

SUSTAINABILITY EXECUTIVE REPORT

May 2023

**THE STUDENTS'
UNION**
AT UWE

ACCREDITATIONS

The Students' Union at UWE has submitted [two sustainability accreditations in the last month](#). We look forward to our subsequent audits over the next two months. Thank you to all UWE Bristol and Students' Union colleagues who have supported the evidence gathering process. Our students will be auditing our SOS-UK Responsible Futures Accreditation on 16-17 May, we look forward to sharing our report with the Sustainability Executive in due course. Our Green Impact submission will be reviewed by SOS-UK staff auditors in the next month, we are seeking to retain our Excellent rating and remain the highest scoring Students' Union.

CLIMATE EDUCATION

The Students' Union at UWE are actively contributing to the working group creating the launch event for the new climate education module. We are reaching out to potential speakers and shaping the look and content of this event.

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

The Students' Union at UWE are very proud of the recent annual campaign organised by the student Sustainability Committee. ['Sustainable Food for All'](#) took place during March 2023 and involved 8 different events and activities, engaging a total of 810 students.

Please find key highlights below:

- **Healthy and Sustainable Food Engagement:** in collaboration with Rahul, VP Community and Welfare, the committee ran healthy and sustainable eating stalls at all three campus sites, talking with a total of 350 students.

"Thank you for such a fun activity, I've had the best time here and these lunchboxes are honestly incredible!"



- **Sustainable Food Survey:** the committee worked tirelessly to engage 485 students in their online food survey, asking students about their thoughts on sustainable food options on and off campus to inform the work and campaigning of the committee and The Students' Union.

- 70% of respondents thought there should be more sustainable food options on campus;
- 60% said they would like to understand more about sustainable food;
- 140 students said that they were interested in a local and organic veg box scheme; and
- 173 students said they wanted to attend a cooking class, when asked what kind of events they would be interested in attending.
- When asked if they had any other thoughts about sustainable food on campus, the most common answers were:
 1. Students wanted more vegetarian and vegan options
 2. students felt options were too expensive
 3. students wanted more culturally diverse food
 4. students wanted more fresh and healthy food.

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- **Sustainable Sri Lankan Cooking Class:** from the survey we could see that many students wanted to attend a cooking class. We used organic, local vegetables to teach 25 students how to cook a delicious plant-based Sri Lankan curry. The event was fully booked in three days with a waiting list of 8 students!

“I ate winter squash for the first time and it was fantastic, it's definitely inspired me to be more experimental with my cooking”.



- **A Taste of Home – Bring and Share with UWE Global:** 150 students attended this sustainable food and cultural event, bringing in a sustainable version of a dish from their culture, with representation from 12 different countries.

“This event was so beautiful! More of this please.”

“Great idea and executed perfectly”

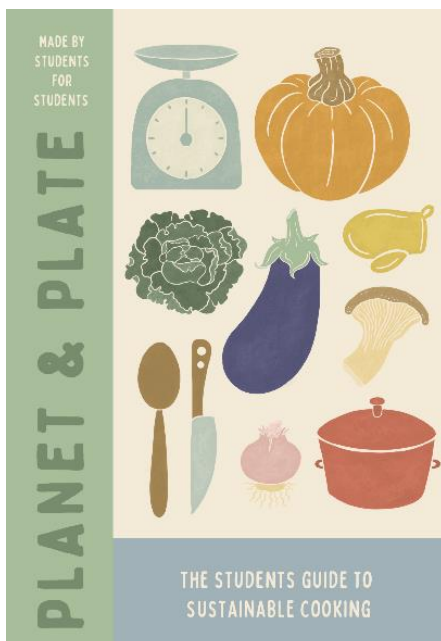


- **'Animal agriculture and the climate crisis'** - talk and quiz: the committee organised this talk with the founder of Plant Based News.

"The talk by Plant Based News was so informative about how we can better change our diet for a more sustainable world."

