

Collated feedback from Green League consultation – January 2010

Collated feedback from online survey and consultation event at Oxford Brookes university on 28th January 2010.

Question 1: Feedback about Green League 2009:



Overall comments about the Green League 2009

1. Due to the criteria changing each year, it has been frustrating that even if performance is improving, e.g. number of staff was in year two more important than actual performance - discriminating against small institutions and those who are affecting change in whatever manner suits the HEI. Some consistency will help ensure that VCs and HEIs have confidence in the purpose of the data collected, and ensure that where an HEI is making a significant effort to improve, it won't get lost in the detail of new weightings or sections. VC's lose interest when you have to explain how P+P methodology not performance has significantly altered the final position in the table.

I think it is really positive that the League does have a 'random' element that continually improved performance does count in the final results - as it means the top ranking Uni will change based upon performance.

Some aspects of EMS data are poorly defined and not audited at all, so these as base data need to be used, but used with caution. E.g. this year there is more data on waste arising, and no real view on how P+P will use this to assess performance.

2. Overall very worthwhile. Process not onerous.
3. I'm afraid what was a good idea is fast losing any credibility. The first year had some effect at this institution but the lack of robust and constantly changing criteria means senior management, perhaps justifiably, no longer take it seriously. Leaders in the sector in certain areas are allocated poor performance, which can be

extremely demoralising.

Am dreading spending time filling in FOI request rather than doing my job.

I think the EAUC view given in a recent edition of Earth is spot on;

'I am confident student-led organisations will

continue to challenge us – and so they should! I do though think it is time we made it clear that we have mechanisms in place allowing us to benchmark our own performance and that we are concerned that a less robust instrument is beginning to show signs of doing more harm than good.'

4. Online submission is very useful and a modern approach, but I still need access to a pdf copy of the questions to take to meetings and share with people I need to get information from.
5. We appeared to do well in 2009 because our EMS submission the year before had wrongly double counted our CHP electricity generated on site with our grid electricity - so it appeared we had dramatically reduced our carbon footprint in the subsequent year.

In effect though - as a successful research led (both Science & Engineering and Medicine) we are inevitably required to run very energy intensive labs etc where the research is conducted. This is not necessarily a bad thing and I wonder how you can take account of this

6. You really need to have an aspect measuring the social sides more - there is not much in the formal HEFCE or REF system for those unis doing lots of community engagement, or student volunteering, for example.

P&P Response:

We're really grateful for your constructive feedback and are keen to continue getting your input to shape and improve the Green League year on year – that's why we've set up the [Green League Oversight Group for 2010 and Stakeholder Area of our website](#) and will continue to hold consultation events and questionnaires throughout the year. Key themes we will be taking into consideration with the Green League going forward are:

a need for more transparency in our methodology

issues of fairness for smaller institutions and those in devolved nations

concerns about the EMS data we use as part of our ranking

a desire for the Green League to keep challenging and pushing the sector further

the need for a phased introduction of new criteria

Question 2:

Environmental staff: What do you think would be the best way for the Green League to compare and score environmental management staff capacity by institution? Should we change the weighting given to part/full-time/ other staff initiatives? How can we best differentiate between large and smaller institutions?

1. I think having a full time environment manager is crucial, the other environmental staff who are part time should get less weighting
2. This really needs to be worked out on ratio of environmental staff to student FTE. e.g.

Institution a - 2 FT environmental staff and 20000 students, ratio of 1 to 10000.
Based on last years criteria scores 8 points.

Institution b - 0.5 FT environmental staff and 5000 students, ratio of 1 to 10000.
Based on last years criteria scores 2 points.

3. Use FTEs, currently a University with one person responsible for travel, waste, energy etc scores more than 1 for each on 4 days a week
4. Perhaps do it on a turnover basis. The old metric originally developed by the Audit Commission in a report in the 1980s suggested 1 full time Energy Manager / specialist per £1m of fuel spend. Perhaps wd be appropriate to take say 1 fulltime environmental specialist per £100m turnover? - where that includes energy, waste management/recycling and travel - all under the banner of sustainability?
5. Weight the provision on FTE's maybe
Some small Institutions cannot afford dedicated staff and therefore are disadvantaged against those that can employ one or more dedicated persons. It should be recognised that some cover the remit as part of much wider portfolio of responsibilities
6. include those directly involved in increasing community engagement
7. By measuring performance rather than numbers of staff - it's not possible to assess the right level of staff per institution - it's the right outputs that count.
8. Make staff relevant to size (less points overall). Doesn't matter about staff if actually improving ie. Give points for spreading to wider staff/students
Too many points?
9. Mainly happy with how this was scored last year. Need to give credit for staff who spend part of their time on env. Management. Need to differentiate between large and small institutions by assessing no. of FTE staff against no. of students.
10. Higher level governance and support may be more important
11. Use Governance and Process in UtC
12. Not relevant – don't include it. Number of staff does not equate to environmental performance improvements. Roles and responsibilities should be embedded within mainstream staff as required by EMS
13. Harder for smaller unis. More about structures than individual actions/actors. The points should be performance not how you get it. Governance and senior management commitment.
14. Environmental responsibilities span very many job functions at xxxxxx so reporting as single environment manager (FT) is not reflective of the actual resource

