

# NUS Students' Green Fund

## Bristol SU Final Project Report



**BRISTOL SU**  
the best student life

**nus**  
**Students'**  
**Green Fund**



"I care about sustainability because I care about everyone. It's not just for nature – it's for ourselves- it's about being happy and healthy! We should be proud to represent Europe as Green Capital - and all contribute to this great achievement!"

Shruthi, Sustainability Officer 2014/15



"[I learnt] That I can do a lot more to be sustainable, and that even with a non-relevant degree I can still make my knowledge useful to sustainability."

Green Gauge Survey Respondent

"Sustainability is the most interesting and important challenge facing humanity today."

Jack, BUST President 2014/15

"Since a young age I've cared about the environment and did what I could to make a positive impact, from campaigning since the age of ten to now joining Bristol University Fossil Free and UBU Get Green's National Campaigns Group, amongst environmental volunteering."

Paloma, 1st Year geography student

"Being stuck in your own subject bubble gets boring. Going beyond that [...] to the Engage Cafés, volunteering, and in other strands makes university more interesting. You need to get outside of your own little world."

2nd Year Law Student

"I honestly enjoyed all of the parts of working and volunteering with Get Green! It was great fun and a really rewarding experience, when we could see that we actually changed someone's mind or told them something new that they had no idea about."

Green Gauge Survey Respondent



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## What is Get Green?

Bristol SU Get Green was a two-year project funded by the NUS Students' Green Fund. The NUS received £5 million of funding from HEFCE which was awarded to twenty-five students' unions across the country to, "develop ambitious greening projects, leading to step-changes in pro-environmental behaviour across higher education."

Bristol received approximately £175,000 of funding to create a transformational step change in student attitudes and behaviours towards sustainability and sustainable development. The primary focus of the Students' Green Fund was to tackle environmental sustainability issues, but SUs also touched upon social and economic issues.

Bristol SU received the funding in September 2013 and recruited a team of two full-time staff and one part-time staff to deliver the targets. Get Green worked in close partnership with the University of Bristol sustainability team throughout the two years to deliver a variety of programmes which increased student awareness of sustainability issues, including: [Education for Sustainable Development](#), energy, recycling and reuse.

Get Green developed a four-step approach to embedding sustainability into the student experience, which allowed the project to maximise its effectiveness and engage over 14,000 across the two years. This approach has been shortlisted for the [EAUC Green Gown Award](#) for Student Engagement.

**"Sustainable development**  
is development that  
meets the needs of the  
present without  
compromising the ability  
of future generations to  
meet their own needs."

Bruntland, 1987



*Bristol Knititative Knit-In, a Create Fund project led by students.*

## Why did Bristol SU get the funding?

University of Bristol had traditionally been committed to sustainability behind-the-scenes with a dedicated, award-winning sustainability team. However the University had varying levels of success in engaging students in environmental and social issues.

By partnering with Bristol SU, the knowledge of the sustainability team was combined with the student engagement expertise in the Students' Union to overcome this.

Get Green's primary aim was to engage and empower students to create positive sustainable change whilst they are at University and after they graduate.

We aimed to:

Enable more students to participate in sustainability actions

Build the capacity of the Students' Union to inspire and implement good sustainability practice amongst its membership

Equip students to become better citizens beyond their time at university

Provide a holistic approach to sustainability by also developing initiatives around ESD.

Get Green's key targets were:

1. 10% reduction in discretionary electricity use saving 450 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and £70,000 a year.
2. Increased recycling rates in Halls, 50% in year one raising it to 65% in year two of all waste.
3. 25 teams partaking in Green Impact in private landlord accommodation.
4. An Increased number of students engaged in sustainability activities.
5. A feasibility study on running a reuse charity shop that acts as a blue print for other Student Unions.
6. A business case established for the continuation of this project – justified by the money saved
7. Engagement with 500 students on ESD.
8. Divert waste from landfill through the Bristol Big Give by doubling 2013's total (9 tonnes) in year one.

## Measuring a 'Step-Change' in Student Engagement

The Get Green Team surveyed 500 students in 2013 (figure 1), before the project began, to assess the distribution of student understanding, attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable development.

