

Sustainability Survey 2018-2019

- Nearly half of all students (49%) reported that they were aware of the UN SDGs, a significant increase from 36% in 2017-2018.
- Over a third of students (36%) reported that they are aware that UWE and the SU at UWE are working with the SDGs, an increase from 24% in 2017/2018.
- The SDGs most relevant to students' programme of study were gender equality (32%), infrastructure industrialisation and innovation (31%), decent work and economic growth (31%) and quality education (30%).
- 1 in 4 students reported that they had learnt about infrastructure industrialisation and innovation (26%), decent work and economic growth (25%), reducing inequalities (25%) and gender equality (24%) during their programme of study.
- The most frequently reported SDGs that were identified as issues important to students included climate change and impacts (68%), oceans seas and marine resources (68%), life on land (68%) and peace and justice (67%).
- The top six SDGs for action identified by students were climate change and impacts (49%), sustainable and responsible production and consumption (46%), life on land (45%), affordable and clean energy (43%), ocean seas and marine resources (42%) and good health and wellbeing (42%).
- The areas that received the most suggestions for improvements by students included promotion of activities, events and achievements, less plastic, food waste and clean energy.

1. Introduction

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a collective vision of the United Nations for a sustainable, fair and prosperous world, achieved by 2030. There are 17 goals and 169 targets, across the areas like poverty, health, education, gender equality, energy or climate action etc. (see below). Since the adoption of SDGs in 2015, cities, organisations and individuals across the world have pledged to get involved and become a driving force of the sustainability in their respective communities.



The education sector has been particularly encouraged to sign the SDG Accord, a tool helping to translate goals and targets into tangible actions. As a signatory of SDG Accord, UWE and The Students' Union at UWE have set out an ambitious vision to become a fully sustainable university – embed the principles of sustainable development across the buildings, services, culture and curriculum. The University has been on a journey to this end for several years. This involved both strategic, city-wide projects (such as the European Green Capital 2015) as well as campus-focused improvements, e.g. solar energy investments or contracts with fair trade suppliers. The cumulative efforts of Su at UWE and UWE staff and their partners resulted in recognition during the prestigious Green Gown Awards and NUS Responsible Futures accreditation in 2016.

With over 27,000 students across multiple campus sites, it is challenging to gauge how UWE students themselves are engaging with the sustainability whilst at university. Therefore, the aim of this report is to present the preliminary results of the online survey, which investigates students' awareness, priorities and recommendations with regards to embedding SDGs at the university. Specifically what we wanted to find out was:

- Whether students are they aware about the SDGs agenda?
- Do they know that the SU and UWE are working with the SDGs?
- How relevant are they to their programme of study and are they being covered in course content?
- Which SDGs are important to them?
- What priorities do students think the SU and UWE should be working on?

2. Survey Design

The data was collected over four months using the online survey tool, Bristol Surveys. The survey comprised of six closed questions on awareness, opinions and priorities and one open question

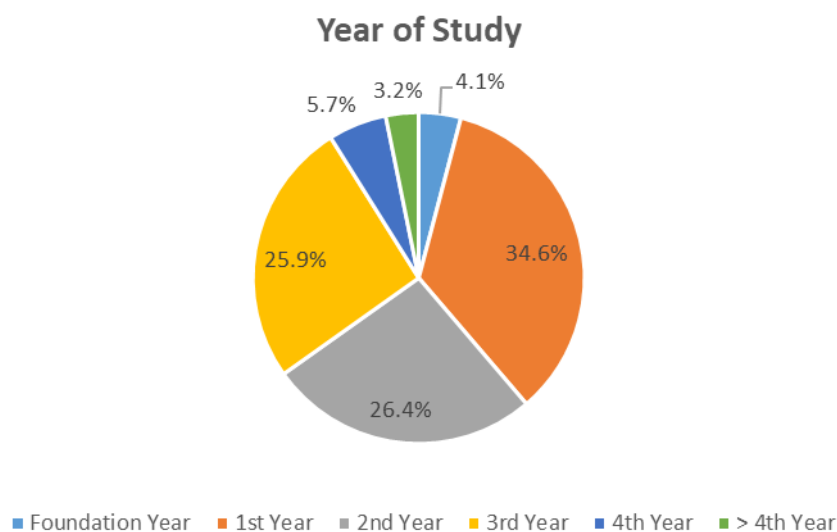
concerned with recommendations for The Students' Union and UWE. Furthermore, the survey asked students to provide demographic information on year of study, campus location and department.

3. Results

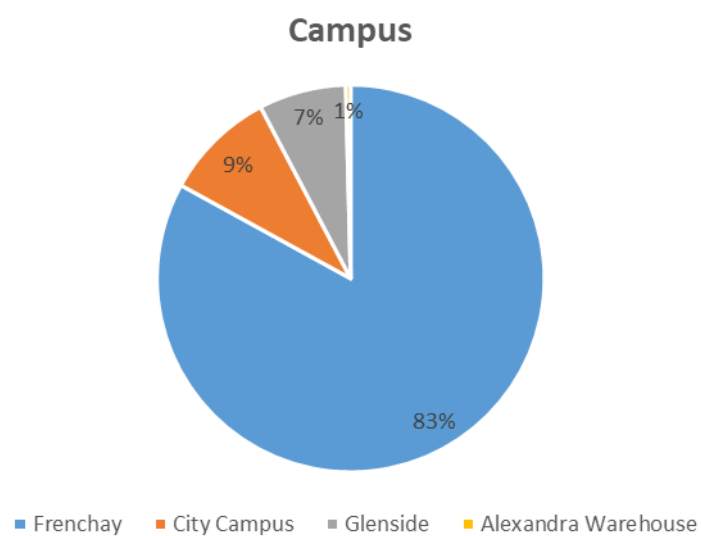
3.1 Demographics

In total 927 students responded to the survey, exceeding the threshold required to be confident that the sampled responses reflect the wider UWE student population (95% confidence interval, 5% error margin). This is an increase from 546 last academic year.

