

Go Green campaign proposal: Carbon Management

1. Issue and context

To deal with climate change, the UK must cut emissions by 25-40% by 2020, and by at least 80% by 2050. These cuts must be made across society, with all individuals, organisations and communities taking action to reduce energy consumption and find alternative energy sources.

In the HE sector, the Go Green campaign has been really successful at embedding good environmental management into universities. However, the four factors are just the first step towards improving environmental performance. In terms of climate change, there is a need for universities to take urgent action to effectively tackle their own carbon emissions.

Nationally, work is being done by the Higher Education Funding Council for England to develop a carbon reduction target for the whole HE sector, and to produce guidance for universities on how to develop and implement their own carbon reduction strategies. However, it is likely that universities will be left to independently develop their own targets and strategies, rather than these being imposed in a top-down way.

2. What are the potential campaign objectives in this area and are they achievable by 2011?

To ensure that carbon reduction strategies in the sector achieve the highest level of emissions reductions possible across the widest range of carbon impacts.

Overall reduction in carbon emissions of the whole HE sector (target level of reductions to be determined by research if this option is chosen at the Forum).

For all universities to develop and implement a carbon reduction strategy which:

- a) covers all areas of carbon emissions (direct energy usage, transport by staff and students to and from the university, overseas travel, supply-chain emissions).
- b) sets targets high enough to effectively contribute to national emissions reductions that will tackle climate change (ie >5% annual targets, 40% by 2020, >80% by 2050)
- c) is adequately resourced and staffed (eg with a Carbon Management Officer)

For those unis that already have a carbon strategy, the campaign would aim to:

- a) encourage student involvement in the implementation of the strategy
- b) monitor progress in meeting targets – celebrate success and highlight inaction.

3. Why would campaigning on this area lead to a “significant” environmental impact?

It is essential that carbon emissions are reduced across the whole of the UK, and unis are no exception. Emissions reported in the Green League in 2008 were 1.7 million tonnes of CO₂ from energy alone. That doesn't include emissions from transport or from goods and services bought by universities, so the total figure is much higher (probably over 4 million tonnes).

543.7 million tonnes UK total 2007

22.1 million – public sector total 2006

4. Who must students target to achieve this?

Primarily the campaign would target university decision makers (as the current Go Green campaign does). It might involve lobbying the VC, or could involve working with uni Environment Managers or Environment Committees, depending on what stage the university is at.

The campaign could also involve national lobbying, depending on the outcomes of the current HEFCE carbon reduction strategy work.

5. Explain how this campaign includes a range of possible actions and strategies catering for people with different skills, levels of experience and preference of campaigning methods in the network.

As with the current Go Green campaign, the campaign would probably be based primarily on a petition. However, the campaign would involve a wide range of engagement and awareness raising activities, from Green Fairs, to 'switch it off' campaigns, Carbon Champions, banner drops, halls of residence energy saving competitions, media stunts etc.

The campaign could involve more direct activities to reduce carbon, depending on the stage of the campaign (from getting micro-generation installed to targeting student and staff behaviour).

6. What are the potential barriers or weaknesses of this campaign? e.g. Is this campaign objective applicable for all University groups?

Some universities already have carbon reduction strategies, which might make it hard for groups to lobby for stronger targets, or may mean there is less need for the campaign.

As there is national work on carbon reduction in the sector, it may be that carbon reduction is already moving ahead.

P&P would need to be able to stay up-to-date with national developments and communicate these effectively to students in the network.

7. How would the new objective build upon the existing four factors?

The carbon management campaign would be a brilliant follow on for groups that already have the four factors, as this should be the sort of work that universities are doing once they have Environmental Management staff and a policy in place.

If groups are still campaigning for the four factors, this could be incorporated into their demands (eg an environmental policy with a strong carbon reduction strategy as part of it).

Useful links for further research