



Green Gown  
Awards 2014

Finalist's case study



Dissemination  
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# The Sheffield College Facilities and Services The Green Trail

## Section 1 About the Project

### Summary

The Green Trail is an induction activity that raises awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability. It does this by familiarising students with the College, its grounds and the impressive green technology used in the building in which they study.

Students use a guide and hand held devices to independently find information hidden in QR codes around the campus.

### Project partners

The project was part funded by a NUS Green Fund project called Sheffield on a Plate, a partnership project involving the Sheffield College, Hallam University, Sheffield University and local community organisations.

## Section 2 The results

### The problem

Like many other organisations in the UK tertiary education sector, The Sheffield College has made great strides in greening its estate. The City College site, built in 2010, has many green technologies such as solar panels, green roofs, rainwater harvesting, food waste composting, energy saving lighting etc. However the most visible green feature is the three wind turbines on the roof. These make the building stand out on the city skyline. The problem was that the strong statement about environmental sustainability made to the city by the prominent wind turbines was not always matched by the activity in the building, in other words, the understanding, behaviours and culture of both staff and students.

### The approach

To have maximum impact and reach the most students, the Online College worked in conjunction with Estates and the tutorial team to devise and deliver The Green Trail. By developing an activity for the Induction programme to be delivered by the tutorial team to all new students, it meant they would immediately be made aware of the building and its green technology. It would also make clear the importance the College places on environmental sustainability.

The Online College has a history of producing high quality interactive resources and using technology to enhance learning. We wanted students to engage with the activity, to work in pairs and to an extent work independently outside the classroom.



The Sheffield  
College

### Profile

- FE
- 23,570 students (includes full and part time students)
- 1350 staff
- Urban

Twitter:

TheSheffieldCollege@sheffcol

Facebook:

<https://facebook.com/thesheffieldcollege>

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We also wanted to keep the technology simple, so we wrote and designed a highly attractive Green Trail guide with directions to different locations in the building and on the campus.

The guide also included a number of questions. Students could find the answers to the questions by reading information from posters and QR codes that were fixed at the various locations. The idea was that students would use their own mobile phone to download a QR reader and access the codes.

### Our goals

- to engage both staff and students in environmental sustainability
- to begin to embed it into the curriculum via the tutorial programme where it would have maximum impact, reaching all new students
- to have the posters and QR codes as permanent features within the building and around the campus
- to have a resource that could be used for all new staff as well and visitors to the College.

### Obstacles and solutions

Obstacles	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting the tutorial team to feel comfortable delivering the activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We delivered a number of training sessions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many students and staff didn't have smart phones so were unable to download the QR reader app.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We bought some tablets for use with the Green Trail</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutor mentors wanted more information about environmental sustainability to extend the activity and for their own understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We created more resources and now the activity stretches across a number of sessions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some of the locations students thought were hard to find</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Signwriting Department produced some green footprints to highlight the locations</li> </ul>

### Performance and results

- The Green Trail is now fully established in the Induction programme and delivered to all full time students at City College (approx. 2750 students)
- The response from students and staff has been overwhelmingly positive
- The Online College has been asked to produce further materials for the tutorial programme about environmental sustainability
- There have been requests from other College sites to produce similar resources

- The success of the resource within the College and the attention it has received regionally and nationally has resulted in a more general appreciation within the organization of the importance of embedding education for sustainable development and an invitation to take part in the NUS pilot called 'Responsible Futures', a new sustainability accreditation award.

## Section 3 The future

### Lessons learned

- Use every opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability
- All areas of the institution benefit from a student and staff body who have a deeper understanding of the importance of environmental sustainability and respect for the building and grounds within which they work and study
- Work co-operatively and inclusively across the institution
- Keep the delivery method and the technology simple

### Sharing our project

The Green Trail has now been presented at a number of local, regional and national events and conferences. Individuals have contacted us about replicating the idea within their own organisations.

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

"We are committed to sustainability and raising awareness among our students and staff, as well as embedding the subject into our curriculum. The Green Gown Awards are a hallmark of good practice and excellence within the education sector nationally. We're delighted to have been shortlisted for this year's awards."

Heather MacDonald, Chief Executive, The Sheffield College

### Further information

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