Students were asked to select the DEFRA segmentation statement that they identified most with. The general public are usually evenly spread amongst each of these categories, however Bristol students showed an inclination towards the positive end of the spectrum, as showed in the table below.

The aim of Get Green was to shift this even further, so that a larger proportion of our students identify as 'Positive Greens'.

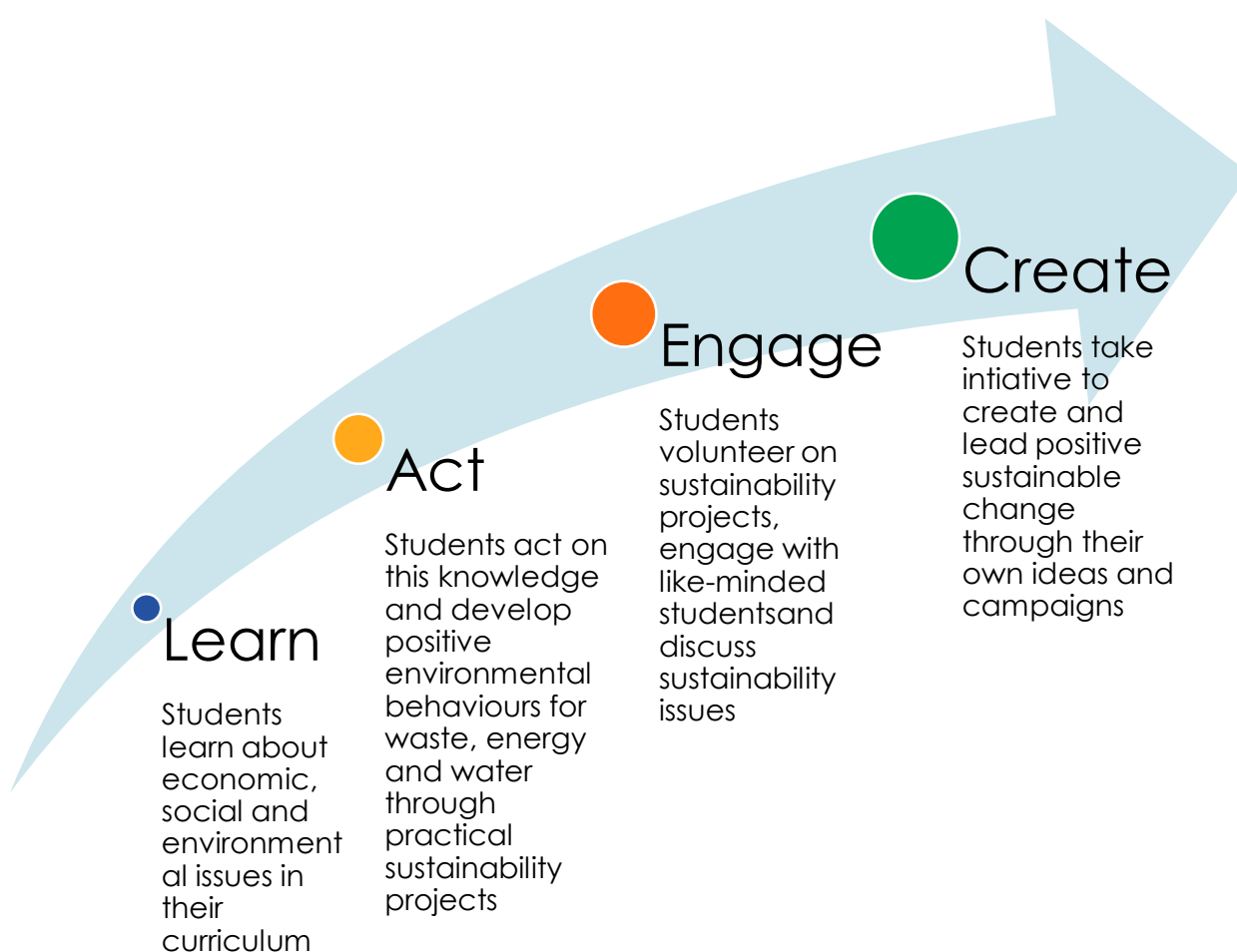
% Students	DEFRA Segmentation Statement	Segment
27%	I think there will be negative consequences if our society does not act urgently to solve environmental problems. I believe it is just common sense to behave in an environmentally responsible manner - I don't agree with people who say that it's just a fad. I already do a lot to help the environment and would be interested to find out if I can do a bit more.	1. Positive Greens
10%	Some claims made by environmentalists are exaggerated and I can often see both sides of the argument with regards to environmental issues. I conserve energy and water and I believe "waste not, want not" sums me ups quite well. I'm motivated mostly by the opportunity to save money.	2. Waste Watchers
20%	I think I'm quite environmentally minded, though I could do more. I worry a bit about climate change, but I think some environmentalists are too extreme - especially when they do things like encourage people to stop flying. I'm hopeful and optimistic that technology will help solve environmental problems.	3. Concerned Consumers
26%	I think we could face major environmental issues in the future and in general I don't think environmentalists have exaggerated the problems. Unfortunately, in the real world it's really hard to do always the best thing. I might do quite a lot of things that harm the environment but I often don't really have a choice.	4. Sideline Supporters
10%	I think there are major issues with the environment and I would like to do more to help. However, when you look around, most people just do their own thing. I think I'd do more if other people did more. I think the government could do more to help, too.	5. Cautious Participants
3.5%	To be honest, I'm much more concerned with what I'm doing today than something which may happen way off in the future to the environment. If anything extreme is going to happen, I don't see what I could do about it anyway.	6. Stalled Starters
1%	I don't think anyone really knows what's going on with the environment. It's not something that worries me or affects me. What I do has very little impact on the planet.	7. Honestly Disengaged

