

Transcript of the ideas emerging from the GSI's Assembly on: How can we embed sustainability and climate change into the curriculum?

5 February 2025

The Assembly consisted of around 50 members of our university's community, including students, (non-) academics staff, and Exeter locals. Participants were split into groups of 5-7, and each group was moderated by a trained facilitator. Each group proposed 3 ideas. All participants were asked to vote for their top 3 favourite ideas. The 3 most popular ideas resulting from this process were:

1 – Idea #13 – A core module tailored to each discipline on navigating climate information and sustainable practices.

About 20-30% of the content would be broad science surrounding climate change and the remaining 70-80% of the module would be subject-specific content, likely taught in the 1st year. A second group that also suggested this idea noted that this would follow [similar practices as the University of Barcelona](#) and should focus on building skills and competencies. A third group proposing this idea specified implementing an ELE training module about climate change and sustainability similar to the mandatory consent module.

2 – Idea #3 – Ending research partnerships with and divesting funding from climate-damaging companies such as the fossil fuel industry and arms manufacturers.

This includes informing students and being transparent about [funding sources such as Shell](#), which fund projects including [CASPER](#).

3 – Idea #15 – Hands-on community project work within the first year of study to build skills and connections.

This would involve community volunteering for credit within every first-year module. Benefits would include increasing student wellbeing, increasing awareness of social and environmental issues and putting skills and complex thinking into practice.

Below are the remaining ideas that were proposed, divided into the following categories:

- **Field trips and travel**
- **Campus life**
- **Core learning**
- **Education beyond University**

Field trips and travel

Idea #6 – Enable individuals to consider new transport perspectives whilst maintaining autonomy. This suggests collecting case studies on different forms of travel being used to better inform on sustainable options.

Idea #5 – Travel to field courses via rail.

Campus life

Idea #10 – Integrate fair trade principles and standards on campus. Reward positive sustainability practices and consumer habits.

Idea #8 – Eco-anxiety and sustainability cafes on campus for students.

Core learning

Idea #17 – Foster creativity and imagination. Students should engage with skill sets as a core part of their learning throughout their degree.

Idea #18 – Encourage student participation in activities related to climate change. This could include creative projects/reflection pieces related to their subject of study as a part of the curriculum.

Idea #12 – Review the content of current programmes and modules to quantify the current sustainability and climate change content across all faculties.

Idea #11 – Set and maintain targets to incrementally increase climate change and sustainability content. This could be implemented through regular module reviews.

Idea #5 – Decarbonise the curriculum through innovation, the Future 17 Programme and by travelling to field courses by rail.

Idea #4 – Subsidise external accreditations in sustainability, e.g. through BREEAM, LEED and ISSP.

Idea #9 – Have an engaging climate scientist (e.g. James Dyke) give an annual introductory lecture to undergraduates in the Great Hall upon their arrival, covering broad topics including tipping points and planetary health.

Idea #14 – More practical-based modules that are relevant to sustainable practices (e.g. gardening).

Idea #19 – Tailored sustainability context within every module, to contain information on case studies and examples for that specific field.

Idea #1 – Training for flat organisation structures with students.

Idea #2 – Embedding positive narratives alongside the gloomier facts to prevent doomerism from becoming a prevailing narrative. The suggestion given is to use Alumni careers in green sectors as examples to show how a positive change can be made within a field and inspire students to pursue this further.

Education beyond university

Idea #16 – Intergenerational dialogue in a core module. This includes adult education sessions open to the public, community outreach through GSI links. Speaking with secondary schools was advised and conversations relating to local environmental and social issues were an important part of this group's idea.

Idea #7 – Incorporate sustainability teaching into teacher training (within the Education Faculty) to allow teachers to continue to provide sustainable solutions and education in secondary and primary classrooms across the country.