

Responsible Futures Audit Report: UWE and the Students' Union at UWE

Responsible Futures Steering Group

April 2016



nus

**Responsible
Futures**

Accredited institution



Audit report

This report provides an overview of the process by UWE and the Students' Union at UWE (collectively known as 'the partnership' from this point on) were audited to assess their level of performance against the criteria of the NUS's Responsible Futures accreditation mark. The audit took place on 7-8 April 2016. A briefing sheet about Responsible Futures is also included.

Responsible Futures is an accreditation programme designed to work "with institutions to embed sustainability into the curriculum of every student in education today" (NUS, 2016). The accreditation audit process assesses education for sustainable development (ESD) performance against 45 criteria in the following categories: Baselines and benchmarks, partnership and planning, leadership and strategy, policy and commitment, interventions, impacts and outcomes, and outreach. Each partnership (an HEI and its Students' Union) also have the opportunity to have their performance measured against three self-defined criteria. Evidence must be provided of activity related to ten mandatory criteria and as many of the twenty five optional criteria as the partnership wishes/is able to. Each criteria is scored accordingly to difficulty and impact of the activity evidenced. A total score for the partnership is then reached. The minimum score for accreditation is 200 out of a maximum possible total of 330.

UWE and the Students' Union at UWE worked together over a six-month period to evidence current/recent activity and to undertake new activity to evidence activity where our own self-assessment had revealed that maximum points might not be achieved but where new activity was feasible. In preparation for the audit, more than 150 pieces of evidence were submitted against all of the criteria. The partnership undertook a self-assessment of difficulty and impact of activity and estimated a score of around 300 for UWE's ESD work.

On the 7th of April, a NUS Sustainability Officer attended UWE and ran a half-day training session for 6 UWE students, including the SU President, who were to audit the partnership's evidence. During the afternoon of the 7th, these auditors undertook a desk-based audit of this evidence against detailed descriptions and expectations of each criteria. On the morning of the 8th of April, the audit team interviewed three members of UWE and Students' Union at UWE staff who are closely involved with our ESD delivery, namely AVC Environment and Sustainability, SL Education for Sustainable Development and VP Societies and Communication. These interviews marked the end of the audit team's official duties. In the afternoon of the 8th, the NUS Sustainability Officer held two focus groups with UWE students – the first the ten students who are on programmes with an explicit social responsibility or sustainability focus or are part of societies or groups with a similar focus.

The second focus group consists of students with no explicit connection to such programmes or societies.

At the end of the audit process, the UWE Responsible Futures steering group was advised that the partnership had reached the minimum score required to achieve the accreditation. This makes UWE the first institution to gain the Responsible Futures accreditation since the initiative was launched following its pilot phase in 2014-15. An informal report will be sent to the partnership by Friday 22 April. There will be a two-week opportunity for the partnership to respond with further evidence where maximum point have not been given for individual criteria. A formal report with the final score will be received subsequent to this response and formal accreditation will be made at a ceremony on 24 May at UWE, on the eve of the EAUC Annual Conference. The full report will enable UWE to identify areas of best practice and help to set an agenda for deepening our ESD offer to students for the benefit of society.

Responsible Futures Briefing Sheet

What is Responsible Futures?

“Responsible Futures works with institutions to embed sustainability into the curriculum of every student in education today. It can help you to:

- Embed sustainability into your students’ learning experience
 - Prepare your students for the emerging low-carbon economy
 - Strengthen the relationship between your union and your institution
- Bullet point text style with coloured bullet.

Working through a bank of criteria, institutions and students’ unions work in partnership to earn our accreditation mark which demonstrates real action on education for sustainable development. It’s a true commitment to helping every graduate leave their time in education as part of the solution to our sustainability challenges, rather than as part of the problem.”
(NUS website)

Criteria categories:

- Baselines and benchmarks
- Partnership and planning
- Leadership and strategy
- Policy and commitment
- Interventions
- Impacts and outcomes
- Outreach
- Self-defined criteria

Our performance against each criteria is assessed on the basis of ‘impact’ and ‘difficulty’. There are a maximum of 300 points available. The minimum score needed to achieve accreditation is 200.

Who is undertaking this on behalf of UWE?

UWE has a Responsible Futures working group consisting of:

- Assistant Vice Chancellor (Environment and Sustainability)
- Senior Lecturer in Education for Sustainable Development
- Vice President of the Students’ Union at UWE (Societies and Communication)
- Vice President of the Students’ Union at UWE (Education)
- Green Team Coordinator, Students’ Union at UWE
- Community Manager, Students’ Union at UWE

This group is responsible for compiling evidence, leading on new activity where necessary, for managing the audit process, for engaging with the NUS and for communicating our engagement with Responsible Futures to the UWE community. This will involve

communication with key stakeholder groups, including: course reps; employability leads; institutional leadership team; professional service staff; sabbatical officer team; teaching staff; trade union reps.

What is involved in preparing for the audit?

An online 'workbook' enables us to upload evidence/links to evidence against each criteria and to undertake a self-assessment of our scoring against 'impact' and 'difficulty'. A rolling indicative score is given as evidence is submitted. New activity will be undertaken to enable us to achieve the maximum possible score within the time available.

Two key areas of new activity are surveying of student attitudes being undertaken by the SU at UWE and curriculum mapping being undertaken by members of UWE's Knowledge Exchange for Sustainability Education (KESE) group and other academics.

When will we be audited?

Mock Audit 21 March 2015 12-5

Full audit 7-8 April 2015

How does the audit work?

We are assessed by our own students; trained and supported by the NUS. A team of 6 student auditors undertake desk-based assessment of our performance and interviews with key staff. NUS staff then conduct two focus groups, each with 10 students. One of these groups will consist of students who have explicitly been involved in education for sustainable develop activities (in the formal, informal and/or extra curriculum) and the second group will consist of students who have not been involved in such activities/interventions.

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