**RESPONSIBLE FUTURES**

**FEEDBACK REPORT**

A confidential report for Manchester Metropolitan   
University and The Union at Manchester Metropolitan University

July 2022

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**OVERVIEW**

**Education for Sustainable Development requires constructively aligned teaching, learning and assessment activities designed to meet key Sustainable Development competencies and learning outcomes. It should provide learning experiences that transform the ways of thinking and practising, empowering students to become informed advocates of Sustainable Development.**

*Advance HE & QAA ESD*

*guidance 2021*

# 1.0 Introduction

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Responsible Futures is certification of a whole institution’s commitment to social responsibility and environmental sustainability, and having an enabling environment for it to thrive, rather than an endpoint.

## 1.1 Responsible Futures

Responsible Futures is a 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.

The framework facilitates a close working partnership between students’ unions and their institutions and was developed with significant guidance from an advisory group made up of representatives from NUS Sustainability Direction and Oversight board, the EAUC, People and Planet, UCU, SOCENV, HEA (Advance HE), AOC, Learning for Sustainability Scotland, and the Knowledge Transfer Network, as well as individual institutions and students’ unions. The criteria represent best practice not only within the UK, but internationally. The programme is now delivered by SOS-UK, NUS’ sustainability charity, formerly NUS sustainability team.

Responsible Futures was created because, for the last ten years, NUS’ surveying of students has consistently shown that c60% of students have either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘Sustainable development is something which I would like to learn more about’, and c85% with the statement ‘Sustainable development is something which Universities should actively incorporate and promote’ (base c15k students)[[1]](#footnote-1).

Responsible Futures was piloted in 2014-15 by 13 institutions, including five Further Education institutions and eight Higher Education across England and Scotland. Following feedback from the pilot cohort, significant developments were made to the programme and it was launched in 2015.

To date, 30 partnerships across the UK have joined Responsible Futures and collectively, they represent over 500,000 students.

## 1.2 Overview of the Audit

2022 MMU Student Auditors and partnership leads

As part of the accreditation process, each Partnership must undergo a two-day audit. The purpose of the audit is to determine the partnership’s score, accreditation level, and conduct in-depth research on the impact of Responsible Futures through:

* A documentary review of evidence to verify score,
* Interviews with key individuals,
* And student focus groups.

There are 45 total criteria, of which 10 are mandatory and must be completed to achieve accreditation and 35 are optional. An additional three criteria are self-defined meaning that the Partnership can highlight unique actions they have taken which are not discussed through other criteria.

To achieve the Responsible Futures Accreditation Mark, the Partnership must meet or exceed the score threshold of **200 points**, out of the maximum 330 points, including the three self-defined criteria (allowing for up to an additional 30 points).

If the partnership does not meet the threshold of 200 points but their score exceeds 100 points, they will be awarded the “Working Towards” Accreditation.

Prior to the audit, each Partnership has submitted documentary evidence through the online workbook tool[[2]](#footnote-2).

1.2.1 Documentary Evidence Review

In keeping with the student-centred nature of the scheme, SOS-UK train teams of student auditors at each institution to lead the audit. This begins with a documentary review of evidence. Through this process, students determined the scores, with support from the SOS-UK facilitator.

1.2.2 Interviews

A key component of the audit was interviews with three key individuals: one representative from the students’ union, one from the institution, and one other individual who was less actively involved in the partnership working group. These informed the audit process as well as providing insights which have contributed to this report and the broader research conducted on the programme.

1.2.3 Focus Groups

The third component of the audit was two student focus groups. The first was the intervention focus group, made up of students who have been actively involved in sustainability and social responsibility within the formal or the informal curriculum. The second was the non-intervention group, made up of students who, to the best of the partnership’s knowledge, had not been involved in sustainability or social responsibility initiatives.

The student focus groups were for the purpose of research relating to Responsible Futures and therefore their results did not determine the partnership’s accreditation. The summary findings can be found in this report.



|  |
| --- |
| Results and Feedback |
|  |
| “I feel the university actually really cares about [sustainability], it’s in many aspects of it. They are making an effort.” |
| Student Focus Group participant, Manchester Metropolitan University and The Union at Manchester Metropolitan University Responsible Futures Audit 2022 |

# 2.0 Your Results

## 2.1 Your Accreditation

Manchester Metropolitan University and The Union at Manchester Metropolitan University gained the Responsible Futures Accreditation with a score of 250.

## 2.2 Score Overview

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Section | Your Score | Total Possible |
| Baselines and Benchmarks | 21 | 40 |
| Partnership and Planning | 19 | 20 |
| Leadership and Strategy | 48 | 50 |
| Policy and Commitment | 33 | 45 |
| Interventions | 42 | 50 |
| Impact and Outcomes | 48 | 80 |
| Outreach | 14 | 15 |
| Self-Defined Criteria | 30 | Up to maximum of 30 |
| Total | 255 | 330\* |

*\*Points threshold for accreditation is 200*

## 2.3 Explaining Your Accreditation

As your partnership was awarded the “Responsible Futures Accreditation” you have been awarded the full accreditation. This means that you have exceeded the score threshold of 200 and have demonstrated and evidenced your partnership’s commitment and progress for embedding sustainability and social responsibility across the whole institution.

This accreditation will be valid for two years, until July 2024, at which time another audit will be required to re-validate your accreditation.

**Congratulations to** **Manchester Metropolitan   
University and The Union at Manchester Metropolitan University on this fantastic achievement! Thank you for your commitment to empowering students to access the skills and knowledge they need to forge a more sustainable education system and more sustainable world.**

**Larissa Kennedy, SOS-UK and NUS National President**

## 2.4 Key Findings

Five students from Manchester Metropolitan University and The Union at Manchester Metropolitan University led the audit process for Responsible Futures. Through the experience, auditors gained valuable employability and education for sustainable development (ESD) skills while playing a leadership role in supporting their institution and students’ union to advance sustainability in informal, formal, and subliminal learning. Throughout various points in the audit, student auditors were supported to reflect on their experiences. At the end of the audit, they shared their thoughts on the auditing process and the work of Manchester Metropolitan University and The Union at Manchester Metropolitan University Responsible Futures Partnership.

**Student auditor overarching feedback on Partnership’s Responsible Futures work:**

* “Strong efforts being made to retain RF [accreditation], which is very good in keeping them in check as it is something they want to hold on to.”
* “It’s absolutely amazing and extremely important.”
* “This is an encouraging step in the right direction from the university especially in these times of climate anxiety.”
* “The Partnership has been heavily engaged in [achieving] the accreditation.”

More details of recommendations and key themes drawn out from the audit are shared at the end of each section of criteria and the end of this feedback report (section 2.8).

