

Introduction to Responsible Futures

Responsible Futures is our new, whole-institution approach to embedding social responsibility and sustainability across the formal and informal curriculum across both HE and FE. It is a supported change programme and accreditation mark that works to put sustainability at the heart of education.

Responsible Futures works to create an enabling environment in which staff and students can work together to embed social reasonability and sustainability into their teaching and learning. It seeks to legitimise and mainstream education for sustainable development, ultimately helping to ensure students leave education with the knowledge and attributes needed to lead society to a more just and sustainable future.

The scheme actively facilitates close working partnerships between students' unions and their institutions through a structured framework of criteria drawn from good practice across the sector. Partnerships can personalise their approach by selecting the criteria that suit them, including developing some of their own self-defined criteria. Partnerships take part as a cohort which share and learn together as they proceed through the accreditation, convened and supported by NUS. When they are ready, partnerships are audited by a team of trained students, coordinated by NUS, resulting in a feedback report. Accreditations are awarded annually and last for three years.

Responsible Futures is the accreditation of the start of, and progression along, a journey of embedding social responsibility and sustainability into the educational purpose of an institution, rather than an end point of complete embedding.

For more information, see www.nus.org.uk/responsiblefutures.

1. General Information

We are really excited to be working with you on creating an enabling environment in which staff and students can work together to embed social reasonability and sustainability into their teaching and learning. This welcome pack aims to help you gain an understanding of what the years ahead will look like.

2. Communication

Responsible Futures jiscmail

The following [JISCMAIL](#) has been set up as a forum to discuss any matters as they arise with each other and share good practice. We will aim to send you fortnightly email updates on programme developments at a local and national level.

Press contacts

If you have any press enquiries, please [email](#) our press team or call them on: 07866 695 010. Please make your communication and/or press team aware that you are involved in the Responsible Futures programme. Please do share any press stories about Responsible Futures as they are published throughout the year.

3. Ongoing support

Monthly catch up phone calls with lead contacts

We will aim to have up to one hour monthly catch up phone calls with lead contacts. Ideally we would like to do this with both lead contacts (at the same time, one from the university/college and one from the students' union). This will be a space to discuss ongoing work on the accreditation criteria together.

Support days

We will have our introductory regional support day in November 2015. If you have not already registered and you would like to attend, please [email](#) Quinn Runkle. We will have a follow up support day in February 2016, please identify your availability for this by filling in the following [doodle poll](#).

Campus visits

We are able to offer one in-person on campus support day visit per year per partnership. This could include but is not limited to: a chance to work through the accreditation criteria, a workshop with students or staff, a presentation to stakeholders or attendance at a coordinating group meeting. Please book the visits individually with either Quinn Runkle or Alex Henderson. NB. These must take place before 26/02/2015.

National NUS and HEA Survey exploring student attitudes towards and skills for sustainable development

This research was first conducted in 2010¹, and was designed to improve the limited base of research on ESD. It aimed to better understand student attitudes to and aspirations towards developing skills in sustainable development both within and beyond higher education as well as understand the policy context within which higher education institutes (HEIs) are operating. The longitudinal element to the research aims both to further understand and build a clear picture of how attitudes may change throughout university careers as well as tracking any changes in attitudes and experiences amongst students entering their first year of study.

In collaboration with HEA we will produce an annual survey to capture student attitudes towards and skills for sustainable development. NUS will produce the survey, and provide details on how to promote this amongst your student population. Using this research we will produce an annual report.

Advisory Board

Our Advisory Board will continue to offer us strategic support for the programme. The Board comprises of influential representatives from the education and students' union sectors, Regional Centre of Expertise on education for sustainable development and relevant sector organisations (including EAUC, People and Planet and HEA).

National lead contact survey

Your participation in Responsible Futures helps us to shape the programme and we really value your opinions to help us to develop the programme further, so we offer a yearly chance to feedback on this via an online survey.

National celebratory event

Further information about this to follow.

4. Auditing

Timeframes

We will aim to offer two auditing periods each year. These are likely to fall in March before the Easter holidays and in November.

To offer flexibility you can pick when you want to be audited and this will vary between partnerships dependent on how long you think it will take you to complete the accreditation.

