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# Finalist's case study

## University of Gloucestershire Learning and Skills

Regeneration for the Future:  
collaborative academic  
innovation for the next generation  
of design change-makers

### About the project

#### Summary

Designers of the future will help remake the world and bring global sustainability visions alive – provided we enable them to work, think and act with a new blend of technique, imagination and collaboration, across professions and social groups.

The Design subject group at the University of Gloucestershire has taken action to support students to become sustainability-conscious design professionals.

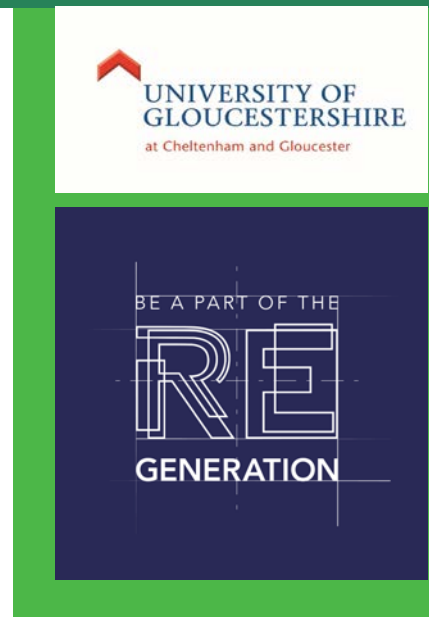
Regeneration for the Future has activated a connected boundary-crossing approach to understanding and embedding Education for Sustainability (EfS) in the curriculum, research, community outreach and professional practice. Impacts so far include: pedagogical changes, inter-disciplinary teaching and an inquiry into the impacts of EfS on learning, taking views from students, staff and industry professionals. 2016 has also seen the launch of a community repair café bringing together students, staff and the community.

#### Project partners

**Core staff group:** 4 academic course leads; 2 Heads of Department; 3 professional faculty staff (design technician; gallery manager; faculty librarian); 2 professional services (Director of Sustainability, Engagement Manager).

**Students:** 86 first year students involved in the EfS experience/research; 34 students active in the repair café plus 3 product design and 2 interior design & fashion design student interns on associated projects.

**Industry/ community partners:** Gloucestershire County Council Joint Waste Team, Vision 21 (local sustainability charity), STAR College, Royal Society of the Arts, HackerSpaces, MakerSpace, University of Worcester, Cheltenham Minster, St Paul's Tavern, Ross & Ross Food, Performance Arts Centre UoG, Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust, Whistles, Superdry, Cheltenham Town Council/Honeybourne Rail Line community group, Thread Counts, Stroud International Textiles, Atelier and UoG Growth Hub.





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## The results

### The problem

There is call for a new era of designers – ‘designers for the future’ who are able to work at a cross-disciplinary level, strategically, whilst also recognizing their subject specialisms; designers who are responsible and considerate of design life-cycles of the present and prepared to face the sustainability challenges of the future.

### The approach

A 6 strand approach inspired by EfS:

- Curriculum change – new pedagogies embedded into curricula, plus creation of new inter-disciplinary teaching and applied professional projects.
- Pedagogical inquiry – comparative study of learning and impact on 1<sup>st</sup> years before and after encountering EfS delivered across the 4 courses
- Professional input – consultations with industry stakeholders, on graduate capabilities related to sustainability required in these 4 professional arenas
- Research development – pedagogical and applied research has resulted, with new bid concepts and influence on current institutional research themes
- Partnership building – new relationships established to host applied projects with external organisations and enable specialist teaching input from industry
- Community engagement – ‘Regeneration’ repair café launched in May 2016 with over 75 local participants, in collaboration with civic and charity partners

### Our goals

The EfS ethos of Regeneration for the Future aims to facilitate learners to develop core professional skills whilst being challenged to take their design specialisms forward by researching materials, weighing up impacts, assessing stakeholder interests and making convincing pitches to clients and demonstrating the value of investment in sustainable design solutions (SDD).

The project blends sustainable design knowledge with transformative pedagogy, going beyond mere inclusion of sustainability ‘content’ or special themes in the curriculum.

The result of this approach aims to develop graduates of the future with technical design insights alongside competencies such as systems thinking, futures envisioning and change leadership.

### Obstacles and solutions

Obstacle	Solution
<b>Repair Café:</b> - Changing mindset of external collaborators to share the vision of supporting the community, especially young people and women, to learn to repair. - Building the student’s confidence to actively participate in repairing products. - The organization to launch the Regeneration Repair Café event	- Encouraged and supported visitations to existing Repair cafes and the students to align a shared vision. - Created a ‘Mock Repair Café’ prior to the community Café launch with founder of Painswick Repair Café, collaborators, first and second year students. - Regular meetings with RCE Severn Coordinator, 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> year students, Vision 21 and Gloucestershire County Council. Empowering students to make decisions with collaborators.