"Great talk on how animal agriculture and food should really be at the heart of the climate and biodiversity debates."

- **Student cookbook:** we worked with 26 students to submit recipes for the committee's cookbook, and they are working with a student graphic designer to curate the cookbook as part of her MA coursework, the final book should be finished in July. Here are some pages so far:



GREENER FUTURES

Sports clubs and societies who have signed up to Greener Futures this year are working hard on completing as many sustainability challenges as possible before mid-May. The club and society to earn the most points will be rewarded with the Greener Futures Award and win £200 for their group. The winners will get announced at our Award Balls at end of May.

We have seen some amazing engagement this year, please see below for some examples.

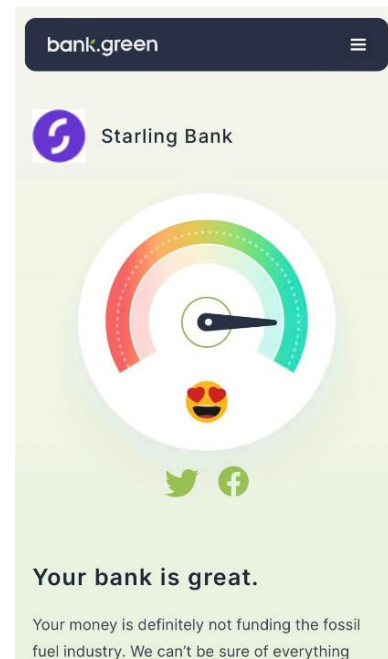
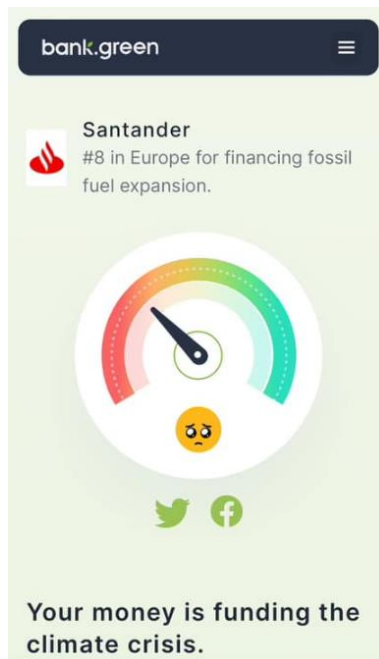
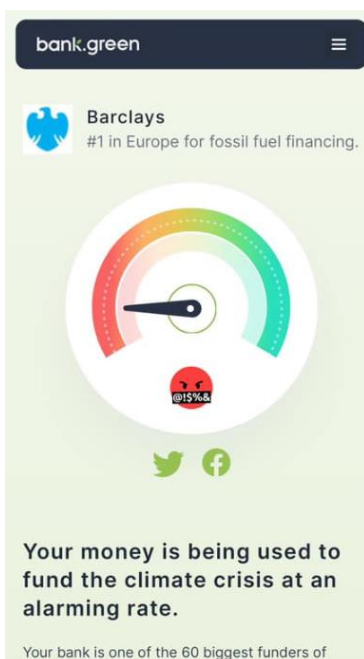
Photography Society brought in food to the Taste of Home event as part of the committee's campaign, as well as two of their members taking some beautiful photos:

Hii I am the Sustainability Officer for Photography Society. In March, Green team had a culture event called 'Taste of Home'. I made Kashkeh bademjan with garlic yogurt to represent Persia. We also had two people taking photos from the event.

I am so glad this event existed. It was great to taste other food and celebrate cultures around the world. Loved every second of it. #greenerfutures5



Lacrosse did some research into whether their banks are ethical and sustainable, and switching their banks to more ethical ones:



OUTDOOR VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITY

The Students' Union at UWE's Green Team are running regular Community Garden sessions with student volunteers and the UWE Grounds Team, as well as our Greenspace Conservation Volunteering sessions at two local woodlands. We have been inviting students from the University of Bristol to these volunteering days, and they have been very grateful for this opportunity. The conservation and community garden volunteering will both run throughout June, giving students opportunities to have a break from their studies, get outside in nature, and get together with like-minded students.