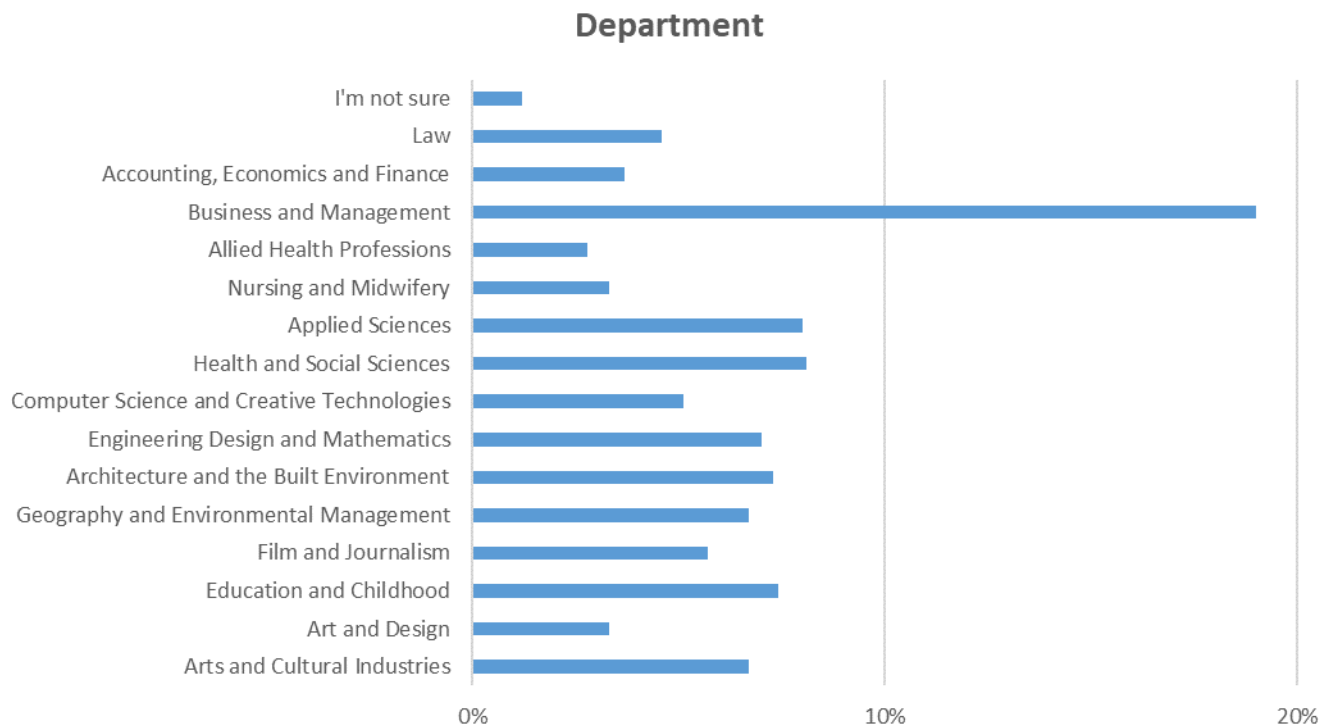
The students were broadly distributed across the study year groups, with approximately 35% identifying as 1st year, 26% as 2nd year and 26% as third year students. A limited number of students identified as Foundation year (4%) or 4th year and above (9%).



The majority of students that completed the survey studied at Frenchay Campus (83%).



Students who completed the survey were enrolled on a wide range of courses, with all academic departments evenly represented. The exception was Business and Management, who had significantly more students complete the survey.

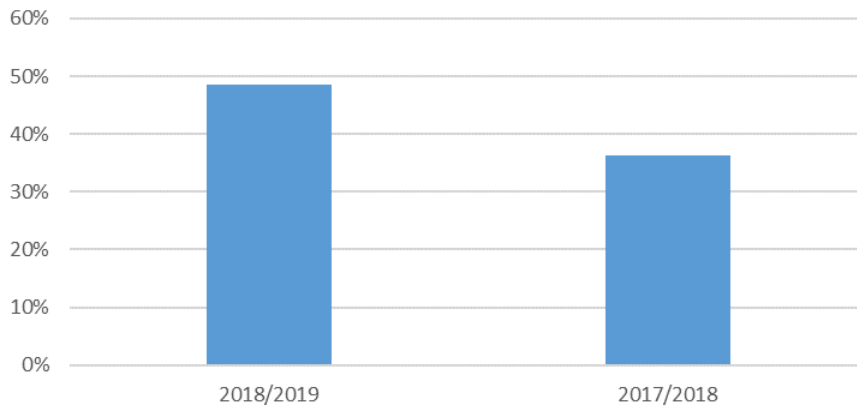


In summary, a high number of responses were received for the survey illustrating appropriate and sufficient reach. To improve responses from Foundation year and satellite campuses (Glenside, Bower & City Campus) additional direct marketing strategies may be considered. In addition, although a broad range of departments were represented in the current sample; it may be useful to explore why the Business and Management department received a higher response and how this could be transferred to other departments. Suggested reasons include the promotion of the survey by academics within lectures or the positioning of student reps outside of the Business School promoting survey completion face-to-face.

