

A MESSAGE FROM NICK BRAITHWAITE



Dear colleagues,

If you were taking leave over the summer, I hope you were able to enjoy a restful break. If you remained engaged on OU business, then I hope there was still some time to make the most of the season. It appears that the frequency and intensity of wildfires and floods continue to rise, inconveniencing holidaymakers and, more seriously, devastating the livelihoods of many communities. This serves to highlight the importance for us all to embed sustainability in our daily choices and workplace actions.



Curriculum and Sustainability - datasets for authentic assessment

One quick way to prepare our students for tackling sustainability is to include a 'sustainability context' in assignments and assessments and we have been asked to recommend data sets relating to the environment. Our Director of Sustainability, Dr Victoria Hands, has recommended the [Office of National Statistics Environmental Accounts](#) as one such source of information. It includes data and analysis from the 2021 Census ranging from the growth of the Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy (LCREE), to predicted uptake of Electric Vehicles to an interactive tool to find out [carbon emissions and woodland coverage in your area](#). If you use other datasets related to sustainability or start using this one, [please let us know](#).

Curriculum and Sustainability - Responsible Futures

Embedding sustainability in our curriculum is where we can have the biggest positive impact for sustainability and it is one of our institutional success measures, via an accredited scheme called [Responsible Futures](#). This is a structured approach to embedding sustainability across all aspects of student learning - including the formal curriculum which goes through a cyclical validation process, the informal curriculum such as our OpenLearn resources and the subliminal curriculum which is all the ways we interact with our students from marketing to enrolment to careers advice and alumni support. Responsible Futures (RF) is a partnership with the OU Students' Association (OUSA) to ensure students can contribute to this important collaborative activity.

RF is coordinated by SOS-UK (Students Organising for Sustainability) and a quarter of UK universities are currently participating. All staff can access (or offer) free workshops to enable peer-learning between staff and students across all disciplines. An accreditation mark is awarded through a student-

led audit of 50 criteria comprising 9 mandatory and 41 optional criteria, arranged across five themes: benchmarking; leadership and strategy; policy and commitment; interventions; and outreach. We can also co-develop and agree specific OU criteria together, which can apply across the whole curriculum.

Student mapping of over 450 OU modules by 90 paid and trained students inform our actions including: embedding sustainability in the Inclusive Curriculum tool (launching this week); an all-faculty RF workshop; presentation and discussion at relevant meetings; an Assessment Board workshop focused on sustainability; a student internship to support audit preparation and plans to seek advice and support from Senate ahead of the April 2024 initial audit. If you are or know a student who would like to be trained to audit against the RF criteria, watch out for further information early in 2024. If you would like to join the RF working group, please contact us at sustainability@open.ac.uk with 'RF working group' in the email title.

Sustainability booster weeks

The OU in Scotland was the first to take up the offer of an intensive week of sustainability focus from our matrix sustainability team. This comes ahead of the November deadline to submit the OUIS annual report to meet the Public Bodies Climate Change Duty and work will continue over the next couple of months. Our Director of Sustainability, Sustainability Project Manager, and Carbon Reduction Project Manager received a warm welcome and busy schedule which included meetings with partners in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, Forestry and Land Scotland, the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh and EAUC Scotland. A dozen OUIS staff received carbon literacy training and learned how to play the 'How Bad are Bananas?' game which is available on loan to play with local community groups and partners. All units can contact sustainability@open.ac.uk to schedule support tailored to your needs in future months.



Andy Berry has been given a three-month special project to support OUIs work on Sustainability. He is re-establishing the OUIs Sustainability Group to deliver institutional actions through the Sustainability Planning Action and Reporting Kit ([SPARK](#)) including [carbon literacy training](#) and the rollout of [Warp-It](#) to reuse unwanted items, save money on procurement of goods and monitor related carbon emissions. The group is open to ALL STAFF based in Scotland, so if you are interested, please contact Andy.Berry@open.ac.uk

The OUIs weekly all staff note was generously given over to discuss all things sustainable within the OU, in addition to workplace sustainability, Andy thought about his personal passions to write the piece below:

Sustainability playlist from Andy Berry, OUIs

Without a doubt music has had a massive impact on carbon footprints and not just through the obvious element of touring. Coldplay created some headlines by making their Music of the Spheres tour cut emissions by half.

I [Andy Berry] was thinking about some sustainable music so a couple of suggestions from me:

The Girl with the Sun in Her Head by Orbital. Recorded entirely using electricity from Greenpeace's mobile solar power generator Cyrus. This is from 1996 (the greatest musical decade!) so highlights a few artists out there who have been switched on to environmental issues for a while.

Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost (Part 1 and 2) by Foals is one of my favourite recent albums, just to prove I do listen to music other than mid-90s rave and trip-hop. ***Like Lightning*** is great but there's an ecological theme to the entire album.

***Massive Attack** have long been advocates for environmental sustainability and also happen to be in the Top 10 of greatest-ever bands! if you haven't discovered them yet, what are you doing? Teardrop is one of the most beautiful songs, ever.*

EAUC Resources and Green Gown Awards

In my [last bulletin](#), I encouraged all units to review relevant [resources](#) from the EAUC Annual Conference 2023: Conversations on Climate Solutions. Colleagues who attended were inspired and connected with their counterparts in other institutions across the UK to share good practice. [The resources](#) can be searched for keywords to enable you to find good practice to embed in your area of work. We are still welcoming applications from colleagues across the OU to attend next year's conference - both to present your own sustainability activities and to learn from others. It takes place on 25 and 26 June, hosted by the University of Winchester. Find out more about EAUC and the conference in [this news post](#) on the sustainability website.

Prior to SPARK launching, a team in LDS heeded the call of 'sustainability is everyone's job' and worked to develop sustainability resources that support university colleagues in their module design. They consulted independently, listened to student voices, and utilised this learning to create infographics, videos and workshops to support module design teams and learning design colleagues. They are finalists in the Green Gown Awards (well done, team LDS!). You can [watch this short 3-minute overview](#) of the work they have been doing. [The Finalists Showcase](#) is well worth a browse. This recognises the great initiative of our colleagues and inspires us all to embed sustainability into our roles. It demonstrates that we can all make a difference! SPARK - our Sustainability Planning Action and Reporting Kit, now enables all units to do the same.

Open Societal Challenges in action

In July, The Open University held the OU Research & Societal Impact Showcase 2023, to celebrate the first anniversary of [Open Societal Challenges](#) (OSC) and the work of our Postgraduate Research Students (PGR). Over 140 people visited the interactive stands and talks. You can find out more in this [YouTube playlist](#) of short videos, this [OU Life article](#), and by keeping an eye on the [OU Research website](#) ahead of the launch of the OSC platform on 1 October.

The Environmental Impacts of Filmmaking

[Dr Rebecca Harrison](#), our Lecturer in Film & Media, launched [the OSC Environmental Impact of Filmmaking](#) project at the British Film Institute in London. It supports UK screen industries to adopt sustainable practices to lower the environmental impact of filmmaking and fill skills and knowledge gaps by highlighting global inequalities brought about by the extraction and export of raw materials, fossil fuel use, and labour practices. The project also creates an archive of interviews with Star Wars and other industry practitioners so people can learn more about both life on set and changing attitudes toward sustainability. Funded by the Arts & Humanities Research

Council, the project works in collaboration with partner organisations BAFTA Albert and the National Science and Media Museum.

Go Green Workshop

To celebrate 'Second Hand September', a campaign to promote donating, reusing, re-wearing, and restyling your clothes, we invite you to join Go Green on Thursday 28 September at midday. We will be welcoming OU Research Student, Ismay Mummery, for an online session on fixing and mending clothes. Fast fashion can have huge and detrimental environmental impacts, so how can you get more out of your wardrobe and slow down your fashion? In this workshop participants will be inspired to alter and fix garments rather than getting rid of them (sometimes after just a few wears) and buying new. [Sign up to attend via Eventbrite](#).

Net Zero Week catch up

The Open University is an official partner of [Net Zero Week](#) and hosted an event on '[Net Zero Skills and the Role of Universities](#)' in July 2023, which you can now [watch here](#). This event focussed on how green skills and career pathways can be embedded into every sector, to help us meet our climate targets and ensure all people thrive in a zero-carbon economy. Our next awareness week is Energy Security & Green Infrastructure week in November 2023 - further information in next month's newsletter. Please get in touch if you would like to be part of activities.

As we have had some recurring items in the last few newsletters, we have decided to add the buttons below to allow you to access information on these items with ease in each newsletter. I hope you find these quick links useful.

With continued optimism,

Nick

VCE Sponsor for Sustainability and Executive Dean, STEM Faculty

**Carbon
Literacy
Training**

**SPARK Lunch
& Learn
recordings**

**Warp-It
information
and sign-up**

**LinkedIn OU
Sustainability
Network**

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