



Green Gown
Awards 2016



Dissemination
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Finalist's case study

Aston University

Enterprise and Employability

Carbon Week – Embedding Sustainability into all second year students

About the project

Summary

Climate change, sustainability and decarbonisation will be key factors in every business decision a student will make during their careers, so we want to ensure that Aston students are ahead of the game.

The results

The problem

How to help embed sustainability into all courses and give students the necessary climate change thinking and problem-solving skills for whatever programme they're studying, and to be an investment in our students that will prepare them for the brave new career opportunities that will come in a low-carbon world.

The approach

Carbon Week (2 - 6 November 2015) was an ambitious 5-day programme to bring climate change awareness and low-carbon design thinking to all our Year 2 students. We were the first university in the world to embed climate change teaching into all its courses and Carbon Week helped give students the essential skills to work in a climate-changed world, ensuring that you're better prepared for the challenges of the future, and therefore significantly increasing your employability.

For Day 1 we invited every Year 2 Aston student to the Genting Arena, NEC (Birmingham) on November 2nd for a day of talks, debates, comedy and employer workshops. Doors opened at 9am and the day ran until 5pm. We were delighted to welcome a line-up of speakers, each with a wealth of experience and knowledge of preparing for a low-carbon world including: Rob Ince, Caroline Lewis (UK Met Office); Caroline Spelman (MP for Meriden), Clive Myrie (Journalists) and Juliet Davenport (CEO and Founder, Good Energy).

The remainder of the week students chose from 12 electives to attend and then in groups worked on a project based around Climate Change. Departments were advised to go to talks and do projects that weren't topics they were doing their studies in.



Profile

- Higher Education
- 7875 FTE teaching students; 199 FTE Research students
- 1400 FTE staff
- Urban



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Obstacles and solutions

Obstacles	Solutions
Transporting students to the Genting Arena	Provided free rail pass that students could use around the West Midlands on that day.
Making students attend when not mandatory	To reward a student's participation, they will be able to gain CAP's (Carbon Achievement Points) for your Higher Education Achievement Report and your MAP record

Performance and results

1400 students attended Day One of Carbon Week at the Genting Arena, out of a UG year 2 cohort of 2800, and over 300 students attended the 12 electives on Days 2 and 3, with an average attendance per elective of 125. Participation in Carbon Week was not made mandatory.

Carbon Week attracted a lot of interest from other universities who wished to join in next year or to replicate the experience themselves. These universities were local to Aston (in Birmingham and the West Midlands), in the UK and at some of our partner institutions around the world.

The future

Lessons learned

Significant refinements have been made to stage this event again in 2016. The Day One event has been rebranded "The Carbon Journey" and the Day One event – while still not mandatory – is being much more aggressively marketed to our students as an "unmissable, invaluable event"; the degree of spectacle, interactivity and career-relevance has been improved; a 10-credit-bearing academic module ("Developing a Low-Carbon World") has been introduced; a partner training course has been introduced for PhD students from Aston and other invited universities;

Sharing your project

For next year we have partnered with a faculty at Birmingham City University to welcome their students into this year's event and stage their own electives, with all the collaboration and spin-off opportunities that has to offer.

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

Aston University has worked hard to be at the forefront of embedding climate change awareness into the curriculum. Carbon Week is our flagship event and a Green Gown award would be a real endorsement of the importance of this activity and the impact it will surely have on future generations.

Further information

For more information please contact environment@aston.ac.uk and to view this year's event please visit <http://www.aston.ac.uk/thecarbonjourney/>