P&P Response:

Without the expertise and championing of professional staff dedicated to environmental management, it has been repeatedly demonstrated that green initiatives in universities are unlikely to be systematic, well-coordinated and resourced, or have significant, sustainable success. Environmental managers develop objectives and set priorities with significant, time-bound targets and can co-ordinate the work to fulfil them.

The [Green League 2009](#) revealed significant progress in this area as 67% of universities (85 institutions) now have at least 1 full-time environmental manager. This represents a large increase since publication of the [first People & Planet Green League in 2007](#). Sector-wide carbon reduction targets also now provide clear incentives for institutions to allocate sufficient staff capacity to managing their environmental impacts. Commensurate with

these increases, we have reduced the overall number of points allocated to this criteria to focus the Green League 2010 on other innovations essential for a university's low-carbon transition journey.

After consultation with our stakeholders, we have also amended the methodology slightly to make the allocation of points in this category fairer to smaller institutions. Points this year are awarded to institutions based on the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) posts per 5,000 FTE students as previous Green Leagues have shown this to be the level of staff capacity required to manage the university's environmental impacts. Further points are awarded where an institution can show that there is at least one member of staff with overall responsibility for strategy and implementation of environmental management policy which forms at least 50% of their job description.

Questions 3.

Student accommodation: How could/should the Green League account for and score the differences between universities with and without halls of residence?

1. As energy, water and waste are all included in the price students pay for halls it is very difficult to influence, all we can do is educate our students to use less resources. I think this area should get less weighting
2. Split scoring for the two categories. Not an easy one admittedly.
3. May be best to simply take the Academic Accommodation data only from EMS? and then could separately do a little study on Accommodation ... BUT a lot of the data is even more patchy in the Accommodation sector so best omit altogether?
4. They should be looked at separately with perhaps a combined category
5. don't: they all need to become green
6. I would like Green League to consider how it might use wholesale measures related to Carbon Reduction Commitments as these will in the future also be ranking carbon in league tables and will affect many HEIs. At present, it is highly likely that P+P, EMS and Government will all have implemented a different 'footprint' measure for an organisation.
7. Significantly – as residences have a significant impact on our environmental impact
8. Not applicable to our institution
9. managed? Owned?
10. V.v. Important – needs to be included but differentiated, need to accommodate for halls emissions, problems with outsourcing – (ie another audit?). Student Switch Off.
11. Difficult, often an area of influence rather than control
12. Yes, and make allowances for them but cannot audit the 3rd party providers
13. Needs to be included

P&P Response:

We recognise that it is a very difficult area to accommodate the wide differences between outsourced and university-managed accommodation with the current data available to People & Planet. The feedback did not suggest any consensus approach to tackling these variances – nearly all suggestions came with provisos about the difficulties of obtaining data on 3rd party-managed accommodation. People & Planet has decided not to change the methodology in this area, as doing so would require either the collection of difficult-to-obtain third party data or a complete change in methodology from previous year which would have significant impacts on the Green League ranking. We will, however, be taking steps to influence the collection of EMS data to reflect this significant discrepancy between universities, and have also ensured that the weighting in the Green League methodology 2010 minimises those discrepancies. For example, this year the Green League focusses

more on measuring universities absolute performance against national targets rather than against each other. We will continue to look at this area carefully and consider all our options.

Question 4:

Rewarding improvement: Do you have any feedback on the balance of points available in Green League 2009 for % changes in performance, over pure performance data? How would you recommend we overcome any problems with this?