## 2.5 Feedback

### 2.5.1 Baselines and benchmarks (BB01 to BB07)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria Number | Criteria | Estimated Score | Student Auditors’ Score | Student Auditors’ Comments |
| BB001 | Within the last two years, the [Partnership] has completed an institution-wide survey of students on their attitudes towards, expectations on, and awareness of social responsibility and sustainability [SRS] and published the findings. | 4 | 4 | Positives: It is very positive to see that all students complete a survey which includes questions on sustainability as part of their enrolment process year on year.  Recommendations: Consider how findings from this survey are shared in the years when the staff travel and sustainability survey is not carried out, and the Students, Staff and Sustainability report is not updated. This could be a section on the website, or a short document specifically reporting on student perspectives. |
| BB002 | The [Partnership] has completed a follow-up to the survey conducted in BB001 and published the findings. | 4 | 4 | See above. |
| BB003 | Within the last five years, the [Partnership] has carried out a thorough baseline curriculum review or audit on [SRS] and published the findings. | 4 | 4 | Positives: Large variety of individuals involved in developing a curriculum audit approach oriented around sustainability, from Head of Education to the Director of Education Services. Individuals that show involvement have a lot of influence within the partnership, which is promising. Areas of improvements have been pre-emptively mentioned and improvements are being created in regards to data mining. Embedding ESD in programme approval shows initiative and centres the curriculum around ESD.  Recommendations: ISS is used as a data source for student opinions regarding courses providing sustainable development-related skills and knowledge, despite it only having a 10.8% response rate. A survey with a larger response number would be more representative of students, to give them more say about the SRS curriculum.  The Students’ Union Education Officer sits on the Education Annual Review panel to represent the student voice in the process, but it would be great to see students involved in the process more directly and by more than one person.  KPI indicator is currently based on number of courses by percent that include ESD. Consider if the KPI could be oriented around percentage of students that feel knowledgeable about ESD or have been taught adequate knowledge, as degrees of inclusion vary between preferences of lecturers. Consider how students are informed of how their courses/units are tailored, especially in regards to how much ESD is required in their courses to be classed as sufficient. Perhaps the areas considered by programme reviews could be shared with students. |
| BB004 | The [Partnership] has completed a follow-up curriculum review or audit conducted in BB003 on [SRS] and published the findings. | 3 | 1 | Positives: A solid plan has been developed and the curriculum is soon to change from a whole university approach. There is some progress to date, despite the challenges faced. With more time and the appropriate implementation, the 2026 goal for delivering effective Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and climate change education in all disciplines should be met.  Recommendations: Carry out the follow-up curriculum review, as per the plan. |
| BB005 | The [Partnership] routinely asks students about [SRS] in evaluation surveys. | 5 | 2 | Positives: It is good that the questions are set in such a way that it is mandatory for students filling a survey out to answer them, to ensure that everyone puts forward a contribution.  Recommendations: The results fit the criterion, however the question asked gains minimal insight into students’ thoughts on ESD in their course (the answers are on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree, with no option to elaborate). Furthermore, the question only asks about how the student’s course supports sustainability knowledge and skills development, not about the wider experience of being a student at the partnership.  The criterion asks for local findings to be published and shared with interested students and staff who can utilise these findings and benefit from the exercise. |
| BB006 | Within the last two years, the [Partnership] has developed an understanding of teaching staff's knowledge and confidence with [SRS] at the institution and informed their practices with these findings. | 5 | 5 | Positives: Survey among University staff was conducted three times between 2016-2020 and opinions were gathered on staff understanding and experience of sustainability.  Recommendations: Consider how staff working within the union could be included in these surveys – as University professional services staff are, this would broaden the Partnership’s understanding of all staff’s knowledge and confidence with SRS.  Consider how staff who indicate lack of confidence with and/or knowledge of SRS issues, or who do not incorporate sustainability into their teaching and research activities, are supported to professionally develop in this area. |
| BB007 | The [Partnership] has completed a follow-up survey to the survey conducted in BB006 and published the findings. | 4 | 1 | Positives: It is great to see a long-term repeated survey on staff perceptions of SRS issues, and that this will be repeated again in the 2022-23 academic year. It is also highly positive that the Partnership undertook an all student and staff survey as part of its new 2030 Sustainability Strategy.  Recommendations: As the survey from criterion BB006 has not been followed up on with the same survey questions yet, this criterion cannot be considered completed.  Perhaps the Partnership could ask a wider range of staff and students to contribute towards the survey which is a part of the new 2030 Sustainability Strategy. |

* Strengths
  + Many years of good practice of surveying staff and students on their knowledge of sustainability
  + Published reports on staff and student sustainability knowledge spanning a long time period, with in-depth analysis of the results
* Challenges
  + Complete the follow-up surveys and curriculum audit as planned, and publish the findings which have not been shared yet
  + Consider how the surveys could provide a more detailed view of student and staff opinions, and how they can be supported in their development as a result

### 2.5.2 Partnership and Plan (PPL001 to PPL003)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria Number | Criteria | Estimated Score | Student Auditors’ Score | Student Auditors’ Comments |
| PPL001 | The [Partnership] has a working or coordinating group that leads on [SRS]. | 5 | 5 | Positives: Sufficient evidence presented of the SRS group having frequent meetings, membership of group meets criteria set out (both Students Union individuals and Institution individuals). Equal partnership between staff and student representatives is established early on in the meetings.  Recommendations: Individuals themselves aren't from a variety of areas within the Partnership so influence of these meetings seems limited to sustainability-oriented fields. Consider expanding the group to cover all areas of the Partnership. |
| PPL002 | The [Partnership] has a [SMART action plan] progressing actions for [issues related to Responsible Futures]. | 5 | 5 | Positives: There is extensive action on every point of RF, with detailed notes on the actions taking place, and the senior managers in charge. Where issues have risen, there are notes of said issues and appropriate action next to it.  Recommendations: The document however is difficult to understand, with many colour-coded and blank sections which are not explained or addressed to their meanings. If more effort was taken to ensure legibility to those who are not personally in charge of the documents, it would result in significantly clearer understanding. |
| PPL003 | Within the current academic year, the [Partnership] has proactively engaged key stakeholder groups in the [issues related to Responsible Futures]. | 9 | 9 | Positives: They have done well in engaging staff and students overall. The Partnership clearly engages with external stakeholders in terms of sustainable environment and social projects. This is through research and other projects being conducted at/through the university.  Recommendations: We appreciate that the respondents’ data has been anonymised, but it would be valuable to see general figures for e.g. numbers of staff from protected groups who fed into the 2030 sustainability strategy development. |

* Strengths
  + Well-organised and active SRS groups within both partners, which work towards specific action plans for sustainability
  + Positive engagement with a range of stakeholders on Responsible Futures through a variety of avenues
* Challenges
  + Make the action plans clearer to understand for those who are not members of the group to increase transparency

