

# SUSTAINABILITY EXECUTIVE REPORT

January 2024

**THE STUDENTS'  
UNION**  
AT UWE

# ACCREDITATIONS

## Green Impact

Green Impact is a sustainability and social responsibility programme run by Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS-UK). Through participating in Green Impact Students' Unions (GISU), students' unions demonstrate how they continue to lead on sustainability initiatives.

The Students' Union at UWE has been awarded Excellent ranking for Green Impact Students' Union 2022-23 for the 8th year in a row. This is the highest level you can achieve.

We are also delighted to announce that The Students' Union at UWE are the winners of a GISU Special Award for "The Highest Scoring Students' Union", for the seventh year in a row!

Following our success in our Green Impact Accreditation last year, we are on the journey again to complete Green Impact by May 2024. Thank you to Tom and Abbie for meeting with us to progress our carbon footprint calculations.

## Responsible Futures

We were audited for SOS-UK's Responsible Futures Accreditation at the end of last academic year, 2022-2023.

Responsible Futures is a whole-institution approach to embedding social responsibility and sustainability across the formal and informal curriculum across both HE and FE. It is a supported change programme and accreditation mark that works to put sustainability at the heart of education. As part of the accreditation process, each Partnership must undergo a two-day audit. The purpose of the audit is to determine the partnership's score, accreditation level, and conduct in-depth research on the impact of Responsible Futures through:

- A documentary review of evidence to verify score
- Interviews with key individuals
- A student focus group

There are 55 total criteria, of which 9 are mandatory and must be completed to achieve accreditation and 46 are optional. Three criteria are self-defined meaning that the partnership can highlight unique actions they have taken which are not discussed through other criteria.

To achieve the Responsible Futures Accreditation Mark, the Partnership must meet or exceed the score threshold of **220 points**, out of the maximum 355 points.

The University of the West of England and the Students' Union at the University of the West of England have a draft score and therefore retaining the Responsible Futures Accreditation with a score of 313.

"I think the partnership made a great effort to gather a diverse range of information along with the evidence to retain the accreditation." - *Student Auditor, University of the West of England and The Students' Union at the University of the West of England Responsible Futures Audit 2023*

# SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER

Chela Rossi (she/her) is our Sustainability Officer for 2023/2024.

<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/support/parttimeofficers/sustainabilityofficer/>



Chela is campaigning to save the below area (outlined in red) for rewilding. The 9.5-hectare site is on Frenchay campus and is currently set aside for development. The “rewilding” site would be accessible to students for wellbeing, research and of course, wildlife. Think of it as a sort of mini-nature reserve! You can see the student idea live [here](#).



## SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Chela, our Sustainability Officer, chairs The Students' Union's Sustainability Committee. This student-led team meet to discuss key projects and campaign topics. The Committee members were selected back in October and received their campaign training in early December. The Committee have chosen to focus their campaign this year on UWE's greenspaces and will be planning their campaign for delivery in March 2024.

## WELCOME AND CLIMATE EDUCATION

As part of Starting Block, The Students' Union contributed to the launch event of the new Climate Education Module and posted a blog post highlighting key takeaways from the event, as well as a social media competition encouraging students to sign to the module.

<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/news/article/thesuatuwe/Climate-Education-at-UWE-Bristol-launched-through-successful-event/>

The Green Team had a busy welcome period of events and being present and engaging with students at the three welcome fairs.

## GREEN FORTNIGHT

Green Fortnight was a success, thank you to Vicki Harris for this collaboration.

<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/news/article/thesuatuwe/Green-Fortnight2023/>

Over 1,200 students attended 51 events over the two-week period. We held dedicated seminars, activities, drop-ins, workshops and the events were all centred around educating our community on sustainable practices as well as tackling the climate crisis and protecting nature.

Highlights include:

- 98 students signed up to our sustainable period trail during Green Fortnight
- 106 students used the Placement Uniform Swap Shop at Glenside
- Over 600 of students explored the Hell Bus (an interactive art installation by artist Darren Cullen) and learnt about greenwashing and sustainable banking

## GREEN TEAM ACTIVITY

The Green Team have run a variety of events from September through December, with Green Fortnight and Welcome being our biggest projects.

Our regular events have been running well, with Frenchay Community Garden sessions attracting a range of students and Greenspace conservation volunteering days had a fantastic impact on the local woodlands. We are proud to add that our Greenspace volunteers have been awarded the South Gloucestershire Council Chair's Community Award - which recognises and celebrates the valuable contribution local unpaid volunteers make to life in South Gloucestershire.