Figure 1: DEFRA Segmentation Survey Results 2013

## How did we deliver the project?

The team developed a four step approach to embedding sustainability into the University of Bristol student experience:

1. Students **learn** about sustainability through [Education for Sustainable Development \(ESD\)](#) in their curriculum
2. They **act** on their knowledge by participating in energy saving or recycling projects in halls and on campus
3. They **engage** with other students and discuss issues around sustainability through volunteering and attending a monthly sustainability network
4. They take the initiative to **create** and lead sustainable change



The four step approach gave Bristol SU a coherent way of talking about the project and increased the team's efficiency. In 2014/15, Get Green engaged over 10,000 University of Bristol students in sustainability issues.

Each step targets specific groups of students depending on their level of understanding of sustainability according to the DEFRA segmentation survey (figure

2), with the aim of taking them on a journey through the stages until they are a 'positive green'.

Strand	Description	Components	Target Segments*
<b>Learn:</b>	Through our ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) work in the formal and informal curriculum, loads of interesting talks, and CV-building student training we offer loads of opportunities to LEARN.	ESD, formal curriculum, student training	6. Stalled Starters 7. Honestly Disengaged
<b>Act:</b>	Whether its energy use or production of waste, it's important to ACT. Adopting new behaviours while at Bristol can save you time, money, and help out the planet, too.	Student Switch Off, Act Ambassadors, Bristol Big Give	2. Waste Watchers 5. Cautious Participants
<b>Engage:</b>	Get to know UBU Get Green at our monthly "Engage Café", volunteer through our UBU Get Green Core Team, and gain employability skills while making a difference in Bristol through our Student Green Capital Programme.	Volunteers, Engage Café, Bristol Green Capital 2015	3. Concerned Consumers 4. Sideline Supporters
<b>Create:</b>	Do you have your own sustainability idea that you need help getting off the ground? Do you want to change your curriculum, improve the infrastructure, or run a new campaign or event? Through our funding, staff support, and network we can help you CREATE your own vision of a Green Bristol.	Create Fund, enterprise/sustainability competition (hackathon)	1. Positive Greens

Figure 2: Targeting projects according to the DEFRA Segmentation



## Learn

In order to mobilise such a cohort of students we need to make sustainability relevant to each student by embedding social, economic and environmental sustainability issues in their curriculum. The LEARN strand of the Get Green project played a critical role in strengthening partnership work between Bristol SU, University of Bristol and the Cabot Institute (UoB's centre for multi-disciplinary research) to create a united approach to embedding sustainability in the curriculum.



