



Green Gown
Awards 2017



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Finalist's case study



The University of Manchester

Learning and skills

Whole institution sustainability
engagement through innovative
learning programmes

MANCHESTER
1824

The University of Manchester

Profile

- Higher education
- 39,700 students
- 12,315 staff
- Urban
- £987 million annual turnover

About the project

Summary

The University of Manchester is unique in British higher education in having social responsibility as a core strategic goal. As part of this, a pioneering whole institution sustainability skills and engagement programme has been developed through two signature programmes: i) *Sustainability Challenge* for all 1st year undergraduate students; ii) *10,000 Actions* programme accessible by all staff. This approach harnesses the University's large workforce and student body to change environmental-related behaviour.

Project partners

10,000 Actions and the Sustainability Challenge are impressive examples of cross-University working. Every part of the University has been involved in delivering these opportunities to our students and staff. Relationships have been forged which is paying dividends in work beyond these projects. This initiative has seen staff from across the University working together in different ways. 250 academic and administrative staff were involved in developing and delivering the Sustainability Challenge. Academics and non-academics worked with the University's Media Services team to develop ways to put across complex messages to all members of staff, regardless of role or educational achievement. This cross-University working was unprecedented.

The results

The problem

A small proportion of staff and students actively engaged with environmental sustainability.

The approach

The Sustainability Challenge and 10,000 Actions are unique in scope, scale and ambition as the only university to engage all of our staff and students in such a comprehensive learning and action approach. The Sustainability Challenge is offered in September to all 8,000 incoming first year students on their second day at

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the University. The Challenge immerses students in a highly interactive simulation activity, based on building a new campus for the fictitious University of Millchester. Students work in interdisciplinary groups of ten, against the clock, to develop recommendations for the new campus. They have to balance competing environmental, economic and social factors, tight budgets and restrictions to carbon emissions. Constructed TV News Features, Skype communications and replicated live twitter feeds created an evolving situation, forcing students to juggle new budget cuts, carbon caps, changes to planning requirements, and interference from an increasingly anxious University President.



High-end learning materials are streamed into 100 classrooms across nine buildings, to guide the students on their simulation activity and to ensure effective time-keeping throughout the day. A closing plenary session links the Sustainability Challenge to the real world, explaining its grounding in current University research, and highlighting the exciting ways in which students can continue to engage with the sustainability agenda. Ambitious in scale, innovative in the development of its content and delivery, the Sustainability Challenge creates a memorable student experience.

Launched in November 2016, 10,000 Actions is the UK's biggest sustainability initiative launched to higher education staff. It encourages learning and action around the key issues of sustainability. A pioneering learning platform was developed which includes seven videos: systems thinking, living campus, responsible purchasing, waste, energy, water and travel. The videos feature world-leading Manchester University academic experts alongside professional support staff. Each video ends with a series of a wide-range of staff from across the institution saying what action they take, a quiz and a discussion board where staff can discuss the theme in more detail. Every theme has a 'learn more' section which explores issues further.

10,000 actions

This learning section is followed by an action planning tool, which profiles what type of member of staff the user is through a series of demographic questions. It then provides a list of issues in the themes which users select and then rank in order of importance to them. The option to add own issues is also provided. Finally, the learner is then presented with an individual action plan, listing actions that they can take as a University member of staff.

Our goals

- To equip our graduates to address some of the profound ethical challenges of the 21st Century.
- To provide all 10,000+ members of University staff with the opportunity to engage in a programme of learning and positive action on sustainability.

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Performance and results

Sustainability Challenge	10,000 Actions
Student engagement on a wide scale: 60% of first years took part in the Sustainability Challenge, of these. 85% of students enjoyed the experience.	Increased engagement in environmental sustainability initiatives, 46% of staff have engaged with the programme. Previous staff sustainability engagement activities have only had a 3% engagement rate.
Supported staff and student partnerships: 250 academic and administrative staff were involved in the development and delivery of the challenge.	Increased commitment to action in order to reduce environmental impacts and increase positive impacts. Over 34,000 actions have been committed to and 5,000 actions have been completed or in progress.
Supported student engagement with and understanding of sustainability: 82% of students more aware of the complexity of sustainability issues after taking part.	Training for hard to reach staff: Almost 400 Estates and Facilities staff who do not have access to computers were provided with face-to-face sessions.
Supported student experience: students really enjoyed working with students from other courses and frequently highlighted this as a benefit of the Sustainability Challenge in their quantified feedback.	Supporting ambitions for low carbon Greater Manchester: The University of Manchester became the first Carbon Literate university in the world as a result of 10,000 Actions.

The future

Lessons learned

These skills and engagement programmes are regularly evaluated so improvements can be made. These include:

- Modifying the beginning of the Sustainability Challenge so students have a chance to meet more peers.
- Making the Sustainability Challenge more sustainable by providing water fountains for those taking part instead of bottled water.
- Changing software provider so that more interactivity can be included for staff in 10,000 Actions.
- Providing staff with a live dashboard so can instantly see the impact of actions taken.

Top 3 learnings from implementing your project

- Building in data collection at the beginning of the project reaps huge benefits later on.
- Engage with colleagues who need to be involved across the institution as soon as possible.
- Having a comprehensive communications plan with a strong brand helps with engagement.

Sharing your project

We are regularly contacted by organisations wanting to discuss our programmes for whole institution sustainability engagement. We have also undertaken some communications on a wide scale: our approach has been communicated at the EAUC annual conference, a session at the World Symposium on Climate Change

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Communications, in a book chapter in the Handbook of Climate Change Communication and in a number of presentations to different organisations in Manchester. A number of other organisations, including other universities, hospitals and local government have also expressed interest in our approach. In addition, Jim Tudor from the Future Index, has written about the Sustainability Challenge, calling it 'The World's Largest Classroom'. (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/worlds-largest-classroom-part-one-university-jim-tudor>).

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

We are delighted that our work in increasing the knowledge of sustainability amongst our staff and students has been recognised through this award. Congratulations to the staff and students who were involved in these projects. Your work is making a real difference and contributing to our goal of social responsibility.

Further information

- Email es@manchester.ac.uk
- Visit www.manchester.ac.uk/sustainability
- Twitter: @UoMSust
- Facebook: UoMSust
- Instagram: uomsust