1. Universities that are constantly building and improving their environmental progress, should get more credit. Also it can be difficult once you have put a lot of measures in place, to keep momentum and it would be good to see points just for having some things in place without a necessary improvement (not always possible to improve in some areas..if you are already doing a very good job)
2. This certainly needs to be included. Should be a sliding scale, for example and institution who purchase 100% green electricity cannot score in the % increase category, they should score here as a matter of course. For those at the top end of the range 80-90% there should be a weighting to show good performance.
3. Need to address issues of EMS first
4. I strongly feel that you MUST not mux up the improvement factors in the weighting for each / any specific scoring applied to achieve the degree positions. I strongly feel however that the commentary - and the way you broadly present the League - should instead celebrate those that have demonstrably changed performance / numbers of people applied etc. It might mean that you need to accept wider bands for the "grades" as more institutions achieve very acceptable performance levels. Any shoving down of evidently satisfactory places to 2:2 status will inevitably reduce the standing of the GL and undermine it.
5. Cannot comment need time to look at the data
6. Relate them directly to the new sector targets from HEFCE for carbon reduction
7. By sticking with a methodology for more than a year and seeing how it develops.
8. Could be set against the university's baseline.
9. Again, difficult to manage improvement due to diversity of institutions. Better to focus on externally verified information which is more reliable and provide assurance.
10. Once you're at 100% you're screwed. Needs to be pure performance (maybe baseline based?)
11. Should be more emphasis on percentage change
12. yes, given the significant issues with EMS data/ Also if you're improvements have plateaued there is no recognition of this.

P&P response:

The Green League 2009 increased the weighting for the improvement in an institution's performance over the institution's absolute performance figures. This was done to reward those institutions which demonstrated considerable improvement and clear determination to tackle their environmental impact. No institution has ever performed so well that it does not have room for improvement, however this approach did have the effect of reducing the overall points available to higher performing universities.

People & Planet respects and recognises the fact that environmental improvements will happen over different timescales (for example, a big improvement one year, followed by 3 years with less change). In light of this, the performance criteria for the Green League 2010 return the emphasis to measuring absolute performance rather than improvements. People & Planet feels it is important to celebrate improvements, even in those performing less well overall, and will continue to do this by highlighting key 'movers' within the Green League. However, we have taken on board feedback from our stakeholders and put more weighting

on absolute performance in the Green League 2010.

Question 5

We are aware that a number of institutions also now take part in Universities that Count. How could we synchronise our submission process and timeline with Universities that Count better?

1. I'm glad that the league is after the UTC as most managers are very busy in February with this and green gown awards
2. Simply replace green league with UtC
3. UTC is subject of an entirely separate process and needs a lot more work on it to make it genuinely helpful for the sector. Probably best to keep yours clear for now. BUT don't follow them by going for bloated questions / endless demands for volumes of data / evidence. Suggest you really focus very closely on "does this absolutely and clearly differentiate X from Y institution?" And cut out / eliminate questions which really don't add value / make the difference.
4. Do not know not really aware of Universities that Count
5. don't know, but hurry up and do it; another newspaper tried to set up a new league table and that would be crazy - you MUST go more broad to other aspects of sustainable development like social involvement
6. Please don't. Completing two questionnaires at the same time would be extra stress on staff and resources. UTC is voluntary, but both it and Green League require data that is largely out of date.
7. Is there a place for both leagues? A lot of work, but copy and paste possibilities. Make UtC mandatory and publicly reported
8. Don't need both
9. Perhaps you should join forces with UtC. Use their more rigorous and comprehensive assessment but get it made public! One green league table for the sector, with all institutions to complete it.

P&P response:

People & Planet has begun discussions with Universities that Count about the future of both initiatives. For the moment, the Green League remains the only published comparator of environmental management and performance for the HE sector covering all HE institutions.

Question 6:

How can we make the submission process for Green League easier /less time-consuming for environmental managers? Do you have specific suggestions for changes to the timeline or format?

1. Can you copy UTC, and pre fill sections you already know the answers to, from last years survey ?
2. None, although do we need to re-submit the same data as last year. Suggest only submitting updated policies etc.
3. Check for info that is already on webpages eg recycling data, carbon figures before asking for data via FOI
4. Satisfactory format as a word document. I'd suggest any way possible for the work done for the submission to be somehow formatted so that it could be mounted on the institution's web site as a clear, proud, statement of where they have gotten to - and give an extra point for this. Ideally ask respondents if they will allow the submission to be made available on the web!
Information transparency is key driver ...
5. Web based submission process would be good, access to the previous year's