*A Students' Guide to Sustainability Conference, May 2015*

Get Green aimed to increase student-led, peer-to-peer engagement for ESD curriculum change. A team of students interested in ESD work formed the Green Curriculum Team which increased awareness of Bristol's sustainability open unit and organised the inaugural 'A Students' Guide to Sustainability' conference, showcasing undergraduate and postgraduate sustainability-related research and attracting 60 attendees from a variety of backgrounds. Speakers included a second-year medical student who presented her research on prescribing nature for health. This student-led approach powerfully demonstrated to senior members of the University that students want to learn about sustainability in their curriculum.

## Act

As students began to see social, economic and environmental sustainability as relevant to them, Get Green gave them opportunities to reduce their impact through simple, practical projects as part of our ACT strand.

A team of twelve student staff knocked on every door in halls of residence speaking to over 2000 students about energy and waste saving and promoting the Student Switch Off competition. First year students were encouraged to engage in a few simple steps to save energy and increase recycling in order to win the competition. In 2014/15, the winning hall reduced their energy consumption by 17.5% and average recycling rates in all halls increased from 55% to 65%.



*Bristol Big Give Sorting Day, June 2014*

Students were able to reduce their impact in private accommodation by donating unwanted reusable items to the Bristol Big Give campaign at the end of the year. As students moved out of their accommodation for the summer they diverted over 80 tonnes of unwanted items, generating up to £200,000 for local and national charities. The 2015 campaign has diverted 25 tonnes from landfill in the first four weeks of the campaign.

A team of students interested in promoting shopping second-hand delivered three Love Bristol Fairs with the support of Get Green in 2014/15. Local charity shops were invited into the SU for a pop-up second hand market which attracted 1000 attendees across three events and raised over £4000 for local charity.

### Engage

The Get Green project maximises peer-to-peer sustainability engagement through our ENGAGE strand. Twenty student volunteers led their own projects with the support of the team, including the Fossil Free Bristol Uni campaign, community garden action days and the launch of a student bike loan scheme.

Over 285 students attended six Engage Cafes through the year to discuss social, economic and environmental issues with their peers, including divestment, Fairtrade and future cities. Each Engage Café was led by a different individual or group of students.



*Future Cities Engage Café, February 2015*

## Create

As students get together and begin to develop ideas at meetings and the Engage Café they can apply for funding from our Create fund (£7000 of funding for student-led projects). The CREATE strand itself developed 50 student leaders who reached almost 2000 students with their social, economic and environmental sustainability projects and campaigns.

The Fossil Free Bristol Uni campaign is a prime example of how Get Green provided a chance for like-minded students to meet and grow into a movement of over 1000 students campaigning for the University to divest from fossil fuels.

### The most important lesson we learnt?

The value of peer-to-peer, face-to-face engagement. Students talking to and engaging other students in sustainability has a much greater impact than a lecturer or staff member telling students they must do something. If our ambition is to create a shift in social norms, we need to maximise peer-to-peer engagement going forward



*Fossil Free Bristol Uni collecting signatures on their petition, February 2015*

## The Challenges

The Get Green team and project board believe there is potential for stronger sustainability engagement in halls, particularly in relation to recycling, but have been hindered by various factors within the halls' structure. We have learnt a great deal from our halls programming over the last two year and are setting out plans to embed sustainability across University of Bristol halls of residence over the next year.

The main area that Get Green saw little success from was the Green Impact project in privately-rented accommodation (20 steps). The 20 Steps Campaign had 80+ students register their interest and then 15 participated in the programme. The events and prizes proved very popular, however the website was difficult to use and the marketing campaign was not strong enough to engage students who weren't already interested in sustainability.

The Energy Dashboard we trialled as part of the project was delayed by DMU who were developing the software and in its current form it would not engage students in energy saving. There were also limitations with energy metering at our halls of residence which mean that real-time data was not possible.

There was a delay in gaining a strong web presence due to marketing restrictions and changes in staff. This may have hindered student sign up during the early stages of the project.

