



GREEN IMPACT STUDENTS’ UNIONS 2023-24 - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Key Dates: 2023-24

Launch: 28th August 2023

Intro to GISU welcome webinar: 3rd October 2023, 3pm

Student Sustainability Summit: October 2023

Annual sustainability survey: 23rd October - 12th November 2023

GISU contacts virtual skills & networking day: 6th December 2023, 10am-4pm

GISU midway ‘check-in’ calls: w/c 12th February 2024

National SDG teach in: March 2024

Progress and action planning webinar: 13th March 2024, 11am



Submission deadline: Friday 3rd May 2024, 5pm

Audits: June 2024

Awards confirmed: July 2024

How do I access the toolkit?

After sign-up, you will receive your login details for the toolkit. The new toolkit has new features that include:

- You can now ‘star’ your favourite actions for easy access on your homepage.
- You will be able to filter actions to find the ones most relevant to your team and priorities.
- You will be able to invite colleagues directly to your team (under the ‘team settings’, found on the top right).
- You will be able to assign actions to yourself, or colleagues in your team, which will then appear on your homepage.
- You will be able to mark actions as ‘in progress’ if you have started them, but not completed them.
- Progress will now autosave.

How many points does my SU need to get to achieve each award?

There are two separate scoring thresholds to meet; one for large/commercial Unions and one for small specialist or FE. This is to enable small SUs to be accredited at a level which is more in-line with their capacity and resources.

Award thresholds for large/commercial SUs:

- Working towards: up to 100 points
- Good: 100 to 249 points
- Very Good: 250 to 299 points
- Excellent: 300 or more points

Award thresholds for small, specialist, or further education SUs:

- Working towards: up to 85 points
- Good: 85 to 234 points
- Very Good: 235 to 284 points
- Excellent: 285 or more points

What has changed this year?

We have listened to feedback, and for the 2023/24 year, we are introducing an exciting new change. Under a new category called “Thematic projects”, we are giving SUs the opportunity to select up to five criteria from a range of ten themes. These criteria cover areas such as mental health, biodiversity, energy, poverty, and food. Each SU can choose the criteria that align with their priorities and fit the demographic of their students. You will not receive any additional scoring for doing more than five of these criteria but you may submit these under self-defined criteria in the instance you do have evidence for the other themes.

Are there any criteria that must be completed?

Due to the quickly-changing issues affecting the student experience and the different types of SUs across the UK, there are no mandatory criteria in the GISU workbook.

How will the audits work?

The audits are not as formal as they seem! We just like to check in to make sure you are making meaningful changes and to offer any extra ideas and support. SOS-UK staff will continue to aim to audit all submitting unions virtually. We will be in touch with further details about the audits from April onwards.

Why are there two scores (SU and Auditor) for each criterion?

We ask SUs to evaluate how many points they think they should get for each action they have taken to complete a criterion, with accompanying evidence, and our auditors validate it in the context of SU actions across the country as part of a moderation process. We will consider the size and capacity of the union when awarding points in the audit.

To help you score yourselves, we have come up with a scoring guide. This is accessible through the 'How you will be audited' section of the online toolkit.

Can we include things we did last academic year?

GISU was created to see work towards more sustainable institutions and organisations. If you are citing an action for this year's toolkit using evidence started before the current academic year, you should let us know in the comment box for that criterion. For an action to be considered for points, auditors will expect to see progress year on year to maintain the points you have achieved previously.

Why do some of the criteria relate to what the University is doing?

There are criteria in the GISU workbook for your SU to engage or lobby your University to push progress on sustainability. We know that SUs and elected officers, as the main mechanism for capturing the student voice, have the power to influence key decisions at the University. Completing these criteria may be over the course of several elected terms or even years, but we will award you points relative to the progress which has been made each year.

Other actions, such as reducing your energy usage, may be indirectly related to your University. For actions like this, we expect you to work proactively with the relevant University departments to promote change or provide information to help you become more sustainable.

How do I tackle the outcomes section?

The outcomes section is worth a total of 80 points, and we've done this to encourage you to prioritise the monitoring and evaluation of your sustainability work. Do refer to the scoring matrix to help you build up points in this section, but you can use this template to help structure your comments and evidence.

What do we need to do for the self-defined criteria?

This is your opportunity to share any other initiatives or work which you feel hasn't already been covered elsewhere in the toolkit. One of the three actions is to showcase an 'innovative intervention' which you feel is a new approach to promoting sustainability on campus. The remaining two self-defined actions can be any other activity which you feel deserves recognition.

What support is available?

The GISU Resource Bank - this is where you'll find guidance documents, templates, case studies and webinar recordings.

Join us on Workplace - join in discussions, share ideas or ask questions by [joining the 'NUS Sustainability, Ethics & Climate Action' Facebook Workplace page](#).

Newsletters - [sign up to our monthly SOS-UK newsletter](#), which includes updates for Students' Unions as well as other sustainability articles.

Webinars - we coordinate webinars on a range of themes to facilitate idea sharing and inspire action. We will email out details about any upcoming sessions, and you can access past webinars through the resource bank. You are also welcome to join our centrally-coordinated national webinars - [see schedule here](#).

Peer to Peer - We have a great network of sustainability contacts, help partner SUs, and support or facilitate online forum calls. [Join the monthly Sustainability Forum call every first Wednesday of the month at 11am here](#).

Training & Networking - if you'd like more tailored on-site or remote training for your staff, officers or students, you can request to purchase this when signing up for GISU or get in contact with us.

Learning and development opportunities - Students' Unions participating in GISU will receive a 10% reduction in price to [SOS-UK's Learning Academy offerings](#). Offerings particularly relevant for SUs include the *Course reps & Sustainability* training, campaign planning and Carbon Literacy Training.

Ad hoc support - please reach out to us if you're having trouble with the toolkit or need help with ideas at <mailto:gisu@sos-uk.org>.