3.2 Awareness of SDGs

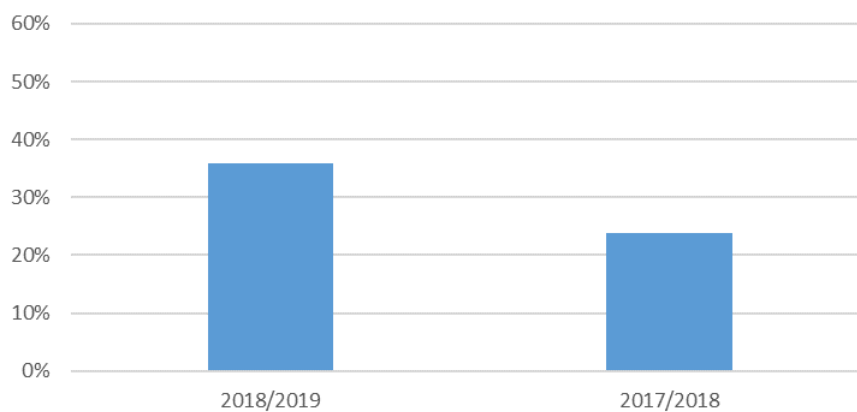
Nearly half of all students (49%) reported that they were aware of the UN SDGs, a significant increase from 36% in 2017-2018.

Were you previously aware of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?



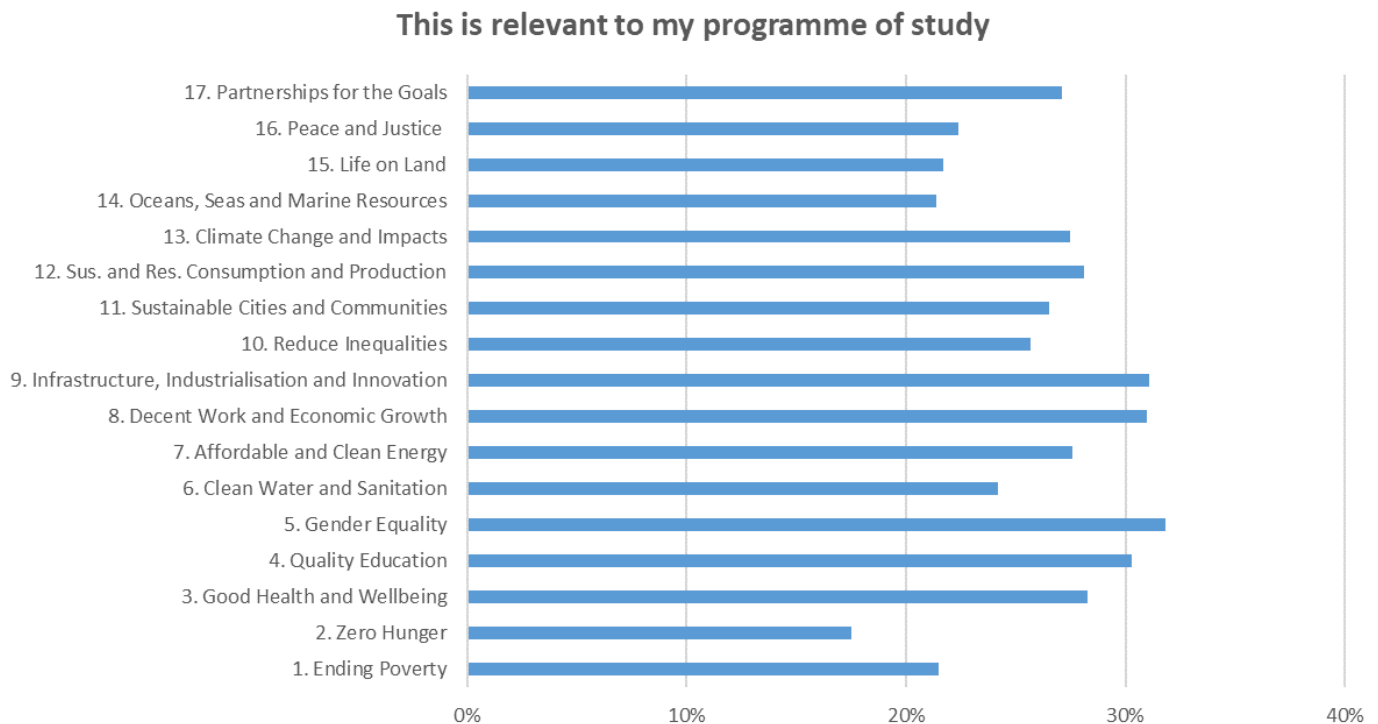
In line with this finding, over a third of students (36%) reported that they are aware that UWE and the SU at UWE are working with the SDGs, an increase from 24% in 2017/2018.

Are you aware that UWE and the SU at UWE are working with the SDGs?



These findings illustrate that significant progress has been made in raising awareness of the SDGs amongst UWE students. This momentum should be continued upon in the following academic year with the aim of reaching the majority (>50%) of students.