SUSTAINABLE PERIODS

The Students' Union at UWE are running a behaviour change campaign promoting sustainable period products and is working to address period poverty within the student community 318 students and 25 staff members took part in our sustainable period product trial, receiving a free product (such as a menstrual cup, period pants, or reusable sanitary towel). This is a 209% increase in take-up compared to last year.

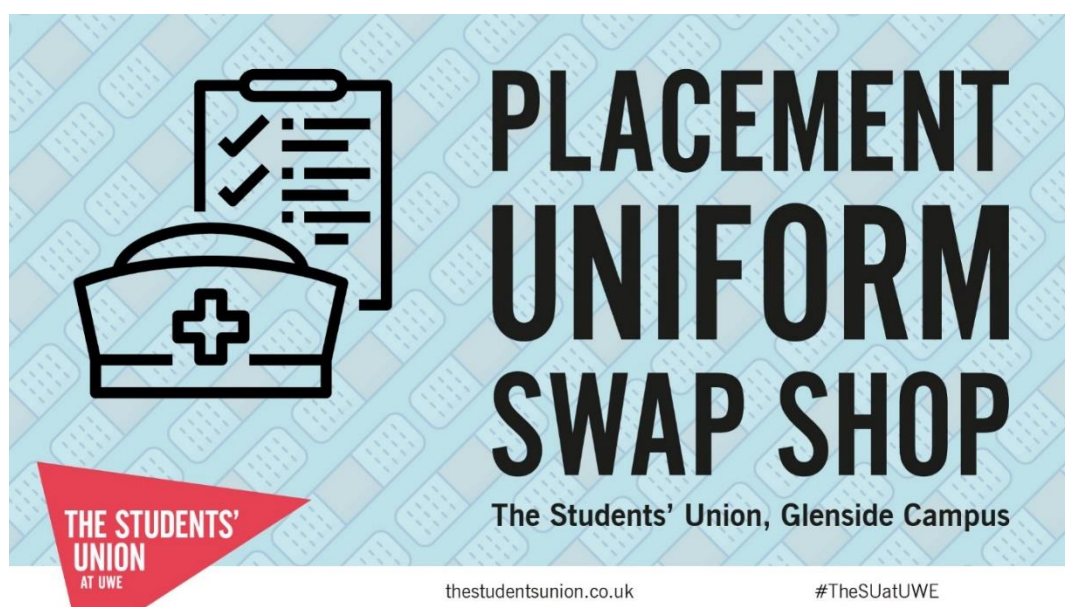
- From our feedback survey, we received many positive comments about the trial, and the average rating for this scheme from those who took part was 4.3 out of 5 stars.
- If everyone who took part in the trial switched to sustainable alternatives, we estimated that we would have saved 1529kg of CO2 equivalent per year and saved 4931g of plastic per year, which is the equivalent of 704 plastic bags per year. This is the equivalent of driving 5 round trips of Bristol to Edinburgh in a petrol car.
- If students carried on using these products over 5 years, then this would mean 24655g of plastic saved over this time, the equivalent of 3520 plastic bags (estimated).
- We estimated that students could have saved a total of £11,208 a year or an average of £35 per year per for the upfront costs of these products.

- When asked about the positives of using the products, the most popular responses were 'saving money in the long term' and 'reducing plastic waste' and 'reducing chemicals found in some products'.
- 86% of students said they would use this product most of the time in relation to every cycle.
- We provide free organic menstrual products in all our toilets and increased the number of locations where plastic-free period (single-use) products are stocked and increased provisions to include all 5 campus locations.

This project has been shortlisted for 'Campaign of the Year' at The Students' Union Welfare Awards (15 May). The Students' Union are going to submit this project as a Green Gown Award for Student Engagement.