### 2.5.3 Leadership and Strategy (LS001 to LS007)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria Number | Criteria | Estimated Score | Student Auditors’ Score | Student Auditors’ Comments |
| LS001 | The [Partnership] has gained the support of a high-level champion within both the students' union and institution for their efforts to attain Responsible Futures. | 7 | 7 | Positives: Clear evidence of senior leadership support for Responsible Futures at the University and Students’ Union through the Responsible Futures and Sustainability Groups.  Recommendations: Consider how the leading role in and responsibility for Responsible Futures work can be effectively handed over to the next cohorts of sabbatical officers in order to ensure the longevity of work progressing issues related to Responsible Futures. |
| LS002 | The [Partnership] has gained the support of their trustees and/or governors within both the students' union and institution on the [issues related to Responsible Futures] and their efforts to achieve accreditation. | 6 | 6 | Positives: The governance structure and processes developed at MMU and the Student's Union regarding sustainability demonstrates that the partnership has gained the support of their governance/trustees. The new Sustainability Strategy has been approved by the Board of Governors, which has oversight of sustainability work. The Union’s trustees have also approved MMU Students’ Union sustainability policy. |
| LS003 | The [Partnership] has developed a statement on [SRS] through a consultative process that defines what it means to the institution in relation to its educational purpose and values. | 7 | 6 | Positives: Extensive detail has been provided about the development of the new Sustainability Strategy, with expert knowledge and student and staff opinions gathered during the consultation phase. The strategy that is currently public is easily accessible on the University’s website, and the Union’s sustainability website redirects the University’s page easily.  Recommendations: The extensive consultation process seems to have been done only for the University’s strategy. Explore embedding the SRS statement into the Union policies and websites to support a joined up approach to holistic sustainability in learning amongst the students' union and institution. Ideally, the leaders of both sides of the partnerships would sign a joint statement on SRS, which would be included or linked directly on both websites.  The number of individuals who participated in Sustainability Strategy surveys and focus groups is small, considering the size and reach of the partnership. We appreciate that this may have been restricted with the consultation beginning during lockdown. |
| LS004 | The institution's overall strategic plan and/or the publicly-stated learning outcomes include supportive references to [SRS]. | 10 | 9 | Positives: A well-made, public facing document has been made, which is easy to digest while also addressing the institution’s plans and goals they are aiming to achieve during their set time period. It has been written well to engage the reader while also addressing the points clearly, which is vital for public documents.  Recommendations: There is sufficient evidence of implementation of previous strategic plan by departments/faculties, however, it would be beneficial to learn how this current Strategy is implemented as well. |
| LS005 | The institution's learning and teaching strategy, academic strategy, or equivalent, includes supportive references to [issues related to Responsible Futures], or it will do after the next review. | 10 | 10 | Positives: It is clear the Partnership has strong ambitions to improve student learning across their degree ensuring they gain as much development across their learning as possible. There are various platforms for both staff and students that enable the SF-based learning. There is also suggestions for embedment of sustainable based teaching into degree courses though it is unclear how they intend to support tutors in this endeavour. They also demonstrate that their aims for teaching will empower students and improve their skillsets and employability.  Recommendations: Consider how students and the Union’s representatives can feed into the development of the annual “Learning for a Sustainable Future” sustainability engagement strategy and action plan, and into the reviews of the overall Education Strategy. |
| LS006 | The institution and students' union have whole institution/SU holistic sustainability strategies (or equivalent). | 5 | 5 | Positives: Both the institution and students’ union have their respective sustainability strategies which holistically cover environmental, social and economic sustainability.  Recommendations: Consider developing a joint public statement/policy on sustainability objectives for the Partnership, to support collaboration towards common goals. This would also further support criterion LS003. |
| LS007 | The institution and students' union's marketing and communications teams (or equivalent) are fully engaged with and supportive of the [partnership]s [SRS] work. | 5 | 5 | Positives: Sustainability is one of three key communications priorities for the University, and the marketing team of the Students’ Union is involved in sustainability-focused group meetings, which is great to see. There is a plethora of communications items in which the Partnership includes SRS issues.  Recommendations: Consider how SRS-related communications could directly involve the student voice, for example via features or blogs. |

* Strengths
  + High level of senior buy-in and support for the sustainability agenda
  + Presence of comprehensive strategy and policy documents that support the SRS agenda
* Challenges
  + Existing policies could be more joined-up and collaborative between the institution and the students’ union partners

### 2.5.4 Policy and Commitment (POC001 to POC008)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria Number | Criteria | Estimated Score | Student Auditors’ Score | Student Auditors’ Comments |
| POC001 | The institution has provided professional development and dedicated support for relevant personnel on the [issues related to Responsible Futures]. | 5 | 5 | Positives: Opportunities for staff to learn about sustainability are present, including Carbon Literacy training, additional thematic workshops for both staff and students, and the Education for Sustainable Development unit, predominantly taken by new teachers (as it forms part of a professional qualification to teach).  Recommendations: Few staff seem to actively approach learning about sustainability - perhaps a certain amount of education regarding sustainability could be included in CPD toolkits for all staff.  Testimonials that show the staff actively changing course layout/ units in response to learning about sustainability, if occurred, would increase likelihood of achieving the top score for this criterion. |
| POC002 | The students’ union has formally passed and publicised a policy commitment to embedding [SRS] in the formal and informal curriculum. | 0 | 0 | *Criterion Incomplete.* |
| POC003 | One or more named elected student officer has agreed to lead on [SRS] issues for the students' union this academic year. | 4 | 4 | Positives: There is responsibility of all elected sabbatical officers for sustainability that is written into the Union’s bye laws, and specific responsibility for social sustainability in the roles of President and Societies and Development Officer – of which the latter was the official officer lead for sustainability this year, sitting on working groups for Green Impact and Responsible Futures.  Recommendations: Consider how the leading role in and responsibility for Responsible Futures work can be effectively handed over to the next cohorts of sabbatical officers in order to ensure the longevity of work progressing issues related to Responsible Futures. |
| POC004 | At least one member of staff in the students' union has responsibility for SRS. | 3 | 3 | Positives: Two staff members within the Union have SRS responsibility formally embedded in their roles, the Volunteering & Communities Manager and the Project Coordinator. As discussed in the interview with the elected officer lead for sustainability, particularly the latter has worked with them in very close partnership throughout the past academic year. |
| POC005 | The [Partnership] has made sufficient staff or student resource available to substantively progress the [issues related to Responsible Futures]. | 10 | 9 | Positives: High transparency in sustainability staffing, with key staff collaborating via several working groups dedicated to developing SRS.  Sustainability-related education resources available to MMU staff and students via the RISE platform. Sustainability fund available for project funding for staff and students to engage in sustainability. Sustainability Ambassador scheme for students currently under review for improvement for the next academic year.  Recommendations: Consider how to ensure that staff development for sustainability translates into its inclusion in their teaching within the formal curriculum. |
| POC006 | The [Partnership] has made effective use of the relevant quality framework and/or outcome agreements to progress the [issues related to Responsible Futures]. | 3 | 3 | Positives: Evidence provided shows usage of the framework and is especially recent in regards to the audit, showing continued effort in maintaining framework in SRS education  Recommendations: To achieve the highest score the partnership should build on the use of this framework – within all courses post the full curriculum audit to evidence how the framework is tangibly progressing issues related to Responsible Futures. It is exciting to consider how this may be facilitated by the QAA funded project. |
| POC007 | The [Partnership] has embedded the [issues related to Responsible Futures] into their human resource, induction, and training processes for all types of new starters (students, sabbatical officers, staff, governors, etc.). | 7 | 5 | Positives: The University has made RF issues core parts of their information guides and training for all new starters (staff and students alike), and they frequently have entire sections dedicated towards sustainability. These are all well thought out and directed towards the different types of starters with relevant information.  Recommendations: Include similar induction information for sabbatical officers and Students’ Union staff. |
| POC008 | The [Partnership] has worked with the institution's student recruitment and/or widening participation department(s) to incorporate issues relating to [SRS] into their work. | 4 | 4 | Positives: Extensive evidence provided for both the Partnership as a whole and individual University departments incorporating SRS issues into their recruitment and widening participation work, which includes collaborating with schools and colleges. |