3.3 Relevance of SDGs to programme of study

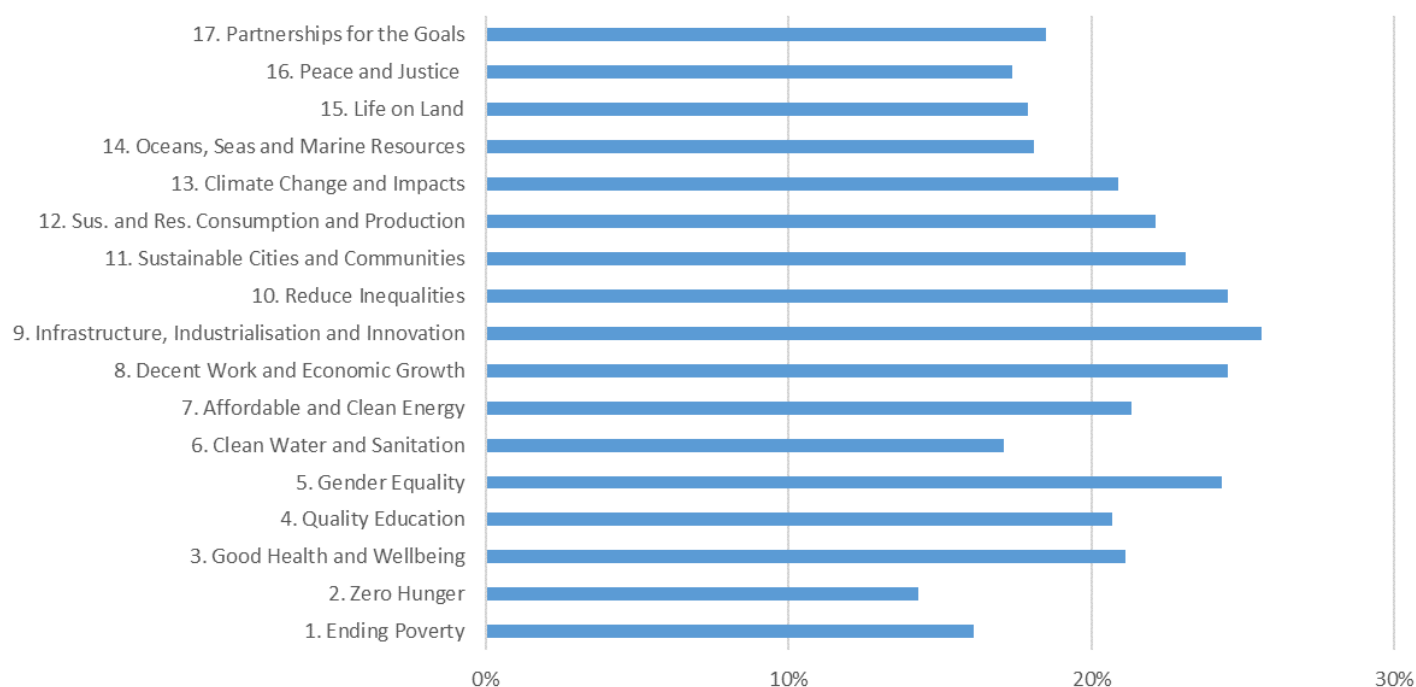


Students were asked to indicate which of the UN SDGs were relevant to their programme of study. The highest reported SDGs were gender equality (32%), infrastructure industrialisation and innovation (31%), decent work and economic growth (31%) and quality education (30%) which were reported by approximately a third of students. For the majority of other SDGs 1 in 4 (approximately 25%) of students reported that they were relevant to their programme of study. The SDG that was reported by the fewest students as being relevant to their programme of study was zero hunger.

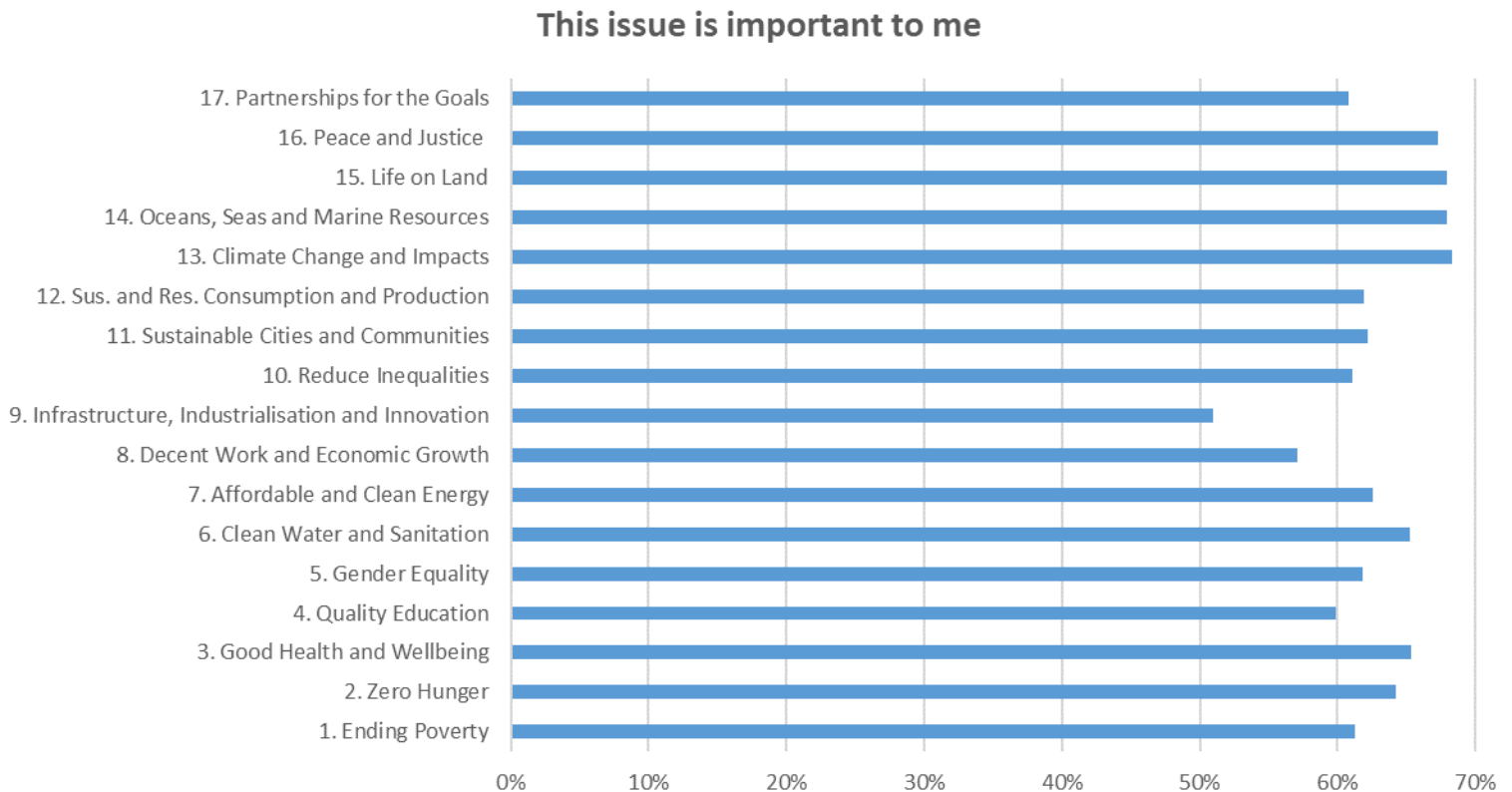
3.4 SDGs learnt about during programme of study