## Our Impact

Get Green has provided students with the opportunity to meet like-minded students, learn new skills and participate in sustainable action across campus. The project has been successful in engaging hard-to-reach groups (e.g. international and postgraduate students) by providing practical opportunities for them to develop their skills.

The project has created a cohort of graduates equipped with the skills and knowledge to make their future lives, communities and workplaces more sustainable.

The DEFRA segmentation surveys conducted in 2010, 2013 and 2015 (figure 3) demonstrate a significant step change in student understanding, attitude and behaviours towards sustainability.

44% of students identify themselves as 'Positive Greens' using the DEFRA segmentation survey, this shows that sustainability is firmly engrained in their values and beliefs beyond their University experience

The segmentation survey shows that 9% less students identify as 'Concerned Consumers' in 2015 compared to 2013. This can be attributed to an increase of peer-to-peer engagement, whereby 'Positive Greens' have been engaging and inspiring students who care about sustainability, but haven't previously acted upon their values, to change their behaviour.

Feedback in a survey conducted in April 2015 showed that students are more likely to act sustainability if they recognise sustainable behaviours in their friends and peers.

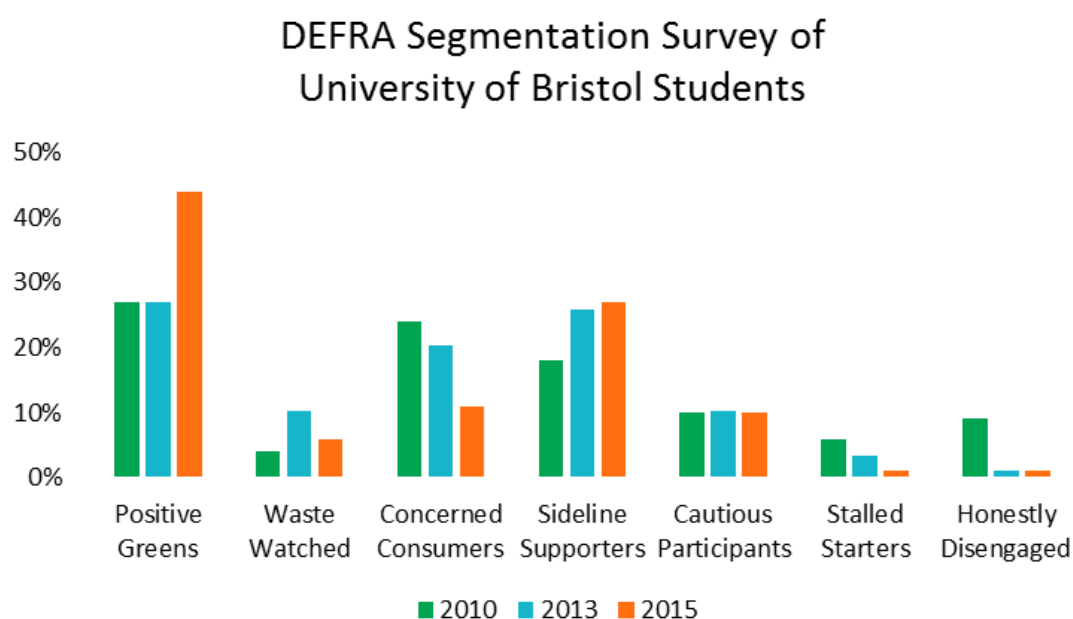


Figure 3: DEFRA Segmentation Survey Results from 2010, 2013 and 2015

Get Green has made significant progress in engaging University of Bristol students in sustainability issues. The SGF project provided capacity to engage over 10,000 students in sustainability issues and helped position Bristol SU as a leader for sustainability.

Get Green's four step model of student engagement has been critical in its success. It has supported and developed a strong cohort of change makers who have been engaging their peers in sustainability and creating change through their own campaigns.

By mobilising a huge number of students, Get Green has raised the profile of sustainability as a student priority at the University.

Bristol SU and the University of Bristol are looking forward to continuing to work together to create a culture of sustainability amongst our students.

