GREEN IMPACT PROJECT ASSISTANTS:

BRIEFING FOR TEAMS

Overview

Green Impact Project Assistants (GIPAs) are students who have received training and volunteered to work with a staff team to support them to implement Green Impact. The aim of the GIPA scheme is for students to encourage, motivate and support their assigned Green Impact teams in implementing sustainability actions and projects.

Through [SOS-UK research](https://www.sos-uk.org/research/sustainability-skills-survey), we know that approximately 80% of students across all disciplines want their institution to be doing more on sustainability and around two-thirds of students want to learn more about it. The GIPA scheme responds to this student demand by offering students the opportunity to develop their knowledge around sustainability and support teams to make improvements to their environmental and social performance. It also offers a way for students to develop transferable employability skills within a professional environment.

Every year 100s of students volunteer to support Green Impact programmes around the world in their roles as auditors and project assistants. They have a range of academic backgrounds and experiences which shape the ideas, skills, and attributes that they bring to the programme. They bring new perspectives and make valuable contributions to the success of their Green Impact teams. They are trained and supported in their role by the central Green Impact team but are not experts – they are here to learn and develop as much as they are to support your team!

Benefits to your team

If your student GIPA is supported in the right way, they can provide excellent extra resource for your sustainability work. Students will be looking at things from an entirely differently perspective and may therefore come up with some new suggestions, notice things you don’t see or come up with innovative ideas for projects.

Some of the benefits of working with a GIPA include:

* Added capacity, resource, help to drive forward your sustainability plans
* Fresh enthusiasm, creativity, dynamism
* The opportunity to work with students and develop student-staff collaboration

What can they support with?

What your GIPAs do will be entirely dependent on their existing skills and knowledge, what you need, and where you are at with your sustainability journey. You will work together to decide their role within your team. It’s important that the tasks they do offer them some opportunity for professional development, as well as being useful for you.

**Typical GIPA tasks could include:**

* Attending or leading Green Impact team meetings
* Brainstorming ideas
* Assisting with project plans and case study documents
* Developing communication materials
* Collecting feedback
* Estimating impact
* Maintaining the online toolkit and collecting evidence
* Conducting research, surveys or baseline audits
* Presenting sustainability ideas to the team
* Identifying achievable actions to inform next steps
* Liaising with the central Green Impact team to resolve team queries

Supporting your GIPA

All GIPAs receive training, delivered by SOS-UK, at the start of the year. This training coversan introduction to Green Impact and sustainability, what the GIPA role is, a look at the toolkit and some actions, practical exercises on communication and engaging.

Following the training, they will be matched with and introduced to Green Impact teams. Following the initial introductions, it will be up to you to arrange how you will work together over the year. We will provide a template first meeting agenda and GIPA-team agreement to support you with this process, and we are always available to answer questions or troubleshoot.

For students to get the most out of the role and to maximise the benefits to your team, GIPAs will need to be managed effectively. All GIPAs are volunteer students so it’s important to remember that their studies must come first, especially at certain times of year. Most of them are brand new to the programme and some of them won’t have worked with staff in this way before, so give them time to get used to the way that Green Impact and your team works.

These are the basic ways you can make sure that your GIPA is well-supported:

* Introduce them to your team early on
* Agree on tasks that use and develop their skills AND help you out
* Think of them as one of the team – invited to meetings and events
* Have regular meetings/contact and be responsive
* Ensure expectations are clear and reasonable
* Find out their strengths – do they complement team weaknesses?
* Offer clear and honest feedback and praise for tasks they complete and the way they work
* Share learnings with other teams who also have a GIPA
* Get in touch with the central Green Impact team if you have any problems

At the end of the year, SOS-UK will conduct a feedback survey with all GIPAs who have completed their volunteering, and issue them with a digital badge so they can demonstrate their achievements. We’d also encourage you to nominate your GIPA for the Student Leadership Special Award if they have demonstrated excellent leadership within your team.

Timeline for the year

GIPAs will be assigned to teams with the intention that they will work with them for the whole Green Impact cycle until the submission deadline.

Date- Register your interest in working with a GIPA

Date- Students attend training session

Date- GIPAs allocated to a GI team

Date- GIPAs and team maintain regular contact, working together to progress through the actions and develop new skills

Date – GIPAs may support with the auditing process, either conducting an audit of another team, or being present for your audit.

Date- Team and GIPA attend awards ceremony to receive recognition for their efforts!

Get involved

To request a GIPA please… [add in details e.g. a link to an expression of interest form or an email to contact].You can even request more than one if you have ambitious plans or could benefit from the extra support!

Thank you for your involvement in the Green Impact programme and for supporting a GIPA as part of the scheme!