* Strengths
  + Extensive opportunities for staff and students to learn about sustainability are present
  + Good level of involvement of the Union’s staff and sabbatical officers in Responsible Futures, and good resourcing for staff working on SRS and RF
* Challenges
  + Ensuring that staff take up the opportunities that exist, and that it translates into the inclusion of sustainability in their teaching within the formal curriculum, in all departments
  + Lack of sustainability training for new Union staff and sabbatical officers

### 2.5.5 Interventions (IN001 to IN009)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria Number | Criteria | Estimated Score | Student Auditors’ Score | Student Auditors’ Comments |
| IN001 | Within the current academic year, the [Partnership] has run one or more internal event bringing together staff and students on the [issues related to Responsible Futures]. | 5 | 4 | Positives: Evidence provides a plethora of positive reviews towards SRS-related events, students have engaged in these with enthusiasm and have taken away key information. Individuals say the events were enjoyable which shows their success in bringing staff and students together, as the events were run by staff.  Recommendations: To achieve the top score, evidence must include the Partnership’s evaluation of the impact and reach of the event(s), and reflective suggestions for future improvements. |
| IN002 | Within the last five years, the [Partnership] has taken part in, or is booked onto, an external change programme on the [issues related to Responsible Futures]. | 3 | 3 | Positives: There is a plethora of evidence that the Partnership has participated in a range of external change programmes focusing on SRS issues. |
| IN003 | Within the current academic year, the institution has made funding, or related resources, available to staff and students so that they can develop their own projects that support the aims of Responsible Futures. | 5 | 4 | Positives: Evidence does show evidence of ringfenced funding towards SRS for students and staff, however more could be done. The Fund application form also includes an option for applicants to be connected with similar project applications if available.  Recommendations: Other than the yes/no option mentioned above, the Sustainability Fund seems limited in how much collaboration between staff and students it provides.  Recycled filament resources listed in the evidence could be a webpage on MMU site that shows students how to recycle/reuse household goods, or giving students access to short term placements alongside staff to work on SRS, benefiting not only their employability but also SRS knowledge. |
| IN004 | During the last 12 months, four or more schools or departments have integrated innovative pedagogical approaches to their [SRS] teaching, learning, and assessment. | 8 | 8 | Positives: There is extensive evidence of various schools and departments within the Faculties of Business and Law, Arts and humanities, and Science and Engineering integrating innovative pedagogical approaches into many parts of their curriculum, as well as developing new units for their degrees that address many RF issues, and also incorporating them into MSc dissertations.  Recommendations: Consider publishing the case studies mentioned in the comments on the toolkit on your website, to demonstrate this practice more clearly to current and prospective students and staff.  Consider how to implement these approaches into faculties/departments where they are not currently represented. |
| IN005 | The institution's non-academic and research/academic teams routinely collaborate to create educational and/or research opportunities through their [SRS]-related work. Some institutions would call this a Living Lab approach. | 7 | 7 | Positives: MMU RISE enables students to actively engage in community- and university-based projects across a multitude of disciplines. These have focuses relative to the present as well as working to developing sustainability, both environmentally and socially. MMU print city’s engagement with local communities as well as a range of staff and students further enable developments toward sustainability and a drive toward circular economy. Further to this, their work in recycling concrete demonstrates a consideration of a responsible future. There seems to be clear enabling of students across all departments to actively collaborate on a range of projects that focus on sustainability and a better future, both in terms of environment and social inclusion. |
| IN006 | Within the current academic year, the [Partnership] has actively made use of student coursework and/or dissertations. | 3 | 2 | Positives: Great to see that feedback from a student dissertation was taken into account during the development of an institution-wide strategy. Additional student-development opportunities for masters dissertations based on a project lead by an experienced academic available thanks to sustainability decision makers are also a good initiative.  Recommendations: Broader range of subjects where RF-related topics are included in the coursework and affect institutional practice would be great to see, as well as frameworks that encourage students to take up such dissertation/coursework topics across the board, so that this is something suggested by tutors/supervisors/course leaders, rather than something that relies on a student's own initiative and suggestions. |
| IN007 | There are wide reaching structured interdisciplinary experiences, linked to the [issues related to Responsible Futures], through the formal curriculum for students across the institution. | 4 | 3 | Positives: 32 students have joined a structured course on the Sustainable Development Goals through RISE in its first month of availability. There is evidence of over 2000 students per Faculty engaging with the RISE programme, which suggests a wide reach.  Recommendations: Consider how to encourage more students to join the course via RISE, and how to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration between students and staff.  Explore how to evidence the impact of this course on students’ sustainability learning. |
| IN008 | There are good levels of informal curriculum activity that support the aims of Responsible Futures. | 8 | 7 | Positives: Students and alumni seemed to be at the centre of the events and considerations were made at multiple levels, from local to larger ones.  The RISE programme is an excellent way of advancing the SRS agenda in a way that allows students to have ownership of their learning and tangible positive outcomes for their employability.  Recommendations: From the presented information (one leaflet about ESRC social science festival and two events written about in description) this criterion was not met fully. Adjustment was made for the pandemic, however more events are needed and additional data about attendance of events would be beneficial for future auditing. Informal events also include social clubs, therefore mentioning clubs that fit Responsible Futures’ aims may be useful. Asking social clubs to include a day about aims that Responsible Futures work towards could also allow goal to be met.  To achieve the top score, evidence must include the Partnership’s evaluation of the impact and reach of the activities, and ideally a celebration of those through a positive news story. |
| IN009 | There is demonstrable positive progress in embedding [SRS] across the subliminal curriculum. | 4 | 4 | Positives: On campus, there are many subliminal SRS messages that should help people take sustainable actions in their day to day life, and the Partnership works with other organisations to take action. SRS has also become a part of online articles for the university's guides when it comes to travel.  Recommendations: While SRS has been embedded across the subliminal curriculum, I believe more could be done when it comes to implementing SRS policies to enhance this commitment. |

* Strengths
  + Many positive, successful SRS-related events, activities, and interventions, targeting staff and students alike, and covering formal, informal, and subliminal curriculums
  + Student dissertation findings contributed to the development of an institution-wide strategy
  + Living Lab opportunities are available and taken up by students across the Partnership and with external partners
* Challenges
  + Evaluation of the impact and reach of the events and activities, and reflective suggestions for future improvements
  + Promoting new pedagogical approaches used in teaching to wider stakeholders