***“The SGF project has moved student union activity to a new level, raising the level and profile of student action and also transforming the union. The achievements of our students through SGF support are now one of big stories university leaders tell. It has been instrumental in revolutionizing our understanding of what our students can achieve.”***

*Chris Willmore, Academic Director of Undergraduate Education*

### What would we do differently?

The SGF project board discussed this in depth at our final meeting and concluded with three things we would change if we were to run the project again:

1. 'Get Green' – we would choose a name that didn't include the word 'green' as we have found in surveys and through speaking to students that it has put some people off getting involved. Instead we would go along the theme of NUS' 'Responsible Futures'.
2. In an ideal world the project would have started much earlier, possibly around April 2013, to allow for planning and preparation prior to Welcome Week and term 1.
3. The Get Green project was spread across an array of themes and activities and at busier times this resulted in the team being spread very thinly. It would have perhaps been better to select fewer projects with a more specific focus and therefore potentially a more meaningful impact on students.

## Get Green in 30 Seconds

17% increase in recycling in halls (from 48% in 2012/13 to 65% in 2014/15)

6.6% energy saving in halls since 2013

Over 150 tonnes of reusable items diverted from landfill, generating up to £300,000 for local and national charities

Over 14,000 students engaged in sustainability across the two years

Over 200 University of Bristol and Bristol SU staff engaged in sustainability since 2013

Around 40% of students involved in Get Green were postgraduate

95% of students do at least one or two things that are environmentally friendly, up from 37% in 2010

44% of student identify as 'Positive Greens' in the DEFRA segmentation survey, an increase of 27% since 2013

60% have heard of Get Green and 35% see sustainability taught in their courses

20% of students say they have developed skills for graduate employment

38% say that Get Green has enhanced their University experience

47% of survey respondents report a change in habits and choices having been involved with Get Green

## What's Next?

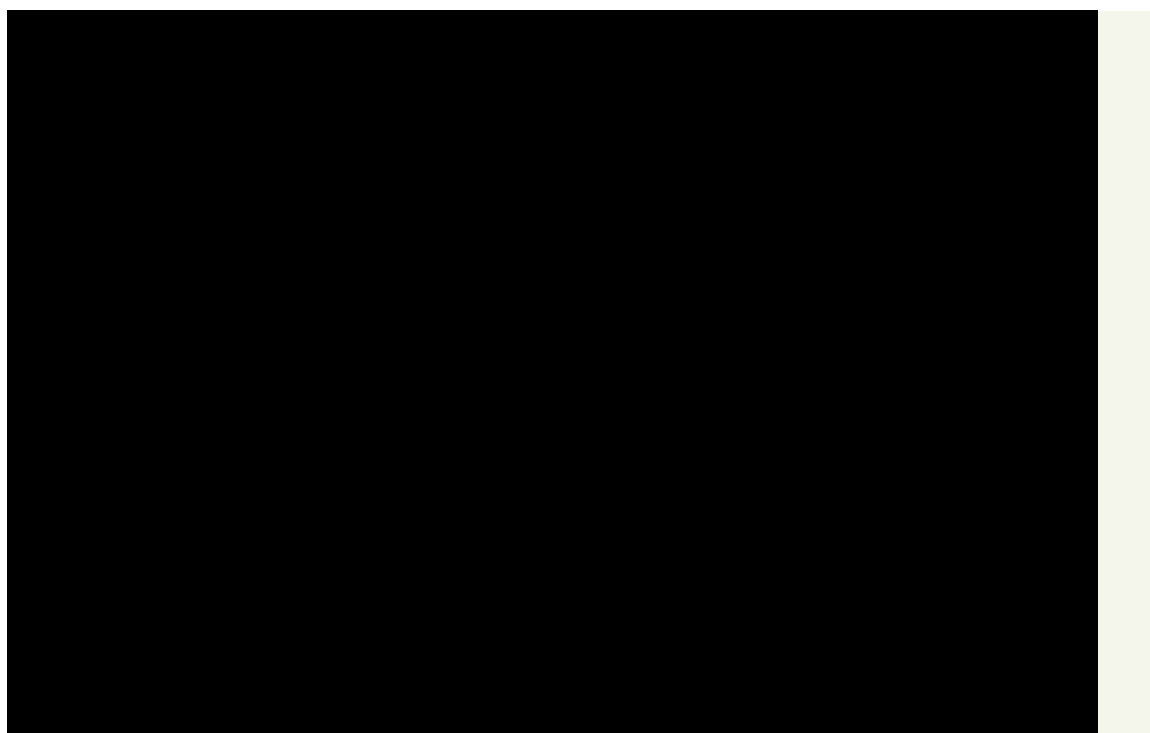
The four-step model created a journey for student engagement in sustainability. It played a crucial role in galvanising support from University leaders which has led to securing further funding to continue our student engagement work for the next academic year and allowed us to add extra capacity to the team to deliver additional projects to engage students during Bristol's year as European Green Capital.