We have been running more bulb planting drop-in sessions due to its success during Welcome. It is a great event for facilitating conversations about The Green Team and reaching those without a pre-existing interest in sustainability.

## GREENER FUTURES

Greener Futures is The Students' Union's sustainability competition for Sports Clubs and Societies. We have 17 sports clubs and societies signed up for Greener Futures this year. They have now started the competition and they are working their way through the workbook of sustainability challenges.

## 3C's: CLIMATE CONVERSATIONS AND CAKE

Our Sustainability Officer (Chela) and Student Sustainability Engagement Coordinator (Laura) have been working with Dr Sara Williams and Vicki Harris (and numerous UWE Bristol colleagues) to run Climate Conversation and Cake. During the first term we ran three sessions. We were excited to work with an alumni, who studied at Bower Ashton, to run a craft themed session where students could come and talk about the Climate Crisis whilst crafting. The craft element created an environment that allowed conversation about the climate crisis to flow more naturally. For our third session we watched 'North of the Sun', a film that allows you to rethink our use of waste in a light-hearted way.

## COMMUNITY CORNER AT BOWER ASHTON

The Students' Union has set up a new Community Corner at Bower Ashton Campus to replace the previous Students' Union shop space (the shop is now located with the café). The Community Corner is our new 'sustainability hub' open to our student and staff community to enable access to free Cost of Living products such as our Community Larder (where students can take up to 5 household items at one time), our plastic-free sustainable period products (eliminating the cost barrier to a sustainable and inclusive period) and condoms. There is also a Bring Your Own Cup provision to make hot drinks. A permanent clothes and book swaps are key features of the Community Corner. The Community Corner is open 10:00 -15:00 Monday-Friday, B Block Bower Ashton Campus.

<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/aboutus/campuses/citycampus/communitycorner/>

You can watch a tour of the space here: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2fHC8-su7i/>

You can see a video showcasing the launch event here:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2j3iApsKuv/>

## EAUC GREEN GOWN AWARDS

UWE Bristol and The Students' Union were awarded the big prize of 'Sustainability Institution of the Year' at [EAUC's Green Gown Awards](#). In its 19th year, the 2023 awards, presented in collaboration with UK Research and Innovation, occurred in Liverpool on 30 November and recognises Sustainability Excellence in Tertiary Education.

In addition, The Students' Union at UWE and UWE Bristol were Highly Commended in "Creating Impact" Category for "Circular economy in action!" – [read more here about our work](#) on the new Sustainability Hub, Placement Uniform Swap Shop and ethical fashion!

The Students' Union at UWE Bristol were also a finalist for our [sustainability period work](#) and in collaboration with UWE for work on [climate anxiety](#) (Climate, Conversations and Cake (the 3C's)), a

successful campaign in which students' emotional reactions to the climate emergency were listened to and prioritised.

The Students' Union were also shortlisted for our work on inclusive access to period products and sustainable periods.

## SUSTAINABLE PERIODS

The Students' Union continue to partner with UWE Bristol to provide students and staff with access to free, single-use, plastic free and organic period products across the 5 campus sites. We have negotiated with Cleaning Services to add additional toilet locations to our provision.

We are also re-running our successful sustainable period product trial, giving students and staff the opportunity to receive a free sustainable period product. This year the options are menstrual cups, period pants, reusable pads and sterilising pots for those who already own a menstrual cup. Since the trial restarted in October 2023, we have had 301 sign ups. Our period stalls which give students and staff an opportunity to collect free organic, eco-friendly single use products and learn more about the trial has enabled us to partake in meaningful conversations around sustainable periods and give further advice on how they can reduce their plastic waste during menstruation.

For further information on the trial and how to sign up to it can be found here: [Sustainable Period Products \(thestudentsunion.co.uk\)](https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk)

## VALUES AND STRATEGY

The Students' Union are delighted that our commitment to sustainability is part of our new values set for our Strategic Plan to 2026.

### Our Values

- We put students first
- We drive change
- We are inclusive and diverse
- We are committed to sustainability

*Values are unique, representing what our organisation stands for. Values are how you make decisions.*



<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/aboutus/mission-values-and-strategy/>

## Our Behaviours

- Supportive
- Empowering
- Agile
- Accountable
- Creative and fun

*Behaviours are actions. Behaviours are the practical application of our values – translating them into day-to-day actions. Behaviours are the detail of what we expect our people to do.*



## ACTION PLAN

The Students' Union's annual sustainability action plan for 2023-2024 can be found on our Students' Union website.

<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/sustainability/sustainabilityactionplans/>