



Engaging students with sustainability – a good practice guide for EECs

Getting students engaged with sustainability initiatives is a great way to bring different ideas and perspectives to the work you are doing to make your Department more sustainable. There are around 20,000 students at the University and their involvement and participation is important if the University is to achieve its environmental targets (as set out in the [Environmental Sustainability Vision, Policy and Strategy](#)).

In our 2016 student engagement survey, 30% of the 900 students who responded told us that they would like to do more in order to become more sustainable. Getting more students engaged will allow the culture of sustainability to become even more embedded within your Department.

Times of change in someone's life provide good opportunities to encourage behaviour change¹ – and so there is real scope to reach new students. You can use the [induction materials](#) provided by the Environment and Energy Section to make your new students aware of the University's environmental sustainability targets and what they can do to help achieve them. It also gives you a useful opportunity to engage students who may want to help you with your goals as EEC, if this is of interest to you.

Good practice examples:

- The Gurdon Institute invites all new staff and students to sign a sustainability pledge. There is more information about this initiative [here](#).
- The Department of Geography's Green Impact team student reps have written about their experience for the Department's student-written magazine. They also carried out surveys of students in the Department to see how effective their proposed changes would be, including one on how frequently the vending machines were being used and another on whether students found the signage on recycling facilities to be clear. Other Departments also have student members in their Green Impact teams.
- The EEC in the Faculty of MML sends a regular bulletin to students, including an introductory/welcome bulletin at the start of each academic year. A number of other Departments use noticeboards, digital signage, bulletins and newsletters to keep students and others within the Department informed.
- Some University Departments give new students the same induction on environmental sustainability as they do for new staff (e.g. CIMR, Paediatrics).
- Some Departments show their new students where they can find the recycling areas and notice boards with 'environmental' notifications (e.g. Epidemiology Unit, CIMR).

Messages:

- Focus on 'responsible' or 'sustainable' behaviours to avoid overusing the term 'green', and be clear these are expected behaviours (rather than something nice to do for those interested).
- Students should be aware that their involvement in sustainability initiatives is welcomed and encouraged, and that there are a lot of opportunities to do this at various levels and in a variety of ways.

¹ Darnton, A, Verplanken, B, White, P and Whitmarsh, L (2011). Habits, Routines and Sustainable Lifestyles: A summary report to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. AD Research & Analysis for Defra, London.





Tips:

- Keep students (and staff!) up-to-date with progress – report on what is being achieved and where new input can be added.
- Hold a launch event or gathering so that students can find out more information and meet the EEC and Green Impact team within their Department.
- Encourage senior staff within the Department to promote sustainability activities.
- Identify ways of linking sustainability projects to academic activities (principally through the [Living Laboratory for Sustainability](#)).
- Celebrate the achievements and successes your team has, and share best practice with others.
- Encourage people to make pledges or personal commitments.
- Offer a range of opportunities – fun events, competitions between teams, developing and running own projects.
- Consider if there are any barriers or challenges that may prevent students from getting involved, for example:
 - are meetings held at times which are inconvenient/impractical?
 - are students fully briefed on what they are expected to do?
 - are students given a chance to pursue their own ideas?
 - are they provided with the resources they need (e.g. are they given access to communications resources)?
- Engage student representatives on relevant Departmental committees, and ensure that they know the EEC and Building Manager and that they can approach them with ideas.

Other resources:

- The Environment and Energy Section has produced engagement [resources](#) and a set of [tips for energy-related behaviour change](#).
- The [Living Laboratory for Sustainability](#) allows students to undertake academic and voluntary projects across the year, as well as offering paid internships and practical experience.
- Students can sign up to receive the [Greenlines newsletter, like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter](#). Send students these links to keep up-to-date with relevant news, events and opportunities





Opportunities to engage students throughout the academic year:

Before the start of Michaelmas Term	September / October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all posters, stickers etc. are up-to-date and replace where necessary. • If you need more posters or stickers, you can request them via environment@admin.cam.ac.uk. • Include sustainability information in student handbooks and on relevant webpages ready for the coming academic year.
Start of Michaelmas Term	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induct new students in sustainability. • Use the E&E presentation templates and fill in with your own details where necessary. • Contact students to remind them of some best practice tips and of any upcoming opportunities.
Departmental bulletins	Throughout the term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let your students what is going on within the Department and how they can get involved. • Share any relevant updates or events. • Introduce them to the key people within the Green Impact team / the EEC.
Green Impact Launch	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend the event to hear more about this. • Promote the event to your students.
Green Impact Project Assistants (GIPA)	October / November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the opportunity to your students. • Have a GIPA support your Green Impact team.
'Spotlight on' month	November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run an event in your Department in conjunction with the Environment and Energy Section. Contact environment@admin.cam.ac.uk for more information.
End of Michaelmas Term	December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let students know what you have achieved as a Department over the course of the term.
Before start of Lent Term	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all posters, stickers etc. are up-to-date and replace where necessary. • If you need more posters or stickers, you can request them via environment@admin.cam.ac.uk.
Start of Lent Term	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact students to remind them of some best practice tips and of any upcoming opportunities.
Cambridge Climate and Sustainability Forum	Lent Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make students aware of this event.
'Spotlight on' xx month	February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run an event in your Department in





		conjunction with the Environment and Energy Section. Contact environment@admin.cam.ac.uk for more information.
CUSU Ethical Affairs Chair election	March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure that students are aware of the opportunity.
Living Lab internships recruitment	February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure that students are aware of the opportunity.
End of Lent Term	March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let students know what you have achieved as a Department over the course of the term.
Before start of Easter Term	March / April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all posters, stickers etc. are up-to-date and replace where necessary. • If you need more posters or stickers, you can request them via environment@admin.cam.ac.uk.
Start of Easter Term	April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact students to remind them of some best practice tips and of any upcoming opportunities.
Green Impact Auditor Recruitment	April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure that students are aware of the opportunity.
'Spotlight on' month	May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run an event in your Department in conjunction with the Environment and Energy Section. Contact environment@admin.cam.ac.uk for more information.
Green Impact Celebration	June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend the event to share good practice with other Departments. • Invite the student members of your Green Impact team.
Student engagement survey	June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the survey to your students so that we can measure how engaged students are with sustainability initiatives throughout the University.
End of Easter Term	June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let students know what you have achieved as a Department over the course of the term, and the academic year as a whole.

