

 **AdvanceHE**



Guide to ESD in practice

'Go Green Week' assessment of engagement for the development of collaborative and critical thinking competencies

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Sian Evans, University of Worcester

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1. Intended outcomes

Students on the module will:

1. Problem solve and work in teams to conduct enquiries.
2. Develop and present ideas on specific aspects of personal and community sustainability.
3. Evidence ability to reflect on personal sustainable practices, strengths and challenges.

In addition to student learning outcomes (LOs), Go Green Week enriches the University’s on-campus informal and subliminal curriculum and supports the [Sustainability strategy](#).

2. Participants

The key participants in this activity are students and staff involved in teaching and assessment, the Director of Sustainability (or equivalent post), students’ union staff and sabbatical officers, university staff and students, and the local community including businesses, charities and schools.

Students undertaking an ‘Introduction to Sustainability’ module are required to design, plan and implement activities for the University’s Go Green Week (GGW), and they are asked to reflect on their experiences for their assessment and evaluate the impact of their events and the ‘week’. Module teaching staff provide taught sessions and resources to scaffold project planning and support students in developing their activities. The Director of Sustainability (who at the University of Worcester contributes to module teaching) provides the lead for coordination of GGW, managing engagement with internal departments/academic schools and external community stakeholders. Students’ union staff and officers provide the venue, marketing and co-leadership, and understanding of their role in GGW and its activities. Around 40 external groups are invited to collaborate. University staff, students and the local community provide the participants for the students’ GGW activities and a source of feedback for their evaluations of impact.

3. Activity/project

The GGW activity assessment forms the first of two assessments for this 30 credit Level 4 (first year undergraduate) module, which runs over the whole academic year (half of the total assessment for the module). At the start of the module students begin thinking about their personal understanding of sustainability and in subsequent sessions are also introduced to ideas of sustainability advocacy, behaviour change (nudge theories) and communication of ideas and actions. In the second half of the first semester of the module, students are allocated into small groups by the module teaching team to begin developing their activities. Ideally, students work in groups of four or five.

Two dedicated GGW planning sessions are allocated within the module teaching slots in semester one. In the first session there is input from the students’ union and previous

students who have taken the module about their sustainability activities and campaigns and how GGW fits into this. Students are also provided with examples of past activities (also looking at the annual GGW legacy video – see resource link below) and begin to discuss and generate ideas. Reassurance for this novel assessment is given by students who have undertaken the module the previous year to provide further insights into the task. Students are also introduced to project planning templates, which they will use to outline their activities, and the live planning workbook for GGW to which they are given access and editing rights. The Director of Sustainability maintains overall oversight of the GGW planning workbook. This is shared externally with groups attending and student societies and individuals who volunteer.

In the second dedicated planning session the focus is on further development of activities, but also how these activities will be publicised and evaluated for impact. Various resources and ideas for evaluating impact are introduced. Students are also given instruction on undertaking risk assessments for their activities, which frequently involve practical activities, tasting of foods and engagement with a variety of community stakeholders. At the end of semester one teaching, the groups submit their outline project planning templates for their two activities as a formative assessment item. They receive feedback on this to feed into final project planning at the start of semester two in the New Year. There is a final dedicated GGW planning session early in the second semester as part of the taught sessions, where the focus is on the preparation of the GGW activities (sourcing and development of any resources needed) and ensuring activities are publicised. GGW itself is a scheduled week within the University in February each year and engagement in activities during the week is open to all University staff and students and invited participants from the local community, including local school groups. During the week, student groups run their activities and gather feedback about impact from participants using the impact measures they have devised. They are also asked to participate in other activities during the week, which will form part of their reflections on engagement. The teaching session following GGW is used for groups to prepare for their assessed presentations where they reflect on their participation in, and experiences of GGW, with the presentations taking place the following scheduled module session.

4. Assessment or evaluation

The success of students in attaining the learning outcomes associated with the GGW activity is evaluated by means of an assessed group presentation where all members of the group evaluate the impact of their activities and critically reflect on their participation and learning from this. Groups are provided with a common framework to structure their presentations in terms of the areas to be covered, which are included in the grading rubric for the assessment. The group presentation includes a brief overview of the project plan for the activities undertaken, including the aim of the activities and the research informing this. Groups are asked to reflect on any changes undertaken to plans (and why), identifying examples of group problem solving. Groups are also asked to reflect on team working, and

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again provide examples of practice. In addition, groups reflect on the impact of their activities on wider community sustainability, presenting evidence from their activity evaluations. Finally, all group members provide a short individual reflection on the impact of planning and implementing GGW on their personal sustainability attitudes, behaviour and learning.