### 2.5.6 Impact and Outcomes (IO001 to IO004)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria Number | Criteria | Estimated Score | Student Auditors’ Score | Student Auditors’ Comments |
| IO001 | The [Partnership] has reflected on and identified demonstrable positive progress in embedding [SRS] across the formal curriculum. | 15 | 15 | Positives: There seems to be a range of courses that have areas pertaining to sustainability and SRS. There does seem to be a clear plan and demonstration of sustainability across the Partnership as a whole as well as how they will engage with stakeholders in this regard. As well as this, there is evidence of strong review and assessment systems for implementing the curriculum changes for SRS into all courses.  Recommendations: It would have been helpful to see more general evidence from a larger section of courses (or from all courses), as well as the courses/units which explicitly focus on ethics and SRS. |
| IO002 | The [Partnership] has reflected on and identified demonstrable positive progress in relation to its institution-wide collaborative approach. | 20 | 17 | Positives: Extensive collaboration and consultations with students on the new sustainability strategy, and engagement activities to do with taking the sustainability agenda forward - this is despite, and during, the covid-19 pandemic outbreak, which shows that even though the process was more difficult due to that, the commitment to progressing ESD on an institutional level is strong.  Recommendations: Would like to see more examples of collaboration \*within\* disciplines/departments, so their local contexts are included in their specific actions and plans, and that the ownership of sustainability work sits within those as well as institutionally. |
| IO003 | The [Partnership] has reflected on and identified their short-term impacts and outcomes in relation to positive outcomes for students. | 10 | 8 | Positives: Case studies presented as evidence show clear enthusiasm of students in engaging with SRS. Evidence also demonstrates that students’ SRS education has resulted in short term benefits like winning awards.  Recommendations: Data presented seems to be primarily qualitative, a mixture of quantitative data related to case studies would give a greater reference of widespread student opinion e.g. the percentage of Fashion and Tech students that will involve sustainability in their designing process. ISS was used as data source despite it only having a 10.8% response rate – consider how else this could be evaluated to ensure the reflections are more representative. |
| IO004 | The [Partnership] has reflected on and identified their long-term impacts and outcomes in relation to positive outcomes for students. | 10 | 8 | Positives: Good examples of statements from graduates whose involvement with SRS-related projects while at MMU have helped them in decisions or progression with their further education and/or career. Particularly the statement from Tayyaba Kosar, who now works as the Union-Led Projects Coordinator, is insightful.  Recommendations: Consider how the database of graduate statements could be developed in the future to represent more students and alumni communities. Consider how longitudinal data may be captured for graduates so that a mix of case studies and wider quantitative data may be achieved in future. Some institutions do this by embedding questions relating to SRS in graduate surveys, for example. Consider how this information could be shared with current and prospective students to draw inspiration from, perhaps as a collection of blogs or case studies on the website. |

* Strengths
  + Evidence of positive progress in embedding SRS into the formal curriculum and of consultation with students during the process
* Challenges
  + Gathering more robust data and examples of positive outcomes for students over both shorter and longer term

### 2.5.7 Outreach (OU001 to OU004)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria Number | Criteria | Estimated Score | Student Auditors’ Score | Student Auditors’ Comments |
| OU001 | The [Partnership] has embedded the [issues related to Responsible Futures] into their community outreach activities. | 4 | 4 | Positives: There have been frequent RF-related contributions in the community throughout the years, and not just single, one-off activities. Furthermore, some of the outreach was done in collaboration with other organisations, such as being a key partner for Hulme Council ‘s Climate Change plans.  Recommendations: Consider how to evaluate these activities with measurable metrics. |
| OU002 | Within the last two years, the [Partnership] has proactively engaged one or more students' union or educational institution on the [issues related to Responsible Futures]. | 3 | 3 | Positives: There is mainly engagement with other tertiary organisations, both nationally and internationally in regards to discussing RF issues. Staff have taken part in external organisations’ events (such as the Global University Leaders Council conference 2021) and MMU Partnership-led events are open to other organisations.  Recommendations: It would be great to see how the Nature Park project pilot that will engage schools will be monitored and evaluated. |
| OU003 | Within the last two years, the [Partnership] has presented on their work relating to the Responsible Futures agenda at a sector event. | 3 | 3 | Positives: Sustainability, ESD, and RF-related presentations delivered at a number of sector events, externally, internally within the partnership, and internally within the RF network, fully satisfying this criterion. Students took part as presenters as well.  Recommendations: Consider how to ensure that opportunities of involvement in the work leading to and delivering these presentations are consistently offered to MMU students year on year, and to a broad range of students. Students and academics working collaboratively on such activities would support development of ESD skills. |
| OU004 | The [Partnership] has published case studies highlighting [SRS]-related achievements, impacts and outcomes. | 5 | 4 | Positives: Clear collaboration has happened between the Partnership and organisations to work towards sustainability. MMU has been awarded numerous accreditations that align with Responsible Future's targets. Case study research that the Partnership has participated in is made very visible and accessible on the MMU site. Evidence on the site presents positive outcomes for students  Recommendations: Case studies seem to be focused on research - criterion needs evidence of SRS being embedded in students’ curriculum regardless of their course.  To achieve the top score, evidence should include more statistical data regarding benefits for students from MMU's SRS education, and at least one case study of a whole-institution partnership approach (i.e. including the Union). |

* Strengths
  + A large variety of successful, holistic outreach activities delivered by the Partnership
* Challenges
  + Consider the monitoring and evaluation of outreach activities, with particular focus on embedding quantitative and data-driven approaches to enhance understanding of the efficacy and impact of these activities

### 2.5.8 Self-defined criteria (SD001 to SD003)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria Number | Criteria | Estimated Score | Student Auditors’ Score | Student Auditors’ Comments |
| SD001 | Self-defined (RISE programme) | 10 | 10 | Positives: Clever use of RISE in including students in SRS. Unique initiative to support students in having ownership of their learning.  Recommendations: Consider how to communicate RISE opportunities to students effectively, so that all interested can join in with these. |
| SD002 | Self-defined (Carbon Literacy) | 10 | 10 | Positives: MMU's Carbon Literacy training is very well developed, with it being a clear part of the partnership, and having its own part of the website dedicated towards it. It not only brings awareness of Carbon Literacy to everyone involved with the university, but also gives everyone the opportunity to become certified with it, making it very accessible to all who are interested. |
| SD003 | Self-defined (External collaboration and partnerships in SRS) | 10 | 10 | Positives: Extensive evidence of MMU collaborating on ESD and SRS provided, locally within Manchester and the North West, nationally collaborating on national QAA guidance, and leading on international sustainability research partnership groups. Thousands of people trained as Carbon Literate and over 240 with the train the trainer approach is evident of commitment to broadening the sustainability agenda on a societal scale. Unique combination of different levels of collaboration that truly deserves praise, this is SDG17 in action.  Recommendations: Consider how MMU students could benefit from these partnerships, particularly the international ones. |

## 2.6 Student Focus Group Summary

Part of the two-day audit involved conducting focus group discussions with current students at the Manchester Metropolitan University and the Union. The purpose of these discussions is to provide the partnership with insight from students on their direct experience engaging with sustainability in the formal, informal and subliminal curriculum during their time with the partnership. Below are paraphrased or direct quotes from focus group participants.