¹ Available at: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/sustainability/firstyearattitudes_finalreport.pdf and http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/esd/Student_attitudes_towards_and_skills_for_sustainable_development.pdf

If you are not ready to be audited you can wait until the next auditing period, either within the same year or the following year.

Our first auditing period will take place between 29 February – 24 March 2016. If you would like to be audited during this time please book your audit before 29th January by [emailing](#) Quinn Runkle. We will release dates for the next auditing period nearer the time.

How do the student-led audits work?

The student-led audits will take place over two days. Day one will consist of auditor training and carrying out the desk-based audits. The second day will be a chance for students to get involved in research about Responsible Futures, by conducting interviews with lead contacts and getting involved in focus groups.

This volunteer role allows students an opportunity to be involved directly in Responsible Futures and offers training to improve personal and professional skills. Following the audits, auditors receive a certificate, a letter of recommendation and a careers development document.

NB. Partnerships will need to recruit student auditors, provide catering and a room for the audits. NUS will provide you with support, advice and the template documents needed to do this.

5. Accreditation and scoring explained

To achieve the Responsible Futures accreditation mark, the Partnership must meet or exceed the score threshold of 200 points, which is exactly two thirds of the 300 points available, not including the three self-defined criteria (up to 30 additional points). Up to 94 of these points will be achieved through the 10 mandatory criteria, which must be completed to gain accreditation. All Partnerships will be audited to validate their scores. Any Partnerships that gain between 100 and 200 points will be accredited as Working Towards Accreditation. Responsible Futures is an accreditation mark, not a league table. We will always ensure we keep your score confidential to your Partnership.

6. Useful links

Our Responsible Futures **website**: www.nus.org.uk/responsiblefutures

Our **online workbook** which you will need to complete as you work through each criteria will be available online soon – the link and log in details will be shared as soon as it is ready.

Our **resource bank** will be available online soon. We keep this tool just for participants who have membership to the programme. If you have any pieces of good practice that you would be keen to share with others, please pass them on and we can consider adding them.

Throughout the year, we will keep adding to this, so keep checking back, if there is anything you feel is missing, please let us know.

Our **Responsible Futures logos** which you can use to promote the programme are included in the resource bank. Please feel free to use this on any related materials. NB. These are the generic logos and are different to the logos you receive once you are accredited.

7. Key contact list

Contacts:

Senior Project Officer – Communities & Curriculum

Quinn Runkle

Email: quinn.runkle@nus.org.uk

Sustainability Project Officer

Alex Henderson

Email: alex.henderson@nus.org.uk

Head of Sustainability

Jamie Agombar

Email: jamie.agombar@nus.org.uk

Insight Manager

Rachel Drayson

Email: rachel.drayson@nus.org.uk

8. Frequently Asked Questions

How long will the accreditation last?

Accreditation is valid for three years, at which time another audit will be required to re-validate your accreditation.

How do we use the logo?

Each institution will be given the appropriate logo – please use this widely to recognise your accomplishment and your partnership's commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. If you would like to provide further information about the programme, please link to www.nus.org.uk/responsiblefutures

How do we keep improving?

We encourage you to use the feedback from the final report and through the audit process to inform your work moving forward.

We would like to visit all pilot cohort institutions 18 months after the audit to conduct a follow-up review meeting. At this stage we would hope to see progress against the recommendations outlined in this report. The Responsible Futures accreditation will push the sector for continuous improvement.

What does the accreditation mean?

The “Responsible Futures Accreditation” means that you have gained the full accreditation by exceeding the score threshold of 200 (out of 300) and have demonstrated and evidenced your partnership’s commitment and progress for embedding sustainability and social responsibility across the whole institution.

How do we compare?

After the completion of all audits and an evaluation has occurred, a national report will be published examining the results of the pilot. This will outline the key findings from year one of Responsible Futures and will allow you to see the range of outcomes. Individual scores will always remain confidential. A similar report will be published annually to monitor changes in the sector.

Responsible Futures is not a league table and therefore individual scores will not be published. NUS will not share your scores, however, you are welcome to share them with others if you wish.

