were asked to complete the CIPS Index. It was subsequently determined that Baxter Storey were the university's second most sustainable supplier. This was helpfully demonstrated the ethos that student fees were allocated to suppliers who shared UAL aspirations concerning environmental stewardship. T

A campaign of local marketing to show visible what the achievement actual meant to customers was undertaken. A sustained, committed "no turning back" message was crucially to ensure any doubters' fears were negated.

Our goals

- To ensure that FFL Gold continues to a part of the University's Environmental Management System, which is part of the University's Medium Term Strategy.
- To ensure that students and staff "buy" into the food ethos and the catering department becomes a platform for educating customers on the real benefits of a sustainable food chain.
- To prove that a sustainable food offer if financially viable for both customers and the University.
- To use our FFL as an "influencer" for other sustainability initiatives including divestment, sustainable transport and agile working.

Obstacles and solutions

Increase in budgeted cost	Additional part funding agreed from UAL as well as a tariff increase for customers
Food supply chain/sourcing of new suppliers	Sourcing of local suppliers which the Baxter Storey food supply department helped and supported

Performance and results

The impact on staff and students can be measured in part by the increase in sales, currently 7% up on the previous year figures and the resulting survey (1000 interviews) which show Student satisfaction for "Value for money and quality" at a level of 87%. Student meeting via "Deans forums" have indicted a positive response towards the ethics of the catering department without having to increase the current annual budget. The university rose to 61st in the last Green League table, has reduced its carbon footprint by 36% has been nominated for The Observers Ethical Award, received two Green Apple awards and continues to proactively engage with students via the innovative meetthetide.com concept.

The future

Lessons learned

A dedicated engagement campaign with students and staff would have made the case easier to make and prove that there was a real positive understanding of what this project was about.

Sharing your project

Communication has been on site, decorating the canteen walls explaining “what Gold really means” to customers. The news has been in the University “Arts News” as well as via “Deans Forums”. The success of achieving FFL has led to other businesses which Baxter Storey cater for, also achieving Gold, through the success of UAL.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

Positive endorsement from external peers and colleagues will encourage to scale even greater heights. We wish to share our finding and more importantly instigate a modal shift in our HEI’ source organic, forcing prices down and driving greater competitiveness. Being nominated provides us with platform to extend to reach of the project.

Further information meetthetide.com