



Finalist's case study

University of Exeter – Career Zone Employability

Dip Dabble Dive and Thrive – integrating Sustainability in the extra curriculum



Profile

- Higher Education
- 21,273 students from more than 130 countries (includes full and part time students)
- 1800 academic staff and 2400 Professional Service Staff

About the project

Summary

The University of Exeter's Career Zone has developed a range of innovative 'sustainability learning for employability development' opportunities that students from any year and any discipline can engage with. These opportunities are available at a variety of levels, from dipping their toes in (dip) to fully submersing in the topic (dive). Engagement enables students to develop real skills, network with employers and professionals from the sector and this permeates the entire student journey, from pre-entry to post-graduation. These opportunities give all students a baseline understanding of the sustainability agenda and enables them to test their career ambitions. Students gain relevant experiences, fully explore the options and successfully compete in the graduate recruitment market thereby Thriving in the sustainability sector or implementing their learning in whichever sector they choose to work in.

Project partners

Internally – Career Zone, all six academic Colleges, HR, Global Engagement and Development, Innovation Impact and Business, the Students' Guild, Sustainability Vision Change Catalyst Group, Green Exeter

Externally – alum, local schools, businesses and charities such as *GroCycle*, *Exeter City Futures*, Public Health Devon, national organisations such as the NHS, Meteorological Office, Isle of Wight Festival, NFU, Mind your Head, Sugar Smart Cities

The results

The problem

Ensuring that students from any discipline have access to quality Sustainability Education in order for them to develop into 'Active Global Citizens; leaders able to effect change, think critically and solve problems' and develop the skills, attributes and behaviors required in the 21 Century workplace.

The approach

Dip – becoming an active global citizen with an awareness of sustainability through:

eXfactor – professional development course, mandatory for all first years (4,500 students), including the Sustainability Literacy Test, Sustainability in the Workplace session and 15% speakers from sustainability backgrounds. **Careers Fairs** – 10% exhibiting employers from sustainability sector, with nearly 6000 students attending fairs annually. **Expert** 20 alumni answering related e-questions in 2016-17. **Advertising graduate roles** 55 roles advertised in 2016-17

DABBLE – actively engaging and participating in the sustainability agenda:



Green Gown
Awards 2017



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Skills sessions eg Resilience, Sustainability, Social Enterprise, Time and Stress Management – 5% students attend, **ThinkTryDo** enterprise education and start-up support for social entrepreneurs. **Sprint** 300 women have benefitted from Sprint training since 2015, **Career Mentor Scheme** mentoring relationships with experienced sector professional in sector 2016-17, **Student Traders** – 6 students businesses set up in 2016-17, **Work placements** – 18 placements and internships advertised

DIVE – becoming a leader in the field of sustainability:

Green Consultants over 200 have benefitted from training and work experience, **Careers Nature Conservation** over 30 students have gained specific management and field skills in the biodiversity sector, **Grand Challenges** nearly 800 students have participated in sustainability challenges since 2014.

Our goals

To increase the number of graduates entering the sustainability sector, and to educate graduates entering every other sector so that they are able to use their skills and behaviors to influence their communities whatever they do when they graduate.

Obstacles and solutions

With the exception of eXfactor (Dip), all of the initiatives are optional for students; this means that we have not encountered problems with engagement – the range of initiatives on offer means there is something for everyone. Employers and Alum approach us to support these.

Performance and results

Impact: Our approach means that 95% of students will “dip” their toe into sustainability as a minimum; initiatives that were not specifically about sustainability have it threaded through them. Nearly 10% of students gain a more immersive ‘dive’ experience. This approach future proofs the integration of sustainability in the employability offering; we have an holistic approach, not one single activity, and it is embedded in the Career Zone’s delivery. It is robust, in itself sustainable and has a wide reach.

External Recognition for Innovation: Green Consultants (Dive) won the Reimagine Education Award for Sustainability 2016 and Grand Challenges (Dive) and our Climate Change MOOC (Dip) were both shortlisted. The Green Consultants team won the Impact Award at the University of Exeter Professional Services Recognition Awards in June 2017.

The future

Lessons learned

Sustainability Education is for all! Prospective students who attend Open Days, who may not even come to Exeter to study, are made aware of the opportunities on campus to engage with the education for sustainability agenda –provoking thought and encouraging participation. 2) Aspirational Educators Programme focuses on sustainability with Primary age children.

Top 3 learnings from implementing your project

1. Students are interested in different aspects of sustainability, requiring variety in the initiatives delivered.
2. Students from across HASS and STEM disciplines are fully engaged in the sustainability agenda.
3. Students have creative and challenging ideas; some of these have changed the way campus operates.

Sharing your project

PR around the Reimagine Education Gold Sustainability Award in particular has resulted in an increase in the number of employers contacting us to collaborate on the project or request student interns to help them improve their own delivery

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

Recognition of the impact of the range of employability initiatives delivered supporting sustainability education and celebration of the pan-University model of working that supports students in achieving their career ambitions and has a positive impact on campus and with a wide range of employers.

Further information

Dr Dawn Lees SFHEA, Career Zone, University of Exeter (dlees@exeter.ac.uk)

www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/sustainability