At Bristol SU we are moving forward to focus on embedding sustainability into the organisational values. This will involve more training for course reps to equip them with the skills to change their curriculum to include more ESD; supporting student leaders to incorporate sustainability into their club or society; and training JCRs to lead the way in greening halls.

A motion was passed at Student Council for the formation of a Sustainability Committee, this is being developed by the Environment and Sustainability Officer. The committee will be a significant step forward in providing a space for students to collaborate and lead on Bristol SU sustainability and create a shift in social norms.

The University and SU have supported several student-led projects and campaigns that were initiated through student involvement in Get Green. For example, Bristol SU are supporting the development of a student bike loan scheme which was initiated by a team of students originally involved in the Get Green volunteer team.

The University is currently undertaking a review of its interdisciplinary offer and is looking to incorporate sustainability throughout the formal curriculum.

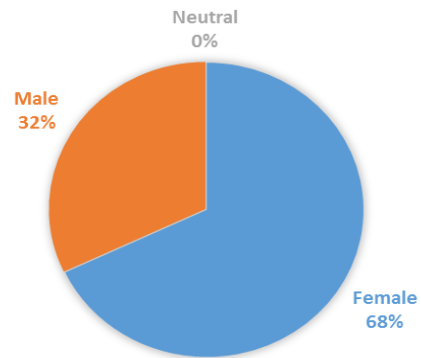




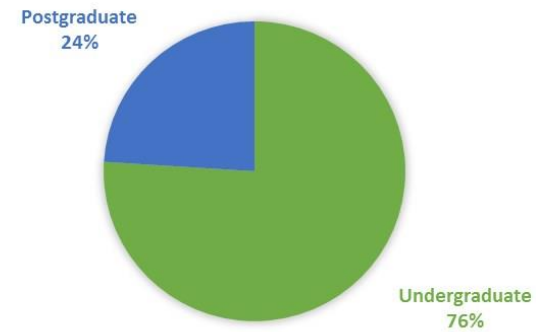
## Appendix

### Demographics of Engage Café Attendees in February and March events

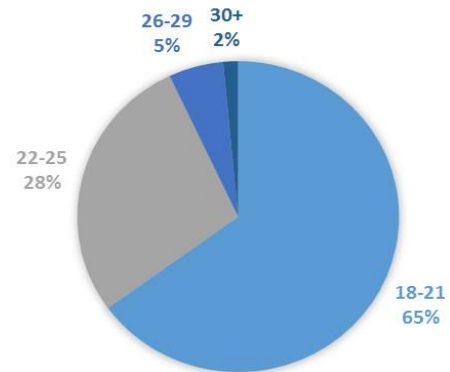
**ATTENDEE GENDER - FEB & MAR**



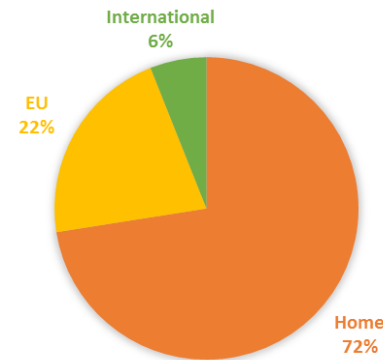
**ATTENDEE STUDY YEAR - FEB & MAR**



**ATTENDEE AGE RANGE - FEB & MAR**



**ATTENDEE ORIGIN - FEB & MAR**



## Breakdown of Student Engagement Statistics

STRAND	TARGETS	STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TARGETS		ACTUAL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT		PROJECT TOTAL
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	
<b>LEARN</b>						
Increase understanding of ESD among the student body and empower students to be change makers in the curriculum.	<b>Engage 500 students in ESD (soft-touch, for example through surveys)</b>	500	100	500	60	<b>560</b>
	<b>Establish an academic focussed committee</b>	-	6	-	6	<b>6</b>
	<b>Deliver a student-led conference</b>	-	-	-	57	<b>57</b>
	<b>Embed ESD in Bristol SU programmes with a particular focus on Course Rep Training</b>	-	-	-	30	<b>30</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>500</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>653</b>
<b>ACT</b>						
Change sustainability behaviours around energy and waste by engaging students in fun and positive programmes.	<b>6% in Y1 and 10% in Y2 energy reduction in halls through Student Switch Off</b>	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>Increased recycling rates in halls to 50% in Y1 and 65% in Y2 through Student Switch Off</b>	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>Y2: Act Ambassadors hired to engage peers and deliver waste/energy programmes</b>	-	12-15	-	12	<b>12</b>
