

Communications and Community Engagement strategy 2013/4 -2018/9

1. Background

The University of Worcester's Strategic Plan 2013 – 2018 includes an area of distinction that seeks to 'promote principles of sustainability in their broadest sense. Through our teaching, research and knowledge exchange activities we will promote sustainable communities, services, businesses and the use of physical resources. We will foster a culture that values sustainability in arts and culture and promote social enterprise in the region.'

One of the university's core values is to promote sustainable development and active engagement with the community and fully accept our broad responsibilities to society. Our aim is to develop the University's physical assets to provide outstanding facilities and opportunities for students, staff and the wider community, but in ways which promote and champion environmental sustainability. To achieve this, a Communications Strategy has been developed to stimulate change in student and staff attitudes towards sustainability during their time at the University and beyond, as well as harness the interest of the local community and display the positive impact we are having on the local environment.

This document details recommendations to increase awareness of new and ongoing sustainability initiatives and encourage behavioural change among staff, students and all other University stakeholders.

2. Campaign Aims – "Love your Campus, Love our Planet"

Climate Change is arguably the most serious global issue we are currently facing, and individually people often feel that they cannot make a difference. The awareness-raising campaign outlined in this Strategy aims to focus on the very simple and practical lifestyle changes that every individual can make but which when added up collectively, can significantly reduce our negative impact on the environment.

It aims to give collective and personal responsibility to the University of Worcester's students and staff, and instil a sense of ownership and pride.

The Strategy aims to help staff to understand how to embed Sustainable Development principles as a core part of their daily working and teaching processes and to encourage students to make day-to-day lifestyle changes.

3. Objectives

3.1 Communication Objectives

- To develop and define the language that students, staff and the broader community can connect with.
- To engage with students and staff and encourage green ideas and initiatives for the University to adopt.
- To develop an aspirational long-term goal that will influence and equip students and staff to minimise the affects of Climate Change.
- Utilise social media for engaging with students and staff

3.2 Research

A baseline review of the level of environmental awareness is key to measuring current understanding, perceptions and knowledge. It is also required in order to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of any campaigns.

Self-completion online questionnaires for staff and students have been carried out for a number of years and a series of semi-structured interviews for students to gauge the current position and set guidelines for future messaging. Additionally through the Green Impact and Go Green Weeks students and staff views are gathered in focus group activities.

Communications and Community Engagement strategy 2013/4 -2018/9

Following the surveys with students and staff awareness- raising campaigns have happened for both groups and a targets set. It is the intention to continually review these targets evaluate them from baseline data and continue to strive for increased engagement with both staff, students and the local community for behaviour change and engagement.

4. Key messages

- As a large institution, the University of Worcester understands its impact on the environment and has developed an Environmental Management System (EcoCampus) to reduce this in a structured way
- The University of Worcester is already involved in numerous activities to improve its environmental credentials
- The University of Worcester supports its staff, students and the wider community in making a positive impact on the local environment
- The University of Worcester is committed to the principle of Sustainable Development
- The University will act as a good practice model to help organisations and individuals in Herefordshire and Worcestershire change their behaviour

5. Strategy

As it currently stands, students and staff at the University of Worcester are aware that there are sustainability measures in place on campus but may not be entirely sure what they are and how they can find out more about them.

With nearly 10,000 students and around 1,000 staff, to be successful at achieving our sustainability goal everyone needs to be involved and engaged as institutional behavioural change is essential to the University becoming greener. Therefore, this Strategy emphasises that internal communication is given a priority over external communication.

To raise the sustainability profile of the University of Worcester, a highly-visual campaign is necessary at the first stage in order to create a real impact and ensure key message penetration. Information on the University's environmental performance and new projects and initiatives should be continually drip-fed to both staff and students.

Constant publicity on the threats of Climate Change has resulted in many people complaining of 'Climate Change Fatigue', feeling threatened and/or 'switching-off'. In order to attract and sustain interest and participation, it is important that the campaign is focussed, imaginative, positive and interesting. A targeted and inspirational campaign will easily achieve the target of 90% staff and student awareness and engagement.

6. Campaign Delivery

The campaign delivery aims to increase environmental awareness, increase green award entries, encourage and motivate students and staff to change their behaviour, attitude and opinion of sustainability, and, most importantly, decrease the University's carbon footprint and thus its overall impact on Climate Change.

The Annual Environmental Responsibility Report details the actions which the Sustainability Department has taken so far and the Communications Action Plan details actions that are taking place in the future.

7. Evaluation and review

Measuring success

It is very important to continually measure and evaluate a campaign to assess whether it is achieving its targets, aims and objectives. It is essential to know how effective a campaign has been and whether it was an efficient use of all the resources. Regular and consistent monitoring will highlight any weaknesses and failures at any early stage and enable the campaign to be modified if necessary.

Communications and Community Engagement strategy 2013/4 -2018/9

This campaign is no exception, and the Sustainability Department at the University of Worcester will use the resources they have at their disposal to conduct further surveys to find out the levels of awareness of the institution's sustainability initiatives amongst staff and students. For example, are they aware of how the University is minimising its impact on climate change and increasing its green credentials? What are students and staff doing to help the environment? How can we work with them and help them to do more?

This data will be collected and analysed and, importantly, we can carry out the same surveys regularly to measure the effectiveness of projects. Have the awareness levels increased? Have students and staff become more motivated to make an effort to reduce their contribution to climate change?

The press cuttings/internet coverage will also be collected and evaluated to ensure that the correct message is going out, and is published in the right publications.

It is important to remember that these campaigns are not about quantity but quality! It doesn't matter how heavy the collection of clippings is, what matters is what those clippings have achieved. For example, changes in behaviour, attitude, awareness and opinion of our staff and students.

We need to ensure that the publications/web we are aiming for are appropriate to our target audience and that the coverage we gain is exposed and displayed to the relevant people.

Reviewed Katy Boom/Jane Britton Director of Communications and Participation Approved Environment Committee March 2013 - next revision with new strategic plan.