

Bloomsbury Colleges

Category Best Newcomer

“Greenthing” – Shared Environmental Management System Implementation

Section 1 About the project

Summary

A project to employ a shared Environmental Manager post between five Bloomsbury Colleges of the University of London, implement a certified Environmental Management System, and initiate activities in staff and student engagement as well as supporting carbon management objectives and targets. Initially a 3 year project, its success has led to the commitment to a permanent role and continued projects for improvement.

The project includes monitoring our impact on the environment, implementing technical solutions to improve environmental performance and encouraging more sustainable behaviours in our staff and students.

This includes reducing the use of energy and water, minimising waste by thinking about what we buy and reusing things where we can, and making sustainable choices for travel such as cycling and public transport.

Project partners

- Birkbeck, University of London
- Institute of Education
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
- School of Oriental and African Studies
- School of Pharmacy

Section 2 The results

The problem

The five colleges in the Bloomsbury Consortium are all among the smaller institutions within the University of London. Individually it has been difficult for them to justify the expense of recruiting a full-time Environmental support post, and this has hindered implementation of environmental improvement projects.

The approach

By pooling resources from the five partners it has proved possible to recruit a full-time Environmental Manager and set up a range of projects to promote greater environmental awareness among students and staff. A consistent approach has been established towards gaining certification to an environmental



Profile

- HEI
- 23,440 students (includes full and part time students)
- 2500 staff
- Urban



management system (BS8555) across all five colleges, an achievement that would have been much more difficult to achieve individually.

Our goals

- Develop a consistent branded communications strategy across all five partner institutions.
- Create a permanent post of Environmental Manager to lead project work.
- Implement a recognized Environmental Management System and gain accreditation for all partners.
- Increase participation in environmental projects and raise awareness among the students and staff.
- Promote intercollegiate collaboration and knowledge sharing between all five partners.

Obstacles and solutions

Difficulty in agreeing a common baseline due to the differences in some of the colleges	A review was held at the outset of the project. This together with establishment of a Project Board of management across the colleges has led to strong commitment, knowledge sharing and to the colleges motivating each other to improve.
Providing adequate staff support across the five colleges	Offering 3 internship positions in the first year. This allowed students from our own and other institutions to gain valuable work experience.

Performance and results

The key benefit to the project has been in allowing work to be undertaken which otherwise would not have been possible. This has included:

- Developing a shared logo to allow consistent communications via a student competition
- Development of a shared website (www.bloomsbury.ac.uk/greenthing) and newsletter communicating current environmental projects and initiatives as well as tips and advice
- Phase 3 of BS8555 Environmental Management System standard achieved in first year and phase 5 expected in October this year
- Establishing a senior level project board for environmental decision making for the BS8555 system
- Hosting a shared Green Fayre, working with local environmentally aware businesses and organisations and communicating environmental best practice
- Increasing participation among staff and students to 80 staff and 365 students across the colleges from 0 at the start of the project
- Establishing active student green teams in 3 of the 5 institutions and allowing students to participate in teams at other colleges where there are not sufficient numbers at their own institution
- Hosting second hand sales and charity donations at halls of residence diverting 20 kg of waste from landfill and 17kg of CO₂ in its first year
- Engaging students at halls of residence in a competition to switch off
- Setting up a Facebook page for dynamic updates and discussion with an average of 15 people actively participating in weekly posts (previously no forum for active discussion in this area was available)
- Certification has been achieved as a group of institutions following the same environmental management structure, reducing the costs for the certification itself by over 60% but achieving the same environmental benefits
- Encouraging further collaboration between colleges, saving on consultancy costs (£12,000 between the colleges on CRC internal auditing alone) through economy of scale and minimisation of duplication

- Ensured legal compliance with environmental legislation
- Knowledge sharing across the institutions
- Minimise space requirements of the shared role through flexible working across the colleges and using a single portable laptop rather than traditional desktop environment

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

The chief lesson has been that, in the right circumstances, much more can be achieved through collaboration and the pooling of resources than by acting in isolation. The Bloomsbury Colleges are 5 small colleges within the University of London, unable to commit to the resources to undergo environmental improvement projects but with a strong desire to improve. These colleges pooled their limited resources and, with the support of HEFCE, took on a shared Environmental Manager at a cost of just £10,000 per institution per year, and embarked on implementing a certified Environmental Management System, something they would not have been able to consider without this project.

Sharing your project

- A shared website (www.bloomsbury.ac.uk/greenthing) and newsletter communicating current environmental projects and initiatives as well as tips and advice.
- The project is still ongoing and further opportunities for sharing our experiences in developing the project will be sought in 2013-14.

What has it meant to your institution to be highly commended at the Green Gown Awards?

Recognition by Green Gown for this project is very pleasing as it has coincided with the achievement of an important milestone: the attainment of BS8555 EMS certification by all five colleges, almost a year ahead of our project schedule. It provides a great incentive now to take this project to the next stages and to further improve our performance in all fields of sustainability and in the efficient use of scarce resources.

Further information

For more information about the Bloomsbury Colleges project please contact:

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