	<b>500 students engaged face-to-face through Student Switch Off door knocking each year</b>	500	500	3000	2000	<b>5000</b>
	<b>20 tonnes (Y1) and 40 tonnes (Y2) of waste diverted from landfill through Bristol Big Give</b>	-	-	400	650	<b>1050</b>

	<b>Y2: Conduct two pilot projects for the LoveBristol second hand shop to complete the feasibility study by January 2015, total 400 attendees across both</b>	-	400	-	1000	<b>1000</b>
	<b>Y2: Deliver 3 energy and waste library roadshows in term 2</b>	-	60	-	250	<b>250</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>500</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>3400</b>	<b>3912</b>	<b>7312</b>
<b>ENGAGE</b>						
Provide volunteer opportunities for students to make a difference in their community (at the University and in the City) and foster the development of a "sustainability community" for students.	<b>Y1: Deliver a series of upcycling events</b>	-	-	800	-	<b>800</b>
	<b>Y2: Establish a vibrant monthly Engage Café community based on the Café Scientifique model with at least 40 attendees per event (with a target of 60 for the first event)</b>	-	260	-	285	<b>285</b>
	<b>Y2: 30 students engaged in Green Capital Sustainability Skills Programme (BEAT)</b>	-	30	-	26	<b>26</b>
	<b>Y2: Engage 90 students in delivering at least 3 local or national campaigns to engage</b>	-	90	-	235	<b>235</b>
	<b>Y2: Support a core volunteer team to lead on projects</b>	-	12	15	20	<b>35</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>1381</b>
<b>CREATE</b>						
Support student leadership through staff support and funding to make students' ideas become a reality.	<b>Y2: Give out £7000 through the Create Fund to at least 18 student-led sustainability projects between January and June 2015 (6 rounds of funding, 1 per month for over £250, less than £250 on a rolling basis, averaging at least 3 successful bids per month ranging of up to £1000)</b>	-	18 projects	-	9 projects	-

		-	50 leaders	-	46	<b>46</b>
		-	500 students reached	-	1652	<b>1652</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1698</b>	<b>1698</b>
<b>OTHER</b>						
Have a physical presence at UBU and UoB events to reach out to students.	<b>Have a stall at: Welcome Fair, Student Councils, Annual Members Meeting, UBU Roadshow in Halls and 500 students to the ad-hoc volunteer list</b>	-	500	60	645	<b>645 (cum.)</b>
	<b>500 Facebook likes on the Get Green page</b>	-	500	164	604	<b>604 (cum.)</b>
	<b>500 Facebook likes on the Bristol Big Give page</b>	-	500	355	538	<b>538 (cum.)</b>
	<b>800 newsletter signups</b>	-	800	600	1911	<b>1911 (cum.)</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>2300</b>	<b>1179</b>	<b>3698</b>	<b>3698</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1000</b>	<b>4323</b>	<b>5894</b>	<b>10,027</b>	<b>14,742</b>