All these elements of the presentation are assessed as part of the grading rubric feedback sheet. In addition, a grade is provided for the extent of participation in activities during the week (above participation in their own activity). The groups present to their peers, module staff and invited guests, drawn from those groups supporting GGW and students and staff from University of Essex where we have a reciprocal arrangement of attending the group presentations. All these participants are asked to fill out peer assessment sheets of the presentations, including an excellent to poor rating of presentation elements and qualitative comments, which are collated to provide further feedback on the final grade form for students.

The evidence collated by the students on participant engagement with their activities in GGW can be used alongside the University’s evaluations of the week’s activities. Throughout the week digital creative students, employed by the University to create media content about its sustainability activities, will gather footage and images of activities which are used to create the GGW legacy video (see below). This, and other images and stories from the week, will be used in University communications about our sustainability impact and public engagement reporting, and feeds into our evidence base for our Responsible Futures accreditation and Green Impact evidence. This includes, for example, students talking about GGW prior to and during the week on local BBC radio station.

5. Useful resources

To view example legacy videos and student co created communications and blogs please visit:

[Go Green Week at Worcester \(1\)](#) – for an example detailed timetable

[Go Green Week at Worcester \(2\)](#) – for various legacy videos

<https://www.worcester.ac.uk/about/sustainability/how-to-get-involved/go-green-week.aspx> for showing how the University promotes GGW

[Going Green with Go Green Week 2022](#) – for a student’s perspective of volunteering (not taught) participation in GGW

[Change Agents UK](#) – for showing students the anticipated employability skills to be gained from this assessment and flagging employment opportunities on graduation

[The United Nations Little Book of Green Nudges](#) – for providing guidance and templates for specific on-campus behaviour change opportunities

6. Example of practice

This module and the Go Green Week (GGW) assessment has run for several years at the University of Worcester with different cohorts of students, initially as part of a cross-university ‘elective’ module and latterly as a core module in an undergraduate environmental management and sustainability course. The assessment is therefore applicable to students from any disciplinary background, both those studying sustainability specifically and those from other course areas with a broader interest in sustainability practice.

The assessment certainly challenges first year students and offers a rather different, active assessment to that they have broadly encountered before. Feedback from students has indicated that it changes their thinking and engagement with sustainability. Students appreciate being active participants, rather than passive recipients, and often continue to be involved in sustainability activities within the University beyond the module. Students enjoy the community participation, particularly the opportunity to work with local groups and schools. They feel empowered by working through real-life problems to achieve successful sustainability outcomes, and they recognise the employability skills gained and rich and valuable experiences they can draw on for their career development. Several former students have gone on to careers in the sustainability sector.

However, some students have reservations about the assessment experience and can initially fail to see the deeper value of participation. Often, these are students who are more comfortable with a more ‘passive’ approach to learning who would prefer content to be delivered, on which they are ‘tested’. Equally, those students who have longer commutes to attend sessions on campus can find the time commitments for group working and GGW participation a challenge. Online communication tools and activities can in part mitigate this. Students commuting, or juggling many other commitments, can also find accommodating changes to the GGW schedule a challenge, impacting on their experience of the week, for example when school groups change the times they are available.

7. Other

The Covid-19 pandemic restrictions offered a challenge to Go Green Week (GGW) planning and participation. For one year, activities were online and the following year a hybrid of online and in-person activities outside took place (a little chilly in February!). However, a positive outcome of this has been to continue to offer some online sessions to complement the in-person activities. Covid-19 also had some other impacts on event planning to support the assessment. For example, several businesses and charity groups ceased to operate following Covid, reducing those participating in the week and providing support and ‘footfall’ for the student-developed activities. Equally, on-campus activity post-Covid has remained somewhat ‘different’ to previously, with staff and fellow students seemingly less willing or able to engage in events beyond their core activities. This all requires reflection and innovation on how best to engage groups to participate to support the student activities and assessment.



Contact us

All enquiries:

Email: communications@advance-he.ac.uk

Website: www.advance-he.ac.uk

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