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<p><b>Creating cross-disciplinary academic collaborations:</b> This is a common obstacle within academic due to timetabling constraints, stereotypical academic silos and restrictive modes of assessment</p>	<p>Course leaders shared lecturers, workshops and production facilities at different campuses. Created groups of students from each discipline to discuss and describe their shared inspirations, visions and designs. Fashion shared their production facilities and skill sharing by course leader and technician.</p>
<p><b>IT Schools Africa:</b> Getting students to understand the diverse environmental, economic, cultural differences of designing IT classrooms for secondary school children Africa.</p>	<p>The head of course was able to visit Malawi and give specialist advice on designing an ergonomic classroom. Through this visitation the students were provided with film footage of the students with the first-hand experience provided by the lecturer. This was also supported by numerous visitations and feedback from IT Schools Africa and skype discussions with the coordinators in Malawi.</p>

## Performance and results

- Student Learning** – the impact for students has been tangible, creating excitement and shifts in their understanding. Pedagogical study results are now being analysed and students have pointed to the value and highlights of their experience of the inter-professional exchanges, live site projects as assessment activities (see below) and doing their own research into local repair activities as part of their studies:

*“Lectures and research we’ve done with the other student groups and lecturers have taught us a lot – how to think in different ways towards sustainability.”*

*“As students we’re designing products that are smarter, intelligent design, that can be fixed and taken apart, and we are giving people confidence to repair products too.”*

*“I feel privileged to be part of this and can’t wait for the year end sustainable fashion show. I really enjoyed the community engagement and hope my work inspires people.”*

*“The feeling of power that we could improve the future. We are the future designers!”*
- External Partnerships** – a wide range of partnerships have developed through this work. Examples of new partners for student learning:

*Thread Counts (with Stroud International Textiles, Atelier and UoG Growth Hub)* – online sustainable fashion forum for education, research and business engagement.

*St Pauls Tavern & Ross and Ross Foods* – commercial offices interior redesign projects being translated into online hybrid learning modules and materials.

*Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust* - students are addressing several problems of health and well-being in the workplace e.g. wayfinding and signage, colour, light, noise in breakout areas and communal restaurant area. Includes application of sustainable and biophilic design principles.

*Cheltenham Town Council/Honeybourne Rail Line community group* – environmental art regeneration project in deprived neighbourhoods, linked to local public art strategy.
- Academic Schools** – we are seeing high level impact and benefits for growth and innovation at Course, Subject Group and School-level. This is extending sustainability in research and outreach strategies/activities, staff development to fuel teaching innovation, and increasing promotion of sustainability in prospectuses as ‘USP’ to aid recruitment.



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*"Sustainability is now embedded into the School's ethos and is used to underpin all our courses. As a result we have seen a marked increase in performance, both in student applications and the results in the National Student Survey and Postgraduate Taught Student Experience surveys." (Angus Pryor, Head of School, Art and Design)*

## The future

### Lessons learned

- Collaboration across subjects for increasing peer-learning and real inter-professional working among both students and staff.
- Long-term strategic change for sustainability requires both a change in course ethos and an embedded approach of pedagogical change across the curriculum, rather than addition of sustainability 'content' or themes. I.e. due to this project, other Design courses such as Graphic Design and Advertising where sustainability has only been considered in schemes if it enables a commercial advantage are redeveloping their course ethos and curriculum to develop graduates with an enhanced skill set.
- E-Learning has enabled key modules to be converted into Flipped Studio hybrids by filming students on placements. This will enable students to access information and experiential evidence of sustainable design and Biophilia in action 24/7.

### Sharing your project

**Visual identity and brand:** Regeneration has its own visual identity, based on old engineering blueprint designs, plus its own video - all created by student interns.

**Online and social media:** The initiative is showcased on UoG website, Regeneration Facebook page and student blogs, YouTube video and promotion by partner Vision 21.

**Repair cafe publicity:** Gloucestershire and UoG media covered the launch story; it featured in the TV news show created by UoG Journalism students and in pop-up UoG sustainability displays held at Cheltenham Science Festival. Jonathan Porritt and our local MP attended its launch, and students repairing were filmed by BBC for Hugh Fearnley-Wittingstall's 'War on Waste', widening media coverage and public interest.

**Academic and sector activities:** The initiative was shared at UoG's annual EfS event and conferences/forums in London, Canterbury, Barcelona and Gibraltar.

*Dissemination Plans 16-17: social media, freshers fayre, Thread Counts exhibition, and RCE Severn events with local Royal Society of Arts partners/Cheltenham festivals.*

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

*"Gaining recognition as a Green Gown Award Finalist is a powerful affirmation that genuine commitment to Education for Sustainability must encompass redesign of the curriculum across all subject areas and help students build their own career employability. External, expert recognition to the creativity and commitment which staff and students have devoted to this project, encourages others to follow their example" – Vice-Chancellor, Stephen Marston.*

### Further information

For further information contact Dr Alex ryan, Director of Sustainability– [aryan@glos.ac.uk](mailto:aryan@glos.ac.uk)

Website: <http://sustainability.glos.ac.uk>

Facebook: @Uniglos Sustainability

Twitter: @uniglossustain