

Coventry University Courses Humanitarian Sustainability

Section 1 About the project

Summary

Humanitarian Sustainability is included in a suite of the University's employability modules to teach students the importance of sustainability in humanitarian situations. It looks at sustainability in a range of circumstances from pre-disaster preparedness through Corporate Social Responsibility to the provision of relief in post-disaster situations.

It focuses on developing sustainable, culturally sensitive, appropriate solutions to address social issues in communities with significant needs. It can be applied at a local, national or international level.

Project partners

A number of NGOs have contributed to the development of the modules and materials delivered to students including Engineers Without Borders UK (EWB-UK), WaterAid, Save the Children, Rapid UK, Architects for Humanity, RedR UK, Engineers Against Poverty, The Royal Academy of Engineering and The Happold Trust.

Section 2 The results

The problem

Traditional notions of humanitarian engineering are linked to helping those in marginalised communities. At Coventry University we wanted to develop this further to ensure that our curriculum and teaching helps develop students who are more culturally aware and more gender sensitive, not just in developing countries but in all areas. We're keen to ensure that our engineering graduates are able to support, rebuild and redress a situation where communities may need assistance.

The approach

The project began as the development of a single module with one NGO partner to broaden the education of engineers, however this soon developed into a 'Humanitarian Sustainability Journey' available to all students across the University.

This project is very unique in its partnership-led approach. We're engaged with over 10 NGO partners and have two teaching fellows working on this area from the Royal Academy of Engineers. We also have a visiting professor, who is a Humanitarian Engineering expert, who has worked in industry for many years designing and building refugee camps.



Coventry
University

Profile

- HEI
- 22,554 students (including full and part time)
- 2,676 staff
- Urban

Winner's case study

Our goals

We aim to further establish Humanitarian Sustainability within the Engineering Curriculum. We currently have a Masters in development that further builds upon what we do with our existing suite of modules.

Performance and results

The partnership approach with NGOs has ensured that the student experience on the Humanitarian Sustainability Journey has been around 'application' and real problems encountered when attempting to deliver humanitarian work in a sustainable way. Over 400 students attended these modules over 2 years and we are doubling the number of deliveries of them next year due to their popularity.

The feedback from students has indicated that this method of delivery, centred around real situations, often delivered by members of NGO's, is highly appreciated and prized in comparison to some dryer textbook-based approaches to the topic.

Additional results include:

- The project has resulted in National and International recognition with a UNITWIN Network with 18 partners in over 5 countries.
- In 2012, Coventry University won the UK EWB Challenge with 5 students winning a month trip to India. In 2013, Coventry University not only hosted the UK EWB finals but had a team come in second place, again highlighting the success and student dedication to the Humanitarian Sustainability work.
- Coventry University is underpinning its Humanitarian Sustainability Journey with applied research in this field with 3 internally funded PhD students joining the group.

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

This topic area is well liked by students who enjoy investigating how their engineering skills can be used to support communities in need. Students like the option of taking a Humanitarian Sustainability Journey and looking at different situations where these skills can be applied.

Sharing your project

- We have already run a series of internal events within the University to raise awareness of the work that is being done and these will be repeated.
- The Global Dimensions Engineering Education programme has used the work we are doing at Coventry University in their case studies.
- Through our recently awarded UNITWIN Network, over the next 6 years we will be running a series of conferences which will have global dissemination and replication of the work at their heart.

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

Winning a Green Gown Award is further confirmation that Humanitarian Sustainability is an issue that we should continue to champion. It reinforces our view that our teaching in this area adds significant value to our students in preparedness for the next phase of their careers.



Green Gown
Awards 2013

Winner's case study

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