<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/news/article/thesuatuwe/Sustainable-Period-Products/>

PLACEMENT UNIFORM SWAP SHOP



<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/union/campuses/glenside/uniformswapshop/>

Launched this academic year in autumn 2022, the Placement Uniform Swap operates at Glenside Students' Union to:

1. help alleviate the financial pressure faced by students studying in healthcare courses; and
2. saves unwanted or unused uniforms from going to waste.

Students are initially issued with 3 sets of uniforms (free of charge), which are meant to last them the entirety of their course. When this uniform is no longer fit for purpose, either because it no longer fits, is damaged or stained, or students have graduated and it's surplus to requirement, it can be donated to the swap shop and given a new lease of life for students, free of cost.

Although students are given 3 free sets of uniforms, we have found that many students need to buy extra uniforms on top of this for a number of reasons (because their size may change, their uniform gets damaged, etc.), and these are expensive. This project is now part of our wide cost of living campaign and runs weekly during term time.

Healthcare students can swap items that are in wearable condition, like for like or for dresses/tunics and trousers where possible. Where needed we are happy to support students where uniform hasn't arrived in time or is required for a last-minute practical session.

The Students' Union at UWE were delighted at the response from our students and invested more in our space housing the swap shop. We have made significant improvements to the shop space, including a full re-decorate, purchasing furniture, and storage, as well purchasing as over £4,900 worth of uniform to fill the gaps in our stock (for example, we had no stock for paramedic students.) We also had a generous donation from UWE Sports Rehabilitation (who are shortly moving to a new supplier and still had credit on the account and donated the remaining £5000) meaning we can support both sports rehab but also physiotherapy students who use the same kit.

The purchasing of the additional stock has allowed us to support a wider range of students but offering extended sizing across the range of uniforms, also offering a try-on service, eliminating the initial waste of ill-fitting uniforms when the wrong size arrives.

The interest in the swap shop has been phenomenal. We have had interest from students across the ranges of healthcare at Glenside Campus, from Physiotherapy, Nursing and Midwifery, Occupational Therapy, Diagnostic Imaging and Paramedic Science.

Over **359 Students** have used the swap shop across the period of September 2022 to March 2023, saving students £8,975 across this academic year.

Feedback from students has been extremely positive:

- "This is SO great, what a great idea!"
- "Thank you so much, I've been needing to get some better fitting trousers - I've been using a hair tie to hold them up - bending down and turning patients has been interesting!"
- "The swap shop got me a new uniform set - when mine got STOLEN out of our halls washing machine, that person must have been desperate, wish they knew about this service before"

This service has also provided an opportunity for gender-questioning students to swap out uniforms which they no longer identify with. One student who was happy we share their story and interaction came to the swap shop with the hope to swap a female uniform for a male style uniform, they let us know they were unable to afford to order new items through Alexandra Work Wear (the manufacturer of our uniforms). They didn't have the choice in style when originally promoted to order their free sets as this was predetermined by the system. On this occasion, we were able to offer this student the chance to try all styles for their discipline and see what was most comfortable for them.



STUDENT MATTERS TO RAISE

Fossil Free Careers

The Students' Union Executive have released an open statement to the UWE Careers Service:

<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/news/article/thesuatuwe/Open-Letter-to-UWE-Careers-Service/>

Recently, members of Climate Society have said that the Fossil Free Campaign is currently their key priority. They have been working hard to engage their peers and spread awareness about their petition, which now has [635 signatures](#). A number of students have also been writing emails to the Careers Service to express their support for the campaign.

The Campaigns Officer from People & Planet also ran a workshop with 18 students, one student said: *"It was really interesting to know more about the Fossil Fuel Free Careers campaign and to meet people from different courses and backgrounds that are also supporting this initiative. I feel like this session provided good insights in how to take action as a University and encouraged us that it is possible to make a change fighting against oil, gas and mining industries."*