Students were asked to indicate which of the UN SDGs they have learnt about during their programme of study. Approximately 1 in 4 students reported that they had learnt about infrastructure industrialisation and innovation (26%), decent work and economic growth (25%), reducing inequalities (25%) and gender equality (24%) during their programme of study. The SDGs least learnt about in student programmes was zero hunger (14%), ending poverty (16%) and clean water and sanitation (17%).

We have learnt about this in my programme



3.5 SDGs important to me



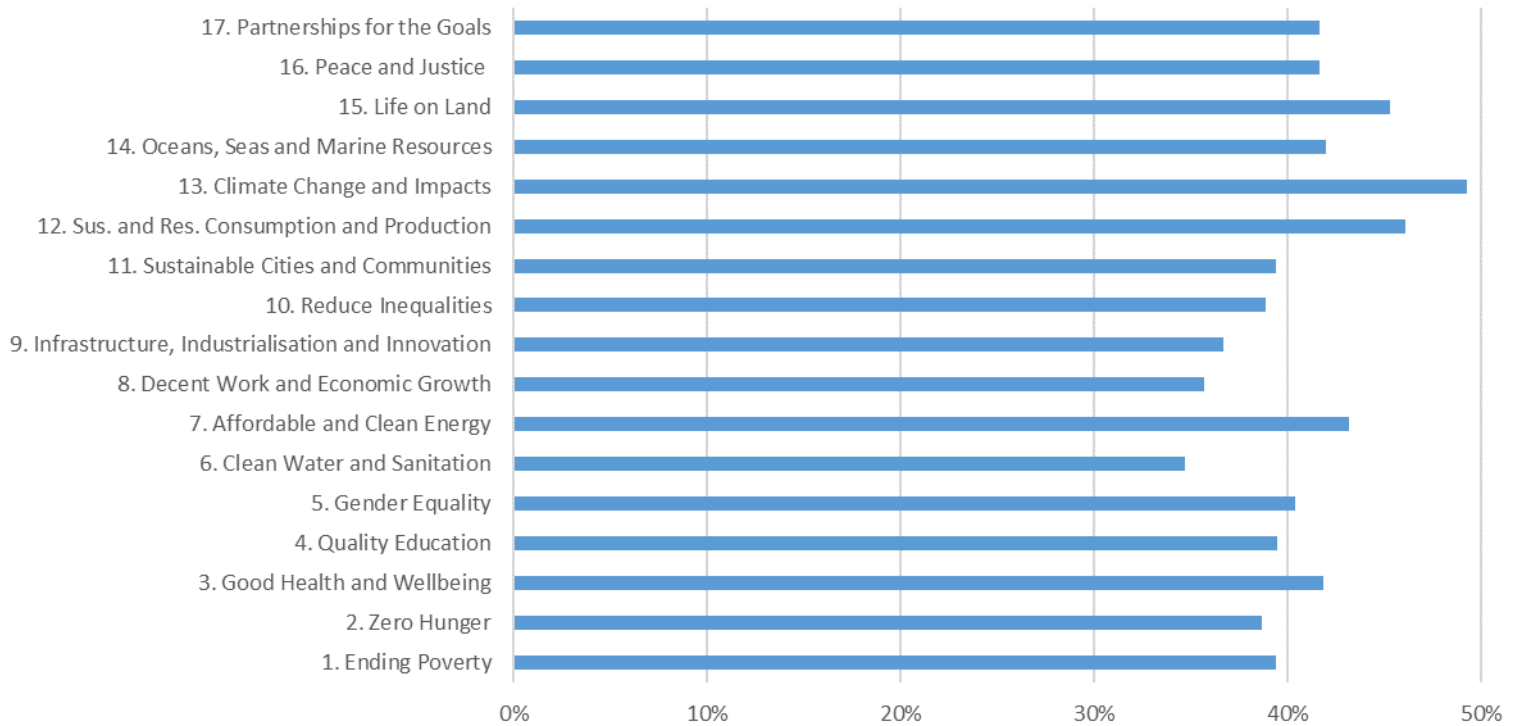
The most frequently reported SDGs that were identified as issues important to students included climate change and impacts (68%), oceans seas and marine resources (68%), life on land (68%) and peace and justice (67%). These were closely followed by good health and wellbeing (65%), clean water and sanitation (65%) and zero hunger (64%). The SDGs reported as less important to students included infrastructure industrialisation and innovation (51%) and decent work and economic growth (57%).

3.6 SDGs the SU at UWE should take more action on

Students were asked which SDGs they would like to see the SU at UWE take more action on. The top six SDGs for action identified by students were climate change and impacts (49%), sustainable and responsible production and consumption (46%), life on land (45%), affordable and clean energy (43%), ocean seas and marine resources (42%) and good health and wellbeing (42%). The three SDGs

of least importance for action reported by students included clean water and sanitation (35%), decent work and economic growth (36%) and infrastructure industrialisation and innovation 37%).