Understanding of sustainability

* “Everything – or at least should include everything. It’s a path to sustainability, but the whole of society is a long way off. Making sure everyone aware of climate change and aware of what they can do to combat it. At university – ensuring they’re teaching about sustainability and giving tools to students to take that knowledge out to the world.”
* “Individual person taking on responsibility for the world, but also on opinions of others. Sometimes really hard not to be mean/judgemental about when someone doesn’t know something.”

**“Knowing that we all have our impact and what we do impacts others in some way, and we should be mindful of that.”**

* “Small actions we can take for the benefit of others”; “Caring for the wellbeing of others”
* “Utilising current resources while remembering about future generations; we only have 1 planet we need to survive on; being mindful ofour resources; seeing how you can contribute to the planet and environment as a whole – what you do affects other things.”
* “Sustainability is environmental, but also about you being able to do something, like a job.”
* “Having a consensus as the university, society, responsibility of us to be decent people, who treat others and the environment with respect”

Perceptions of the importance of sustainability to the partnership and in courses

* “Sustainability is a big part of their image, really proud of rankings, push carbon literacy out internally and externally, a lot of research towards more sustainability – differs by department though; fashion degrees have links to Boohoo, think sustainable companies need people with more experience than grads have – try to change from within? Some courses need more support to progress this work, when money comes into it, it’s always hard.”

**“MMU is playing a good part, has a big responsibility as a big organisation, but it’s good they’re aware of their impact – a lot of limitations, but work keeps happening and if they keep improving, they’ll be very positive.”**

* “Uni sees sustainability as being more important than other unis – e.g. no plastic cutlery or cups.”
* “Impact matters even if part of it is done for ‘marketing’; a lot of sustainable practice is casual, can become part of people’s routines – instinctive to apply university standards outside of campus – making an impact outside; you expect things and might push for sustainable changes outside the university”
* “A lot of places to eat on campus take a lot of responsibility for sourcing sustainable things – but like any institution, MMU can do a lot better. I struggle to see if they’re doing it all for the environment or for the most sustainable university award – if they wanted to truly do it for the environment, there’d be more changes coming from the top, they should be pushing it in every way they can, not just for the things people can see on the surface.”
* “If the person at the top wanted MMU to be the greenest institution, you’d have fully sustainable buildings etc.”
* Students recognised that behavioural change takes time.

There were some concerns around how genuine the Partnership’s sustainability work is:

* “Rating 8.5/10 – some of the actions seem insincere”
* “University more for leagues rather than students, not being realistic, putting up a good face.”

Students were aware about the various sustainability-related events and initiatives led by the Union, such as:

* MMU Union giving out reusable cups
* “The union has a clothes swap shop – one coming up 9th June, gather donations from students leaving halls of their kitchen equipment – ties in with social responsibility. Projects created by students can be submitted to the union for Make the Change. Can also use student voice – course reps etc, RAS, PAL people, run in union elections – you can be involved in shaping this change.”
* Wellbeing days – “really enjoyed those activities, really helpful”
* “On campus you’re engaged to join an eco-community, there are people at of different age and cultural background, university is a very inclusive environment.”
* “It’s a topic rather than a responsibility in the curriculum”
* “For my course, I can’t not take sustainability into account; **it’s about changing people’s attitudes towards sustainability, not just providing resources without understanding if people want them.”**

Perceptions of the importance of sustainability to students at the partnership

* “Right now people are very aware about being sustainable – me and friends see through greenwashing, boycott bad brands, when designing products for the course we’re being mindful of resources and what we do daily re. the carbon footprint.”
* “Not talked about enough – people ignore that it’s an issue; I feel like I have responsibility, but when you mention it to others, people almost find irony with it; when you speak up you feel like a lone voice in a room of many.”
* “Societies aren’t aware of these issues, even though university encourages it.”
* “A lot of people just buy daily takeaway drinks; reusable cup discounts not very motivating.” – another student mentioned that apparently this discount is no longer present on campus
* “Half and half – some very conscious people, some don’t really care, want life to be easier.”
* “If sustainable option isn’t convenient, friends won’t go out of their way to choose it.”
* “Very few of my biology/microbiology course mates are actually interested in sustainability – can see in lectures that many people are not bothered by it.”

Issues arising in engaging with sustainable behaviour

* Recycling issues in flats – no recycling bins, lots of packaging in shops.
* “People are choosing days when they recycle and when not – are bins too small for large events where a lot of waste is being produced? Recycling has to be easy for people to do it.”
* “Just a general waste bin present in an average classroom – but most things in classes are bottles or scrap paper, so why is the prioritised bin a non-recycled one?”
* “Many people need to be reminded about sustainable options, mandatory courses would be more helpful to engage in.”
* One student reflected that “teaching about social responsibility in communities is very important at university”, but wondered how much of it will be carried into the world of work when people graduate.
* “At university you do the most sustainable option – but then you include money etc. - can the university upskill students to steer things into sustainability at work after? The university is not guiding people to be sustainable, privilege for sustainability not acknowledged.”
* “The university has electric car parking for staff, but nothing is provided for students for this solution.”

**There was a shared belief that many students do not realise how many developmental opportunities the Partnership offers:**

* “The university offers a lot of stuff, but 95% of people don’t know about it and you have to go out of your way to find out – people don’t even know about jobs4students! Need better comms, you need to actively sign up for comms rather than receiving them by default.”
* “I got a 10 week internship through jobs4students, but so many people don’t know about this service! Include this info in induction? Maybe encouraging following university accounts on Instagram to see opportunities outside of emails?”
* A few students also found out about the free Carbon Literacy course through the discussions in the focus group, having been unaware of it beforehand.

Personal attitudes on sustainability of the focus group participants and change in attitudes whilst at MMU

* “I fluctuate between 2 moods – why are corporations so bad and leaving so much to the consumer - but also my impact does mean something! What is the most sustainable option? Weighing things up is really hard and a big topic, e.g. leather vs vegan leather.”
* “A lot of information for a person to process”
* “In college I was very up on it, started a climate action group, strikes, then pandemic happened, was closed off – lost a lot of my habits, was veggie 5-6 years and feel myself slipping away because I’m not surrounded by people who have the motivation that I used to have – wish I did.”
* “Huge change – sustainability had to be included in projects, but back in my home country there was only one project focused on sustainability; always hated wasting things – hate how much waste my housemates produce, so frustrated, but still determined to do my part.

**Initially felt restricted, then realised that true sustainability is about solutions for the environment rather than just designing a space and how important sustainable practices are in design**”

* “I’ve always been interested, but never felt like I can take action; don’t know how to get a job that’s making a difference – how do I get there?”
* Student from Bangladesh: “I wasn’t very aware about sustainability, but since coming here there’s a lot of information available and course encourages it. Went to carbon literacy training, feel like I’m learning a lot and incorporating small changes into my life, hopefully with the university’s help I’ll have a lower footprint.”

