



Green Gown
Awards 2016



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Finalist's case study

UWE Bristol Learning and Skills Our Green City

About the project

Summary

Our Green City celebrated and showcased UWE academics and Bristol based sustainability organisations to develop public understanding of sustainability issues in Bristol's year as European Green Capital 2015. Based on a free, open, online course format, c2000 learners signed-up to gain insight into themes of food, nature, energy, transport and resources through a range of video presentations, tasks, quizzes and community discussion forums.

Our Green City enabled UWE Bristol to engage widely with our Local Authority, the business community, and the Bristol Green Capital Partnership. Our Green City featured the work of 14 academics, 24 organisations and reflected a strong educative element for Bristol 2015. The learners have given the project high levels of praise, reflecting on how they have been supported to create changes to their communities, whilst funders have reflected on how the project has brought academic insight closer to people in the Bristol city region and beyond.

Project partners

- Faculty of Environment and Technology
- Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences
- Centre for Transport and Society
- The Bristol Green Capital Partnership
- Bristol 2015
- Bristol City Council
- Dept. for Energy and Climate Change

The results

The problem

A key challenge for the environmental agenda is bringing new people in and developing a broad understanding of the need for environmental change; whilst Bristol 2015 would feature talks, events, workshops, it was clear that these would attract mostly people who have brought into this agenda. We wanted to develop a simple way for people to engage with Bristol 2015 on their own terms and the 'MOOC model' offered this as learning takes place in confidence, is not fixed to time or location, and allows learners to explore concepts and discussions in safety.



Profile

- Higher Education
- 27000 (full and part time students)
- 3000 staff
- Multi-site institution covering urban Bristol



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The approach

UWE Bristol delivered the first massive, open, online course (MOOC) to be delivered as part of the European Commission's Green Capital Award which Bristol held for 2015. Featuring academics from UWE Bristol and using an exciting range of organisations from the Bristol Green Capital Partnership, Our Green City sort to explore, celebrate and build the capability of people to lead change in their own localities.

Using the key themes of nature, transport, energy, resources, leadership and food, Our Green City engaged learners, entirely online, through video presentations, forum discussions, tasks and quizzes. We attracted approximately c2000 learners and received high levels of praise from those who took the course, our funders, and our peers at other institutions.

Our goals

Aim:

To provide a high quality online educational experience that showcases 'The Bristol Method' to a local, national and European audience so that others are inspired to engage with change in their own locality.

Objectives:

- Empower and showcase to communities and organisations: The MOOC will seek a range of contributions from across the city, asking them to share their challenges and how they have sort solutions.
- Link practice to policy: weave a link between grassroots work, research and policy makers through academic contributions from UWE's research and teaching centres
- Provide scale and reach: our virtual learning environment can host thousands of learners from a global audience, ensuing that 2015 projects are shared with European partners
- Accessibility and opportunity for all: we will deliver an accessible learning experience. Interest and commitment will form the course pre-requisites rather than a prior qualification. Our Virtual Learning Environment is accessibility compliant and our videos will be captioned for the hard of hearing.
- Provide a legacy: we will use a range of learning routed in the 'social learning' tradition which encourage discussion and dialogue between participants; this model is most suited to developing an online community that will be able to develop after the funding

Obstacles and solutions

| | |
|---|---|
| • How to engage learners who are new to sustainability | • Work with local organisations to provide case studies and real work examples of their work |
| • Gaining buy-in from a large academic base | • Highlight wider opportunities from taking part in project such as increasing profile of work, linking to Research Excellence Framework and professional development |
| • How to Increase the profile of the project against a tight marketing budget | • Seek external funds and external partners to support the project, 'piggyback' their marketing channels and networks |
| • How to develop the support of external contributors? | • Join networks of organisations and develop relationships early in the project. Bear in mind that some organisations are small with limited resources; support them financially for their work and develop their capacity too, hold their hands through the process. |



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Performance and results

Our Green City gave UWE Bristol the opportunity to engage with new audiences and develop a wider, public understanding of sustainability than we are able to do through our taught programmes. We also provided our funders with a method through which to engage with the regional, national and international community, and provide engagement to lifelong and adult learners which was a gap in the mainstream educational programme that they had developed. To provide an indication of reach Our Green City:

- Had 1853 enrolments
- Learners were drawn from 71 countries
- 14000 video presentations were viewed
- The course was accessed 2400 times by approximately 60% of learners

The feedback that we have received for Our Green City speaks for itself, with learners commenting:

- I am considering how to get involved with organisations to have a bigger impact using my knowledge and experience.
- It's made me more interested to get involved with local schemes like public gardens and car share schemes, and I think it improved my confidence to keep studying.
- I have moved back to Bristol from living in Sydney for more than 20 years, it made me very aware of what is happening locally, how I can be involved, informed and inform others. Thank you
- Cycle more. Aware of importance of wider determinants of health
- It has given me concrete examples to use as leverage with local authorities and other organisations here to push for example mapping all green spaces in the city and habitats for wildlife.

The future

Lessons learned

Our Next Project will be the development of a similar project in the sustainable development field. We have developed a strong model to achieve this project which will use a blend of partner contributions, case studies and community tasks.

Sharing your project

A guidance set for other organisations will soon appear as part of the [Bristol Method](#) to show other institutions who to follow this project. This is not live as the project has only just finished. Further we have [archived](#) the videos for schools, FEs and HEIs to access and are will be soon creating a series of school engagement and outreach products from the learning materials that will form part of our [BOXed](#) project. I was also a speaker at Blackboard EMEA 2016 in Groningen, Netherlands where I discussed the benefits of this approach to public engagement ([programme](#) and [virtual poster session](#)) and staff engagement.

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

Being a finalist has increased the profile of the project, particularly as we now develop a legacy for the learning materials as a method to engage with schools and colleges. This additional credibility will be used as part of the branding for the outreach materials and will send a strong signal to potential students that UWE plays a



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strong role in the Educational Sustainability sector and that these skills are weaved into our work, our programmes and the ethos of the university.

Further information

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<http://tiny.cc/ourgreencity>

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