- submission would be good which is what you get when completing EMS returns
6. Its pretty good, actually. Especially if we could have access to last year's returns and modify them as we go along; that might save some bother
 7. I think it has worked OK in the past, although with some difficulties on the technical web submission.
 8. The submission process last year was good. Straightforward and more evidence-based (which is crucial!). Online system was good
 9. Not sure that it should be less time-consuming – just more transparent and engaging
 10. Ensure systems are operational on submission
 11. Currently ok as long as IT problems are tackled
 12. really good except for crashing

P&P response:

The Green League 2010 again uses an online survey format to make submissions by universities as simple and quick as possible. This can be filled in by a number of people over a period of time and saved along the way. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to pre-fill questionnaires with last year's responses, although to make the process as efficient and simple as possible we have provided each university with a link to their 2009 Green League submissions to enable copy and pasting of unchanged information and links.

Question 7:

Weighting: Do you think the Green League 2009 criteria were weighted appropriately? Please comment on each criteria below.

1. Universities that are not members of the Students Association, and hence can't enter Sound Impact Awards, got no points last year....even if they had an active P&P group and were very keen to promote environmental issues in their students unions. Maybe give one point just for having a P&P group. Also our students union have developed their own environmental policy separately from the University, but this receives no recognition.

Due to student pressure we are changing from bottled water (Eden Springs) to point of use chillers. This will result in our water consumption rising (according to green league criteria) and we will lose points

2. This section does not work properly, ticks can only be assigned to one box.
3. No comments on weighting
Pointless exercise without addressing issues of EMS etc first

More criteria! Help!!

HEFCE will be monitoring carbon management plans, we already have enough reporting mechanisms to respond to

4. Really not sufficiently clear in Qs above what the total adds up to - is it 100%?
Cannot respond to the Q in format provided so shall make comments here:

Last year we introduced some new criteria and changed the weighting of others. Please rate the weighting/existence of last year's criteria (numbers show the points awarded to each criteria) Environmental Management (Section total - 40) Fair enough!

Environment policy (8) OK

Environmental management staff (10) OK

Environmental management staff (10) OK

Environmental Auditing (8) NOT AT ALL clear that a formal EMS / ISO14001 is necessarily appropriate for an HEI! so this Q needs broadening considerably to embrace evidence of institution-wide review of policies and practices ... I don't think the sector wd be any better off for spending loads on consultants and accreditation to standards originally derived for manufacturing processes. THINK AGAIN ON THIS Ethical investment (4) Maybe rename Socially Responsible Investment practices and procedures?

Carbon management Plan / Climate Action Plan reviewed in last year (6) [NB HEFCE likely to require this]

Fairtrade University Accreditation (2) Definitely keep this as a pointer to a willingness to recognise trade justice issues

Environmental impact of Student Union (2) Sound Impact Awards entry? Link up somehow?

Environmental Performance (Section total - 30) Take great care about deriving any idea of X being better than Y simply because it has a low CO2 footprint / sq.m - this may be most superficial and NOT helpful as one might be simply classrooms and another hosting a facility used by reserachers all over UK

Energy sources (eg renewables, CHP) (4) I think you shd use the term Low / Zero Carbon Technologies to recognise on-site generation which does not rely on centralised grid for all consumption

Change in % energy from renewables (2) So minute as you currently define it - this is irrelevant and probably better dropped

Waste recycling rate (2) OK

Change in % waste recycled (2) See commentas above about celebrating "improvements" in OTHER ways than doubling up the relevant scor. Otherwise you are absolutely penalising those who have done well / at the top of the game but nowhere to go!

Change in % waste reduced (4) Ditto

Carbon emissions per head (4) Take GREAT care with this sort of metric - see above comments

Change relative to other institutions (4) Ditto and I don't think there should be a mix of absolute and relative scoring within the main matrix. Do this separately to celebrate the movers / improvers!

Water consumption per head (4) DITTO - total difference from an arts based place to a reseacrh heavy medical labs etc.

Change in consumption per head (4) See comments above

5. Not able to complete the above, ticks not remaining as shown

6. This survey doesn't work too well. It won't let me have more than one response in each column e.g. only one response can be "far too much" etc.

P&P's response:

Apologies to those who filled in this question online as there were issues with the formatting of question. In response to specific points, those with student associations not part of the NUS were eligible for points last year, as we surveyed student unions not affiliated with NUS.