Thoughts on the inclusion of sustainability in courses

* Architecture: “Big focus – sustainability standards taught from the very start in 1st year, insulation is a big topic, recycling of materials – study done on Manchester hall/council building materials’ recycling; big trend for sustainability in architecture. Students encouraged to use scraped materials in their work at university.”; “taught how to be sustainable, but no application of it in work – we need to be taught how to be sustainable and profitable at the same time”
* Drama: “Irony within the course – play about climate change, but 100s of plastic cups used for audience drinks”; “the only mention was the climate play, but it wasn’t explicit about it – play wasn’t really part of the curriculum, it was chosen by the teacher; nothing other than that”
* Microbiology: “not really actively pushed out; don’t feel like teaching ethics is sufficient to count for SRS”;“no sustainability mentioned on the medical side of microbiology”
* Biology: “nothing about SRS in the course, even unethical experiments or ecology not covering it”
* MSc Management: “one unit introduced – sustainability and ethical focus, explaining how these can be practiced in management, but only optional”
* Engineering: “One or 2 pieces of work on sustainability to ‘tick it off’. Academic skills module in foundation year has an assessment on sustainability – don’t think it was that helpful. 2nd year – practical group project unit, one of discussion topics was on plastic waste.”

**Ideas for change**

* “Is there bike hire within university? Something apparently on Oxford Rd, but not at university – scheme like that would be very helpful for students! Or scooters. Help with public transport would be good, outside of current opportunities.”
* “Sometimes when I look through sustainability research, it feels a bit PR-y, rather than real results; would like to see more transparency on mistakes and issues from the Partnership.”
* “Ryebank Fields – it’s a controversial site of which people are not aware. It feels like the university are good at hiding it from students.”
* “University should be inviting students to be more involved in sustainability-related things and research.”

## 2.7 Staff Interviews Summary

During day two of the audit, student auditors were trained on interviewing and the purpose of interviews in an audit. Students were then supported to interview key staff leading on progressing work related to Responsible Futures within the partnership. The purpose of these interviews was for students to capture and understand the story and narratives behind the plethora of work to embed sustainability in all learning at the partnership.

#### Interview 1: Professor Steve Decent (Deputy Vice Chancellor)

**The auditors were impressed by…**

* “I was impressed by how Steve provided us with a lot more explanation that was expected. He treated every question as an open question and provided further useful information without going off on a tangent.”

**“Sustainability shows that the present feeds into the future”** (Steve Decent, MMU and the Union Responsible Futures Audit, May 2022)

**The auditors were surprised by…**

* “I was surprised by how much dedication Manchester Metropolitan University has to sustainability and all the projects that are currently being pursued that support this agenda.”

**In the future the auditors would like to see…**

* “In the future I would like to see an opportunity for auditors to ask further questions. The interview was conducted within a short space of time and so a limited amount of questions was asked.”

**Further comments from the student auditors…**

* “The interviewee was very professional and had positive body language and amazing verbal communication skills and confidence to articulate an answer to all the questions I asked.”

#### Interview 2: Professor Andy Dainty (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education)

**The auditors were impressed by…**

* “How much Andy Dainty knew, and his openness to share it. I was also impressed by the amount that MMU is doing for sustainability.”

**The auditors were surprised by…**

* “How much I didn’t know about the Partnership’s SRS work.”

**In the future the auditors would like to see…**

* “More awareness spread in the student body of what is happening for sustainability at the Partnership.”

#### Interview 3: Cynan Orton (Societies and Development Officer, The Union at Manchester Metropolitan University)

**The auditors were impressed by…**

* “I was impressed by Cynan’s enthusiasm in talking to us and their being enthusiastic in actively helping students and improving the Partnership for sustainability and social responsibility.”
* “I was also really pleased by the honesty they had when speaking in the interview. They showed me clear areas of improvements that I can highlight to Responsible Futures.”

**The auditors were surprised by…**

* “I was surprised by the extent of the relationship the Students’ Union and the University have. It was nice to know that the University encourages students to work with the Students’ Union to hold them accountable.”

**“The university is doing the best that they can with the larger societal pressures that exist.”** (Cynan Orton, MMU and the Union Responsible Futures Audit, May 2022)

**In the future the auditors would like to see…**

* “I would like to see Responsible Futures holding Universities more accountable for what they do outside of the curriculum, e.g. investments and selling of green land.”

## Key Recommendations

### 2.8.1 Strengthening the Partnership with the Students’ Union

The Partnership between the institution and the students’ union is at the very core of Responsible Futures work. The auditors recognise the great effort the two MMU partners have been putting into the programme and commend the way they collaborate to monitor progress and ensure what they implement is truly meaningful. However, from the documentary evidence review and the interview with the sabbatical officer lead for sustainability in particular, there looks to be a kind of a mismatch in level of responsibility for progressing ESD within the partnership, with Manchester Metropolitan University being the main driver of change, and The Union holding more of a space in the background. This seemed to be a sentiment shared by Cynan Orton, sabbatical officer lead for sustainability interviewed on the second day of the audit. From an organisational perspective, this may be a symptom of the University partner having quite a few senior leaders directly involved in the working group and direct management of the RF workbook, while the staff leading the work within the Union are much more junior. It would be great to see a more senior permanent staff member within the Union getting involved in the ESD work at the partnership, and supporting junior staff and sabbatical officers in progressing it on the ground. It is a huge strength for the partnership to have such senior leadership engaged in this agenda from the University.

The auditors recommend the University and SU to formalise the commitment to partnership working, to showcase dedication to this way of working and progressing the ESD agenda. This could be done via a written statement signed off by senior leaders of both organisations that is accessible on both partners’ websites (LS003 and LS006). Further, it would be fantastic to see this approach translate into a more collaborative approach of completing the programme, for instance, for the SU and University to run initiatives and events together, rather than partners coordinating those individually, to encourage greater breadth of reach and engagement. This recommendation was made after the previous, 2020 audit, as well.

### 2.8.2 Supporting student and staff development in sustainability

Student auditors applaud the breadth and depth of extracurricular and professional opportunities that exist at the partnership for internal stakeholders to develop their knowledge and skills in sustainability and social responsibility. From the RISE programme, through Carbon Literacy Project, to ESD modules for teaching staff as part of gaining their teaching qualification, they are extensive. A good number of opportunities that exist also supports collaborative learning for staff and students together.

Nevertheless, many of these opportunities do not generate a large uptake among staff or students. Indeed, during the course of the audit this year, both auditors and focus group participants seemed to only find out about some of these initiatives when another student mentioned that they had taken part, or when they read about them as part of the evidence submitted. Even jobs4students, in the opinion of one of the focus group participants, is “something that 95% of students do not know about”, and never find out in their time as students at the Partnership.

