



ACADEMIC STUDENT REPS

COURSE/DEPARTMENT STUDENT REPS TRAINING GUIDE

GREEN IMPACT STUDENTS' UNIONS

This guide aims to support efforts to embed sustainability into the curriculum and departmental practices; we know students are keen to see this happen and develop new skills in this area.

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Why include sustainability in your student rep training?

Sustainability is a priority in the student movement. SUs have followed this trend in recent years by implementing sustainability campaigns as well as integrating sustainability into their own policies and practices.

Green Impact Students' Unions is a way of identifying methods that will help our members to utilise their assets to promote **and embed** sustainability. The potential benefits for working with **student reps** on sustainability are enormous.

Consistently, 60% of students want to learn more about the sustainability and 80% believe that Sustainable Development should be actively incorporated and promoted by Universities.

[For specific stats by year, click here.](#) With such a high demand for **Universities** to focus on Sustainable Development, this has become an important student issue which **student reps** should incorporate into their role, including:

- Engaging with students on key sustainability topics, such as waste, energy, transport, water, biodiversity, food, supply chains in procurement, health and wellbeing, poverty, social justice, communications etc.
- Engaging with staff across campus(es) to promote student support for departments tackling sustainability issues.
- Engaging with students around opportunities to learn about sustainability and obtain key skills to take into the workplace.

Student Reps are key components in championing the student voice, providing valuable feedback on the academic experience of students on their courses **and departments**, as well as acting as a powerful tool to promote and secure change within your **University or College**. **The prevalence of sustainability interest in the student movement means that this is something Student Reps should take a lead on.**

What should I include in the training?

1. Demonstrate that sustainability is something that students care about

- Outline any student-led sustainability campaigns or societies on campus
- Explain the Union's sustainability campaigns and policies
- Refer to the three key findings from [NUS & HEA's report](#) on student attitudes towards skills for sustainable development, with [continuing research from SOS-UK confirming that this has continued](#).

2. Promote the importance of sustainability knowledge and skills in the workplace (and the increased employability when they have these skills)

- Volunteering to be a Student Rep should be beneficial in terms of employability - and knowledge of sustainability is a key employability skill.
- A study from the Times Higher Education (THE) confirmed that students with skills in sustainability are more likely to be employable ([read an article on it here](#)).
- Sustainable development is having an impact on young people's employment decisions ([read more at this link](#)) - so there's a good chance your Student Reps will already want to work with a company that recognises and works towards the [UN's Sustainable Development Goals](#)!

3. Suggestions for Student Rep focus around sustainability

Creating sustainable education requires changes to the central practices of departments across the organisation. This means there are loads of things that Student Reps can choose to focus on, including:

- **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** - helping academic staff and Heads of Department understand the value of integrating ESD into their curriculum is one of the most important things a Student Rep can do to create a more sustainable world. The education sector must educate students on important sustainability topics to change the way we all behave, both now, and in the future.
- **Digital campuses** - all UK Universities will now know how to work digitally, and it's important to use these new structures to keep things as paperless as possible - there is now very little use for lecture slides or handouts to be printed, and it's important to make sure that things don't backslide. It's also important to look into digital footprints, and make sure that online spaces are not storing files, videos or data that is no longer relevant.
- **Supply chains, Fairtrade and social impacts** - [climate justice](#) asks us to address both climate change and inequality - to ensure that sustainability work doesn't perpetuate oppressive structures, while also actively working to undo oppressive inequalities. Reps can encourage departments to purchase [Fairtrade](#) goods for student meetings and events, or to consider its overall social impact.
- **Encouraging departments to sign up to Green Impact** - If your University or college is signed up, students can have a big influence on whether their department signs up or not. Signing up will provide each department with specific environmental tasks to complete, which will lessen their environmental impact and win them recognition. [Click here](#) to find out if your University or College is signed up.

Post-training support

Any extra training available for Student Reps is useful, helps towards their role and with their employability.

- Make sure to provide details of Elected Officers, career staff, and University staff who are good contacts for sustainability questions and initiatives
- Point them towards the campaigns running at [SOS-UK](#)
- Share SOS-UK's [webinar series](#)
- Offer involvement in your GISU team to gain skills in project management, events management, auditing, etc.
- Offer involvement in your SU's wider sustainability projects, campaigns, events and societies.