Issues with EMS: We have been engaging actively with Hefce, who manage EMS on behalf of all UK funding councils, and raised a number of the concerns brought up in the consultation event and survey responses. People & Planet will continue to

Question 8: New Criteria (online responses only)

Sustainable Food procurement policy (ie. local/seasonal, packaging)

1. Local food will be difficult to source in many areas of Scotland, I think so long as it is policy where possible it would be fairer

- 2.Great
- 3.Take care - very open to interpretation - suggest you research whether any others have identified a KPI?
- 4.Okay
- 5.yes please
- 6. No

Food certification (eg. Soil Association For for Life standard)

- 1. Ask if your University offers organic and/or vegetarian meals in all of it's canteens ?
- 2.Good
- 3.Could be a "stretch" criterion - but wd need to determine what percentage of the food supplied on site met the criteria
- 4.Not much help if catering outsourced
- 5.too early; not well known enough; flag for next year
- 6.No

Procurement (ie. measuring and inclusion in carbon management plan)

- 1. good idea, although carbon trust were not happy that I included procurement in my carbon plan, they didn't include it in any of their spreadsheets or templates for the carbon management programme
- 2.Not a good idea. Data is not likely to be accurate. Suggest looking at actual proof of procuring local supplies.
- 3.Everyone recognises that this is V difficult - embodied energy etc extremely tricky to pin down withon years of work
- 4.fine but weak
- 5.too early; not well known enough; flag for next year
- 6.Possible single Sustainable Procurement Framework question for these.

Ethical procurement (eg. Policy or signatory to Workers Rights Consortium)

- 1. Again, good idea but who checks it's being enforced ?
- 2.good
- 3.See Scottish Govt Sustainable Procurement Action Plan - for requirements
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/10/sspap
- 4.No
- 5.yes please
- 6.No

Transport (eg. measuring and inclusion of staff/student air travel in carbon management plan)

- 1. staff air travel yes, student air travel no. We can not influence where students come from and are delighted to have a multicultural university. Also foreign students bring to the university much needed fees and it would be counter productive (and possibly harmful) to the University to try and cut down the number of international students
- 2.Staff travel fine. Student travel not easy to measure, can only be an educated guess. Include only if data is gathered from each institution in the same way, maybe provision of a template?
- 3.Starter should be a Staff and a Student Travel Survey with Travel to work and study by modal share recorded - within last 5 years [cannot expect more frequently] THEN - SEPARATE Q about the three different aspects of Air Travel - Overseas Students trips to/from each year; Int'l Academic Conference flights; Other Business / work related flights

4. Yes - part of Scope 3 data
5. yes please
6. No

Transport (eg. provision of low-carbon transport infrastructure/services like cycling/buses)

1. good idea, points for having e.g. Cycle Friendly Employer award (or similar)
2. Great
3. Suggest a percentage of revenue and capital committed to same against turnover
4. Yes
5. not appropriate - what if in country vs city???
6. No - my University is based in a city centre next to a bus station - does it need its own bus service too?

Community engagement (eg. departmental energy champions project, curriculum options, funds for student sustainability projects)

1. Good idea, also look at number of partnerships University is involved in within the local community
2. Great
3. Somehow incentivise / recognise student placements for socially-useful work? / real life experience enhancing their Graduate Attributes
4. Okay
5. YES PLEASE ABOUT TIME!!!!
6. Possibly some aspects such as curriculum options, but again each HEI should be allowed to develop its own relevant solutions. If a benchmark doesn't exist, I think the P+P league table will just become too onerous

Bonus points (for eg. unis signed up to 10:10 or Carbon trust standard)

1. Not sure, e.g. we haven't joined carbon trust Standard as we have exemption from the CRC(carbon reduction commitment) due to our efficient CHP (we also have climate change levy exemption). Universities only join carbon trust standard (at cost approx £8,000) as it gives them extra points in the CRC table.
2. Great re 10:10, although smaller institutions could not afford the CT standard. If not in CRC there is little point in signing up, suggest inclusion in HECM as an alternative.
3. Good idea. Need to frame this under Sector Leadership? / responding to the global challenges facing our society?
4. Possible
5. yes please
6. Depends on the value of bonus scheme. CTS is audited and has value, but 10:10 is just a pledge

Are there other areas of environmental management and practice that you think should be incorporated into the Green League?

1. This is UN year of biodiversity....ask who is holding an event or similar to highlight this ?
2. On site composting; Actual projects implemented to reduce carbon emissions;
3. Recognise engagement with other organisations / civil society in transferring skills and knowledge to the wider community?
4. audits of the curriculum for Sust Dev concepts
5. I think this should be used with caution - if you are measuring performance that's great, but the more diverse this league table becomes the more disinterested VCs will be if it is inflexible about approaches and priorities of each HEI