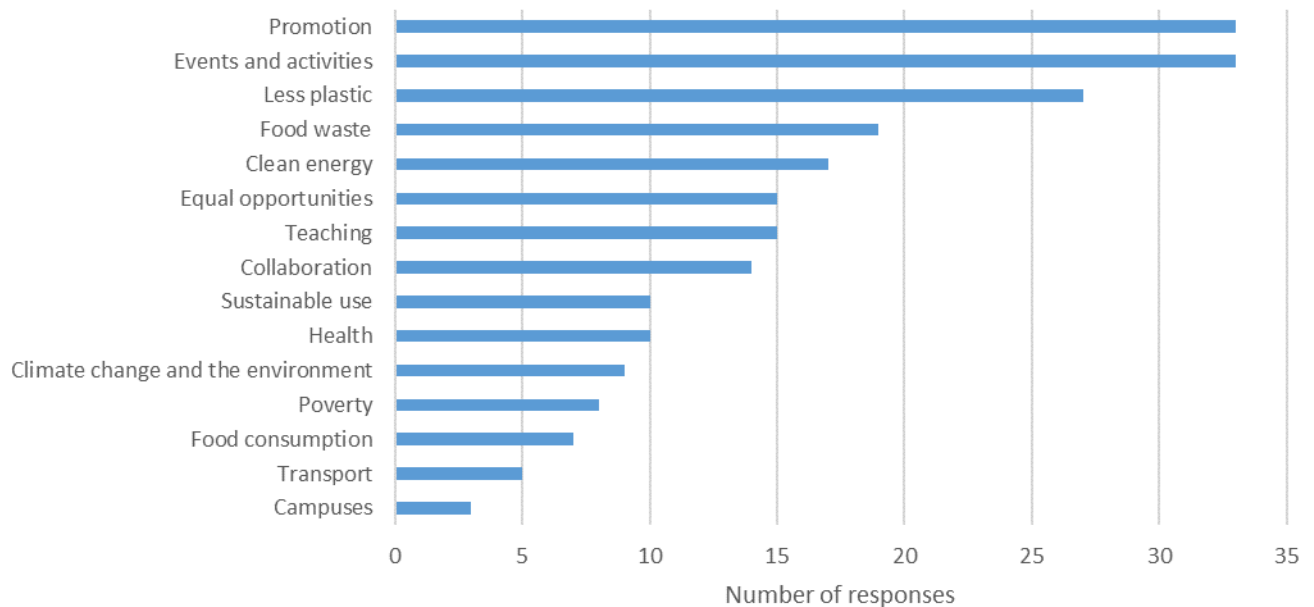
I would like to see the SU at UWE take more action on this issue



3.7 Open-ended question

In the final question students had the option to provide suggestions or to ask any questions about sustainability at UWE. In total 215 students provided comments which ranged from a single sentence to a detailed paragraph. Answers were grouped into the most commonly occurring themes (see below).

Areas in need of improvement most frequently suggested by UWE students



Some notable examples of suggestions in the frequently occurring themes included:

On promotion:

“I feel that with the right advertisement UWE would be able to both educate and advertise SDG's agendas. The use of social media will help the most and giving students an incentive will also work. Free or reduce priced courses on each of SDGs goals would be effective for many different ages and help to spread awareness.”

“The only suggestion I have is to possibly circulate a monthly email on how much energy has been saved or materials recycled etc....”

“One more thing, as for suggestions, it'd be great if UWE or The SU could host a forum/ conference to discuss issues regarding the SDG's and gain input from people different nationalities. I believe this will widen the perspectives of students as well as widen the magnitude of your efforts in solving the UN SDG's not just locally here in the UK but globally altogether.”

“I would love to see UWE presenting itself more visibly around Bristol as a beacon of sustainability for individuals, communities and businesses to learn from and work with. I think Uwe has the capacity to become an exemplar in sustainable education institutions and if love to help make that happen.”

“Shock factor statistic posters above recycling bins. Students often don't use the recycling bins properly. Also posters on excessive water consumption and negative effects in the UWE toilets - have walked in on taps left running numerous times. Turning off plugs at sockets - again, reminders should be put up. Students basically need some eco reminders. They are lazy and I'm sure the campus is wasting a lot of resources. Maybe posters in the OneZone about exactly how much energy, food

waste etc is being used on campus. An electronic email to state that posters have gone up around campus summarizing this so students are aware and will take notice of them.”

“Could be made clearer about the work the University is doing to help achieve these goals.”

On additional events and activities:

“I would like to see some organised events focusing around conservation and biological diversity, and sustainable preservation of nature.”

“Themed SU nights (ocean life for example) and for example 50% of bar profit and ticket prices go towards charities helping these causes.”

“I believe UWE as an organisation could have profound political influence, should it invest in a project to do so. I am confident there are students who can speak professionally, emotively and eloquently around sustainability from a number of faculties that could become involved in activist groups of political organisations/ debates.”

“More BYOB events to promote food wastage.”

“Affordable and community driven experienced and opportunities.”

“Promote and spread awareness of events like the recent Wildscreen Festival (which UWE sponsors).”

“Make films centred around issues in society.”

“A day should be created once a year for awareness for UWE students with regards to these goals. It should be a lecture-free day for all students. I'm not aware if there is such a day for now. If there is, more publications should be made to create better awareness.”

“Could do 'Vegan Mondays' at Uni and only sell vegan products, there are many alternative meat products you can choose to cater for those who eat meat- might be worth doing as it could introduce meat alternatives to people who may have negative opinions on them as they have never tried.”

On less plastic:

“Stop selling plastic disposable bottles of water. Instead sell affordable reusable ones and make sure people know where they can refill.”

“Would love to see less plastic in the SU shops and bar.”

“The SU could use more sustainable products in the form of reusable cups and refillable bottles of tomato and mayo instead of individual plastic bags.”

“Using cans instead of bottled water. There are companies that now only sell cans. I saw it in the gift shop at WWT Slimbridge not too far from Bristol.”