Whilst sustainability is included in the induction of University staff, and to some extent in student induction (sustainability questions form part of a fresher’s survey), this is not the case for the Students’ Union staff. Even when introduced during induction, this knowledge clearly needs to be refreshed, and staff and students alike need to be reminded of the opportunities, or they need to be communicated to them in a different way to encourage greater participation. Furthermore, it would be great to see how knowledge retention and/or application after partaking in a sustainability learning opportunity persists, e.g. if staff introduce ESD pedagogies or sustainability-related topics into their teaching, or how students benefit from the opportunities, during and after their degrees, and how they are able to put their learning into use. This could be done for instance via staff drop-in sessions, feedback surveys, or focus groups that participants are invited to fill out some time after they complete the opportunity, and students/alumni writing case study blogs.

### 2.8.3 Ensuring the partnership's genuine commitment to sustainability resonates with students and staff

The auditors have picked up on some of the language and ways the Partnership communicates their commitment to sustainability, especially when those communications are externally-focused. Some focus group participants have also commented on it. These students, who tended to be more deeply involved in sustainability-related initiatives within the Partnership and beyond, have raised doubts of how genuine some of the Partnership’s efforts are, i.e. how much they stem from moral reasons, and how much from positive PR perspectives. One student shared that they believe the impact of the Partnership’s sustainability work makes a positive difference, regardless of how motivated by “marketing” it is or not.

Nevertheless, it would be worth considering how to ensure that highly aware students feel that the Partnership’s motivation for progressing ESD is honest. One auditor recommended for the Partnership to be more open and transparent about the shortcomings they are aware of, and to clearly communicate with its students about more controversial decisions, such as the Ryebank Fields development, as a way of doing so, as they sometimes feel deliberately hidden. As the audit has demonstrated, much of the partnership's commitment is truly genuine and so these recommendations would serve to ensure highly engaged students are able to see this is the case.

## 2.9 Lead Auditor Summation

Five students led the audit process for Responsible Futures, gaining valuable employability and ESD skills as a result. At the close of each day of the audit students participated in reflection activities to track their development over the two days. At the end of the audit, they had the following to say about their personal experience:

**What has surprised you most through your role as an auditor?**

* “Interviewing people is much harder than being interviewed, especially if we are writing notes.”
* “How easy it was to pick up auditing skills, like writing up a report.”
* “How relaxed the environment was, the informal nature of my job role allowed me to really thrive in my position and gain confidence I initially lacked.”
* “I was surprised to learn about the ways in which the University has been involved in sustainability and their behind the scenes work to contribute to a more sustainable pathway for students and society as a whole.”

**What change implemented by the partnership do you think has achieved the most impact?**

* “The RISE program with more courses/extra-curricular activities being available for students.”
* “Being involved more in sustainability and all the projects undertaken to encourage sustainability.”
* “Holding more events to link students and staff together in working towards sustainability. I read really nice testimonials about students enjoying these events and being upset they were ending, showing that not only are the staff passionate, but the events were working to engage students in sustainability.”
* “The partnership has tried to conduct interviews with university staff so that we can gain an insight into how they incorporate sustainability at MMU and their job role and how they have played a part.”

**What would you recommend the partnership focuses on next?**

* “[Increasing] awareness of what they are doing.”
* “Continuing on its sustainability projects and involving more people.”
* “Being more authentic in challenging areas they aren't sustainable in and empowering staff to speak out about practices they don't feel are sustainable.”
* “I recommend that the partnership works towards more projects and education involved in the formal curriculum.”

**Is there anything else you’ve learnt through your experiences as an auditor?**

* “How to critically think like an auditor, and how to form an opinion and critically analyse the information given.”
* “I have learned a lot about the different criteria by which universities are assessed and how much information and different sections need to be included to demonstrate these actions. I think I have gained more skills in critical analysis as well as constructive based discussions.”
* “Learnt more about the university and other organisation's roles and events they are working on in terms of sustainability which was very interesting to read about. Was cool to see how these organisations are assessed. Skills-wise, it helped practice upon critically analysing data without bias, and when to take into account personal feelings and when not to.”
* “How to skim through vast quantities of data to find necessary information. I have also learned how to critically compare information against a required target. My ability to give thorough feedback in a short span has increased.”
* “I have learnt about how the University contributes to wider sustainability issues and social issues and how they have impacted the university.”
* “Interview skills and confidence.”
* “How to speed write from verbal responses given by interviewees.”
* “I have learnt how to conduct interviews effectively which will help with job applications and also talking to the deputy vice-chancellor has helped me to understand his role with SRS.”

**How, if at all do you think you might use the knowledge and skills you’ve developed during this experience?**

* “Better development of skills in my professional life.”
* “I can [better] use the verbal communication [skills].”
* “I will use this knowledge to help with job interviews in the future and also the auditing experience has helped me to develop confidence in myself. It is also useful in [my] course as an accounting student.”

Thank you so much for the dedication, passion, and enthusiasm demonstrated by both SU and university staff throughout not only throughout the audit process but the Responsible Futures programme as a whole over the years. Congratulations on your re-accreditation! You are a force for good within the sector and have been a great example to other organisations as a Responsible Futures Host Partnership of the 2021-22 academic year. We look forward to continuing to work with and support your ESD work in the future.



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| Further Information |
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# 3.0 General Information

### 3.1 What does my 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.

The “Responsible Futures – Working Towards Accreditation” recognises your commitment and progress when you have not met the score threshold to be awarded the full accreditation. Through being awarded the “Working Towards Accreditation” your partnership should request a follow-up audit when you feel that you are prepared to go for accreditation. Follow-up audits will be charged the standard audit fee.

### 3.2 How long will the accreditation last?

Accreditation is valid for two years, so until July 2024, at which time another audit will be required to re-validate your accreditation.

### 3.3 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 <https://www.sos-uk.org/project/responsible-futures>.

### 3.4 What’s next?

After achieving accreditation, the annual membership fee will cover all future audits to maintain accreditation as well as ongoing support. This membership fees and sign-up form can be found here: <https://www.sos-uk.org/programme-sign-up>

### 3.5 How do we keep improving?

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

In conducting your next audit, we would hope to see progress against the recommendations outlined in this report.

The Responsible Futures accreditation will push the sector for continuous improvement and we hope you will continue to actively engage with other institutions in the cohort to share learning and good practice.

### 3.6 How do we compare?

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

Note that 2014/15 pilot year participants worked to a maximum score of 260 points which the accreditation threshold being met at 130 points before the threshold was raised to 200 points out of a maximum 330 in summer 2015.

### 3.7 I would like to be re-assessed, what can I do?

If you do not agree with your score/accreditation and would like to be re-assessed, please contact the Responsible Futures team on [responsiblefutures@sos-uk.org](mailto:responsiblefutures@sos-uk.org). The documentary review can be re-conducted if the partnership feels that the assessment is inaccurate.

1. Survey results can be found here: <https://www.sos-uk.org/research/sustainability-skills-survey> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [www.greenimpact.org.uk/responsiblefutures](http://www.greenimpact.org.uk/responsiblefutures) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)