



Green Gown
Awards 2016



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Finalist's case study

Glasgow School of Art Student Engagement The RADIAL Project

About the project

Summary

RADIAL is a collective of creative thinkers from the university community across Glasgow. Students and staff are all connected through a shared need and desire to live sustainably. We believe that climate change is a cultural issue connected to inherent values we all hold; therefore we find commonality and connection to tackle these issues together transforming current habits into meaningful habits that will build our sustainable future.

Our core aim is to collectively inspire action towards a zero waste society through the exploration, practice and sharing of ideas that are rooted in the circular economy and resource efficiency. Our project focuses on 3 areas: food waste prevention; extended product life cycles and increased recycling.

Project partners

Our community, described as Glasgow's creative student community, is made up of 65000 students from Glasgow's Higher Educational institutions: Glasgow School of Art, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian and University of Strathclyde. We work with and support staff members from these institutions too. We are funded by Zero Waste Scotland through the Volunteer and Community Advocate Programme.

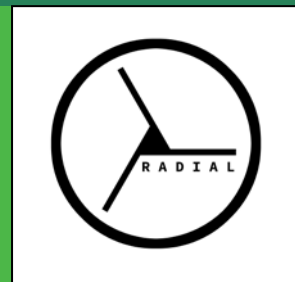
The results

The problem

Disconnection to our environment, over consumption and destructive habitual action; climate change is undeniably the biggest threat to our generation. We want to be part of the solution and to help people transition to the new story based on circular systems and resource efficiency.

The approach

We use systems thinking and design methodology to translate ideas into reality and make abstract thoughts and environmental data tangible. We choose to engage with peoples intrinsic values and focus on human stories to strengthen empathy and ensure engagement is relevant, useable, easy and desirable for our community. Ultimately we'd like to see a paradigm shift in how we relate to our planet and RADIAL creates space to help people transition to this new story.



Profile

- Higher Education
- 1750 students (includes full and part time students)
- 2500 staff
- Urban

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Our goals

- Create space to explore issues relating to climate change, the circular economy and zero waste
- Provide students with extra-curricular opportunities which allow them to gain new skills and reconnect
- Connect staff and students interested or working in sustainability in universities across Glasgow

Obstacles and solutions

Create a network amongst universities	As the institutions we were working with already had sustainability projects on the go, we had to be careful not to step on anyone's toes! By providing extra help and support we were seen as a resource rather than a threat. If we hadn't already, we always made personal connections with those working on these projects and made extra effort to find out where we could support them and bring strength through collaboration while consequently achieving our project goals and targets.
The Engage students on 'unexciting' Hfs topics such as recycling	Do things which were exciting, different and exercised the skills they were already learning. For example we ran a 'Recycle Hack' which brought together students from different disciplines to use design principles to tackle issue relating to recycling.
Operate on a tight budget	Be creative and make use of perceived waste as a resource! For example we used old tshirts (from a swap shop) for a workshop on how to make tote bags.
Producing waste as a result of marketing the project.	Marketing information like signs, posters and flyers are great at spreading a message but have a limited lifespan and we feel they do not lead by example. Our signs have been etched onto fully compostable, recycled card so it can firstly be cut and reused then can ultimately completely break down when it can be used no longer.

Performance and results

Highlights since July 2015 include:

- Engaged with over 5000 people at 159 events
 - Diverted over 1.1 tonnes of surplus food from landfill
 - Diverted 3.2 tonnes of reuse items from landfill
 - Recruited 122 volunteers who have carried out 965 volunteer hours
 - Diverted 15.5 tonnes of CO2e from the atmosphere
- Founded the first cross Glasgow institutional Green Festival celebrating student action for our environment.
 - Designed and created Glasgow first ever zero waste map
 - Created an informal network of staff and students interested in creative sustainability across Glasgow



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The future

Lessons learned

- Be true and honest at all times and always uphold our values while carrying out our work
- Communicate visually with vibrancy and color
- Break the mould – try things a slightly different way!
- Do things collectively and collaboratively
- Provide space to engage head, heart and hands

Sharing your project

Communicating visually is really important to us and we try to capture every event on film. We regularly make use of Flickr – uploading the high quality and colourful images really help tell the story of our project!

We regularly present and give advice to other community groups. Through this dissemination we champion that creativity isn't something mysterious that only a few possess, therefore methods which combine a creative approach with environmental research and data create impactful tangible work which can be replicated.

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

We asked our Director Tom Inns his thoughts: *"The RADIAL Project has had a significant impact at the Glasgow School of Art. The GSA values creative disruption, a responsibility to our planet and working collaboratively, all of which have been key to the delivery of RADIAL. The project has innovative and inclusive approaches to working with students. There has been significant interest and new links to our curriculum through their work, and we wish them well at the Green Gown Awards final."*

RADIAL complements and works in tandem with the GSA's strategy, values and ethos. Creative engagement, cross discipline working and peer to peer learning encourages our students to achieve great things while gaining moral and civic responsibility when they leave the GSA.

Further information

Jennifer Fraser

RADIAL Project Coordinator

0141566125

www.radialproject.org.uk

www.facebook.com/radialproject

www.twitter.com/radialproject