“Would like all departments to remove single use plastics. In particular I went to PAL training and there were bottles of water provided for each attendant and many stacks of bottles in the room which was disappointing and worrying to see. I can't understand why they don't have a water dispenser and it doesn't fit with UWE trying to work towards the SDG's.”

"I wish that UWE could provide better packaging for the food they sell in vending machines because that can help the environment."

"11, 12 and 15 could all be contributed to by the SU by simply creating a different cup system - plastic cups are ruining the planet, instead of a £1 deposit on plastic glasses they should introduce glasses students can buy and keep for nights at the SU just like done at most festivals. Cheaper drink if you bring your own SU pint glass?? Less plastic and less waste!"

"Free refillable water bottles given in Freshers packs. More water stations around campus."

"As far as what more UWE can do, I think more station to fill your water bottles and access to free hot water would cut down on disposable cups/bottles."

"More emphasis should be put on sustainable consumption, particularly in the cafes and bars. I'm disappointed in the Starbucks on site, as they offer a bring your own cup scheme however mine has been rejected before due to the staff not knowing the quantities and having to use a plastic cup to measure."

On food consumption:

"More vegan options and vegan based events and outreach."

"One of the biggest factors to climate change is the meat + dairy industry so maybe there could be more information on how to cut down on your intake or how to go vegan completely."

"Fewer meat and more vegetarian/vegan options (plus all fish sustainably sourced) would help."

"What we eat (the type of fish and food we eat) and how we use things also impacts these ecosystems and a greater awareness amongst all of us would help. All the above issues can be brought more into the daily awareness of how we shop and live and small steps all help towards solving these issues."

"SU shouldn't charge more for dairy milk alternatives."

On food waste:

"Waste management and the education of the importance of waste segregation could be improved on campus and in Uni accommodation."

"I think there should also be a larger range of recycling bins available, including food waste bins. I know there is the problem of smell, but I see so many people throwing banana skins, apple cores, orange peel, etc. in the main waste bins because there is not an alternative. There should be at least one big food waste bin available at major locations, such as canteens and libraries."

"Having more food waste bins around the campus - maybe some outside and not just in the cafe areas to encourage those sitting outside to not just throw their food in the landfill bin. A Bristol based company called Geneco help businesses become zero waste to landfill and use food waste to produce renewable energy - maybe something to look into?"

"A little unclear on how to correctly use the food waster bin in accommodation in campus; signs showing how to use it (disposal of waste especially) would be good!"

"I see a lot of mixed waste in the bins around campus, most of the time there are things that can be recycled in general waste bins. A lot of the time these are sandwich boxes, which I sometimes don't know how to throw away myself because the package is not pure plastic. Maybe this could be down to the cafeterias to not buy in sandwiches in packets (if possible)."

On climate change and the environment:

"I would like to see the topic of climate change discussed more, and see further action / awareness being spread."

"The impact of recycling and global warming should be tackled more in UWE, several students don't recycle or don't understand or know how to improve their carbon footprint."

"Awareness of the chemicals we use, such as cleaning products, shampoos, etc and flush into the system which has a knock on effect on the water system."

"I would really like to see more activity relating to climate issues, as we know just how important it is not just to be seen as doing something but actually changing things (and more importantly) whilst enabling a ripple effect with the public."

On clean energy:

"Input to UWE 2030 strategy to get it aligned to the IPCC recommendations on climate change, eg. Target of reducing carbon emissions by at least 45% by 2030 (stretch target should be more ambitious to allow for slower progress in developing countries)."

"I'd love to see more renewable energy systems in place around the Uni and also more engaging and educational info about energy saving and reducing climate change around campus."

"Energy waste is high in Uni with technology left on... Rooms can be too cold and others too hot poor ventilation and management"

"Create a green campus with solar panels or a wind turbine."

"About time for UWE to have its own wind turbine? Or solar tree for charging phones? Cool right? Become a carbon neutral university, at least."

"Would you expand any of the clean energy that UWE produce? Would you expand the solar panels on R block and the sports centre to other buildings around campus?"

"Too many lights are on. Switch some off. Ask those leaving class to switch off ALL electrical devices. - Build greener buildings - Promote your sustainability initiatives better. There is need for more engagement."

On teaching:

"I am on the business and events management course, it may be an idea to encourage the events students to put together events raising awareness / raising money for charities that promote these causes. They could use their experience on their course / in their essays."

"Weave sustainability thru informal and subliminal curriculum (as well as the sector-leading effort in embedding SDGs into formal curriculum). Change culture so that the Uni community collectively thinks and acts sustainably in everything it does."

"The SU needs to engage more with courses that are not inherently sustainability focused. Students on business, finance, law courses etc need to learn how these goals relate to them!"

"I think UWE could do more to make sure all student are aware of the goals- maybe have them as part of all course's induction sessions so students are aware of them from the outset of their time at UWE."

"Work alongside all course backgrounds for encouraging all to get involved with making a difference. Music Technology courses for instance are not involved in helping/educating in this area, however it would be awesome to be such."

"I think that all courses should have some sort of compulsory sustainable living sessions in some of their modules."

"More could be done to raise awareness by incorporating initiatives into course content."

On health:

"MUCH bigger emphasis also needs to be put on improvement of mental health support services. I believe the current system with only 6 sessions available is pretty poor and is not giving students the help they need. Many are deterred by this meaning they are even more unlikely to get help and consequentially suffer in silence."

"I have to admit that I am very impressed how Uwe supports and promote well-being and I am aware that help is provided which is amazing because when I needed I could go and talk with specialist which was really helpful. The whole process was also made easy because otherwise I would be put off if I have to go through the long process in order to get the appointment so I am very grateful for that."

"More talk of 'It's okay to not be okay'. There are so many pressures on students at University and it would be nice to see more about this, perhaps fundraiser events or even events with information and students shown how easy and available help is. I think this would help so many students and take a lot of the pressure off and therefore bettering their wellbeing."

