

Case Study

Visioning Sustainability for Change 2014-15

Key Points

- A stimulating project based learning activity that developed learner awareness and experience of the business relevance of sustainable development agendas.
- An example of authentic professionally oriented learning that succeeded in prompting participants to consider their own agency in implementing organisational change through policy proposal.
- The task engendered a high level of student engagement, producing some outstanding and viable behavioural change solutions to the real world sustainability issues addressed.

Who?

The Cardiff School of Management 2014-15 Visioning Sustainability for Change module was delivered in collaboration with Cardiff Met's Sustainable Campus scheme which seeks to implement authentic 'real world' sustainability oriented learning across Cardiff Met curricula. With a view to further developing the previous inaugural iteration of the module, Learning and Teaching Development Unit worked with module leader Dr. Dino Minoli to co-ordinate and deliver the third year module to a cohort of 67 students who came from various CSM based programmes including BA Business and Management Studies and BA Marketing Management.

Why?

For Management students about to enter the professional arena 'real world' experience of how sustainability issues can impact upon the running and decision making processes of an organisation is a valuable asset. Recognition of the business relevance of sustainable development agendas and the importance of addressing sustainability oriented issues coupled with an ability to identify relevant opportunities, research influencing factors and propose creative solutions are key aptitudes desired by industry in business graduates. The Cardiff School of Management is committed to providing innovative learning opportunities that address the needs highlighted above whilst aligning such provision with relevant QAA subject benchmarks and guidance documents.

How?

As part of the students' final year learning provision the module seeks to consolidate prior learning through the application of disciplinary theory and skills in a practical 'near world' context. LTDU's Sustainable Campus initiative linked the module with staff from Cardiff Metropolitan University's Estates department thus providing an authentic organisational context for the assessment project to focus on. Estates staff identified nine authentic sustainability issues faced by managers and residents of the university halls of residence. Students chose one of the identified issues to research in order to generate a realistic behavioural change solution supported by proposed organisational policies. Students formulated their solutions using the DEFRA 4E model of change agency which provides a framework for implementing policy and behavioural change through analyses of the categories of 'engage, enable, exemplify and encourage'. Students liaised directly with Estates staff who became 'project clients' providing statistics and information regarding the halls of residence sustainability issues. Students also engaged directly with the real world 'target user group', the halls residents whose behaviours were being targeted. Through focus groups the students were able to gain a fuller picture of the barriers to behavioural change and thus more effectively address them in their solutions and policy propositions. Student proposals were assessed via the submission of an academic poster which required students to first conduct their research (relevant data submitted via appendices) before distilling their policy change proposals into a concise and visually appealing format that addressed the DEFRA 4E model; secondly students gave a 10 minute presentation of the poster and answered assessor's questions regarding their proposals.

Outcomes

Student engagement, participation and contribution were high throughout the course – it was clear from the standard of work submitted that most students recognised the importance of the subject matter as it relates to their broader studies. The use of a live, project based approach proved to be successful in aiding students to bridge the gap between theories and related professional practice.