"Also, I know that UWE is taking mental health services seriously, but there needs to be more access to resources. It takes 2 to 3 weeks to book an appointment with a wellness professional. This wait needs to be reduced significantly for those who need to talk face-to-face to someone during times of difficulty."

"More awareness of the dangers of drugs and alcohol within university culture."

On sustainable use:

"I don't know about other departments but the maths dept. uses a lot of paper for course handbooks. If the handbooks could be made mobile friendly it would save a lot of paper. Or the classes could all be done in a computer lab so that the handbook could be seen on screen too."

"Would like to see the computers set to print two sided as a default (at the moment they print single sided unless you remember to change it)."

"So many computers are left on in many rooms overnight and during the day. This can be easily prevented."

"Already work is being done to reduce food waste, recycle and grow food locally on campus (just a few examples) but I think UWE should focus on recycling as much as possible, using recycled or sustainable sources of materials for things wherever possible (whether it be learning supplies or packaging for things in the SU shops)."

On campuses:

"UWE and the SU should try to include all campuses in sustainability activities by bringing different departments together and increase awareness of campaigns and such activities."

"More opportunities for those at Glenside campus! That is actually at Glenside campus!"

"The SU at Bower could be more developed; it feels somewhat lacking compared to the other campuses."

On transport:

"Climate change is a huge issue and although UWE is doing well to encourage sustainable practices but there are still a lot of students driving in alone every day. Maybe some discount on train and buses?"

"Ensuring that when you restrict parking for public transport use you actually make sure those people have buses that go to UWE."

"Free permits for the +2 car park for carpooling staff and students."

"Car parking is bad due to the huge time issues involved using public transport."

"Air pollution along blackberry hill and college road, with the new road works it is even worse and is affecting my asthma."

On poverty:

"I find my life at university very unaffordable - after paying high rates of rent and travel fares I don't expect to have to buy £100 worth of books and case studies in order to be able to pass my exams."

“Actively support charities and work with the homeless in Bristol. This includes charity fundraising including an overnight sleep on the street. More support for students from less privileged backgrounds.”

“Affordable housing is a big problem in Bristol and a big campaign could raise awareness. The high rents charged to students and the uptake of these premises has a knock on effect to the residents of Bristol and their ability to find affordable housing.”

“However, I think it would be great to see the SU campaigning for students who struggle with money whilst at university as I think this is a common unspoken issue which a lot of students are dealing with on a daily basis, especially since Bristol is quite an expensive city to live in. I know some of my peers have struggled with mental health issues due to financial worries and it would be great to see universities begin to take responsibility for some the high cost of things like student accommodation etc. I think this links in well with the issue of poverty and homelessness.”

On Collaboration:

“Student union could act as a link between students and local community especially young people in attempt to inspire them and act as mentors. They should can have talks in schools around the area.”

“Maybe collaborating with various (Background checked) charities?”

“Collaborating with the University of Bristol and merging its students with our own rather than promoting rivalry and competition may help open up unprecedented doors and create a powerhouse and world of ideas unique to Bristol.”

“Form links with food banks and child poverty action groups. Arrange placements for students with them.”

“The SU are very good at what they do but I can’t help but think that if they had a better, more passionate committee then things will move at a faster pace. I feel as if committee members should be chosen on past experience and not voted for by the students who are doing it to get an incentive.”

“Would like to see more action everywhere, I think the SU is doing a decent job but for everyone, not just SU, we need to work harder.”

On Equal opportunities:

“Inclusion and widening participation to include non-standard student profiles.”

“I would like to see UWE doing more on equality and diversity because being an Asian-British I would love to take part and help in those programs.”

“Tackle sexual harassment in the classroom!”

“UWE really needs to work on their gender/minority issues.”

“There is discrimination of disabled, mentally ill and long-term sick students continuously by teaching staff with the refusal by staff to help students keep up/catch up with studies, refusal to use event capture software, and continued removal of audio/visual materials from lectures and other sessions.”

The open-ended answers broadly reflected the SDG's that students reported they wanted the Students' Union at UWE to take action on, and provided campus-level solutions to the issues they face on a daily basis. This includes climate change and impacts, sustainable and responsible consumption and production, affordable and clean energy and good health and well-being. It is clear that students are passionate about the SDG's and are keen to see action taken by the Students' Union and University to achieve them. Further work should focus on improving the promotion and communication of activities, events and achievements, as well as ensuring effective collaboration with a wide range of partners. Finally, the answers provided also highlighted what aspects of sustainability students would like to receive more information on. These included:

- What UWE has done so far?
- How they can get involved and make a difference?
- What extent is renewable energy used to power the buildings?

In addition to the suggestions made for improvements by students, some students also chose to highlight the successes of the Students' Union and Universities work on SDG's so far:

"I do think that the SU quite clearly does work hard to achieve not only a sustainable environment but also to create a genuinely inclusive atmosphere for students and people that come here. One that does actually make people feel included and comfortable with who they are and not just something done to tick a box and make people happy. It is encouraging to see. Of course more can always be done and I'm sure the SU and the rest of the university will endeavour to achieve this."

"This may sound a bit out of context, but I just wanted to let the student union or rather, the university know that the efforts in helping solve mental health issues and the recognition of gender equalities, UWE has done a brilliant job at those posters I've seen in toilets and on walls. I really admire the inclusivity of different kinds of people here in the UK and in UWE. It's a great environment to study in."

"I think UWE and the SU work hard to support and tackle issues in an appropriate and effective way."

"I am so happy that UWE are taking the lead to make change for the better. I love the fact that UWE has such a big respect for the alumni, it does not matter where we are from, our age, our size, nothing, they support us from beginning to start with the intention of educating us and giving us a bright future. I am very happy to be part of UWE because causes like this show that they are humble and caring."